

EXPLORING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF SOCIO-DRAMATIC PLAY THROUGH AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF AN ENGLISH RECEPTION CLASS

MATILDA STICKLEY

Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

SEPTEMBER 2017

Abstract

The Early Years in England has seen heavy investment since New Labour came into power in 1997. This distinct educational stage has been highlighted in the media as having the potential to alleviate socio-economic inequalities. The first year of compulsory schooling in England, the Reception year, is the period in which children are inducted into becoming both learners and pupils in a formalised system. It is also the period during which children are considered to be in the high season of imaginative play. Play forms a fundamental part of the Early Years Foundation Stage guidelines, though the nature of what constitutes play is contested by critics and practitioners. With the EYFS framework document stating that all areas of learning must be implemented through planned, purposeful play, tensions arise between freely-chosen, child-led play and adult-led activity. Critics of government interventions have decried the 'schoolification' of the Early Years and claim a 'squeezing out' of opportunities for freely-chosen play, which they warn has the potential to damage children's learning dispositions.

This ethnographic case study focuses on the freely-chosen socio-dramatic play of seven children, in the context of their Reception classroom culture. This is based on a socio-cultural theoretical framework and the premise that such play is where rich experience resides; play which is socially, emotionally, and cognitively challenging. Socio-dramatic play comprises children involved in imitative role-play, which lasts longer than ten minutes, uses objects in a make believe context, is between two or more players, and centres on verbal communication (Smilansky, 1968).

Data generation took place over 8 months, employing fieldnotes generated through participant observation, loosely-structured interviews, and researcher reflections. This is set alongside discourse analysis exploring how play and role-play are conceptualised in policy documentation. Microethnographic analyses are made of video data gathered during socio-dramatic play. To put the child's experience at the centre of the study, artefacts created by children, images, and children's dialogue are incorporated in the analysis. Findings are presented through a combination of evocative ethnographic prose and a multi-modal analysis of video data.

Through an inductive analytical process, themes emerged from the data highlighting the complex nature of the socially situated play activity. The negotiation of social relationships through play is explored, identifying play as a liminal activity in an identity transition stage through which children are learning how to *do* school and how to *be* pupils. Socio-dramatic play is proposed as offering a unique conceptual space in which players can explore expressions of bodily freedom alongside the requirements of the bodily comportment and control which are demanded by school routines. I argue that practitioners should pay attention to the materiality of play: spaces and artefacts which are provided for, and used by, children. Drawing on the analysis, implications for practice are suggested, with reference to techniques by which adults can interact in play in ways which prioritise the child's emerging needs and interests.

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been written without the great humour, creativity, and friendships of the children and staff of the school. It was a privilege to be welcomed into your community, to read and create playful stories with you, and to watch you grow over the years. For being there at the beginning, and guiding my thoughts, words, and rants, my thanks goes to Anton Franks. For every enjambment e-mail and every time you told me to carry on even though I didn't know down which path my words wandered. Christine Hall and Philip Hood, my thanks go to you for your insight, interest, and feedback during my thesis writing process. You were like academic parents who completely believed in my capabilities and I am immensely grateful for that. I thank the Nottingham DTC and the ESRC for the continual support and for giving me the opportunity to meet such a range of brilliantly talented and passionate scholars.

I owe a massive debt of gratitude to my wonderfully creative parents. You continually taught me not only to love the stories that we as people create together, but to follow other people's stories and learn about what makes them unique. You have constantly and passionately supported my work, I know I wouldn't have reached this point without that. Thank you to Dais of MBYB Industries for always being alongside me and ensuring I know what I'm doing and *it's good*. My thanks to Justin for your patience and kindness throughout all the emotions of this academic journey. Special thanks go to Annie for our brilliant playing, and the Lowe family for your unwavering enthusiasm and friendship. I am grateful for the encouraging advice of my fellow Docs-to-be, especially the residents of the most hard-working room on the corridor: C12.

This thesis is dedicated to every 5 year old who makes a superb pretend cup of tea. And to anyone who very gladly accepts a pretend cup of tea from a 5 year old and knows what they're doing is profoundly important.

Contents

i. Glossary vii

1. Introduction 1
1.1 Personal inspirations: why socio-dramatic play? 1
1.2 Personal inspirations: why the Reception year? 2
1.3 Early Years: political contentions 3
1.4 Research questions 6
1.5 Structure of thesis 7
1.6 Notes on key terms 8

2. Early Years policy in England: 1999 to now 11
2.1 The Blair years 11
2.2 The Foundation Stage 13
2.3 Statutory assessment 19
2.4 Brown leadership of Labour government 24
2.5 Conservative Liberal Democrats coalition: 'effective' schooling 30
2.6 Conservative government: landslides and U-turns 38
2.7 Schoolification? 43

3. Literature review 45
3.1 Introduction: 'seizing bubbles' 45
3.2 Definitions of play 46
3.3 Play and education 53
3.4 Pretend play and learning 57
a. Vygotsky's influence 57
b. Cognitive 62
c. Linguistic 64
d. Social 66
3.5 Gender and play 68
3.6 Play in school 72
a. Role-play/socio-dramatic play in school 75
b. Play culture in school 79
c. Spaces for play 84

d. Media influences 85

4. Methodology 93
4.1 Conceptual framework 93
4.2 Theoretical analysis 95
4.3 Methodology 96
4.4 Methods 97
a. Participant observation and fieldnotes 97
b. Focus children 99
c. Video data 100
d. Children as researchers 101
4.5 Ethical concerns 104
4.6 Reflexivity 107
4.7 The roots of the ethnographic method 109
a. Ethnographies of young children's literacies and play 111
4.8 Writing and analysis 114
a. Stages of the analytical process 116

5. Context of the study 123
5.1 The school 123
5.2 The people 125
5.3 The spaces 127
5.4 Values and culture 134

6. Data analysis 137
6.1 Our Troupe 137
6.2 Isaac 138
6.3 Kylie 148
6.4 Ryan 159
6.5 Emily 170
6.6 Caden 178
6.7 Claire 190
6.8 Andrew 200

7. Discussion 215
7.1 Physical spaces, times, and materiality of play 217

7.2 Themes of play 227
7.3 Social relationships 235
7.4 Gender 240
7.5 Bodily engagement 245
7.6 Adult in play 251

8. Conclusion 257
8.1 Research question 257
8.2 Summary of findings 257
8.3 Contribution of the study 258
8.4 Implications for practice 259
8.5 Implications for further research 263
8.6 Reflections on the research project 264

References 267

Appendices
1 Data corpus list 288
2 Transcript of Isaac's socio-dramatic play 289
3 Transcript of Kylie's socio-dramatic play 296
4 Transcript of Ryan's socio-dramatic play 304
5 Transcript of Emily's socio-dramatic play 314
6 Transcript of Claire's socio-dramatic play 320
7 Transcript of Andrew's socio-dramatic play 329

Glossary

EYFS	The Early Years Foundation Stage is the statutory framework issued by the Government which sets standards of learning and care for children from birth to 5 years. Effective in nurseries and childcare settings in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.
EYFSP	The Early Years Foundation Stage profile which measures a child's attainment at the end of the Reception year.
Key Stages	The four fixed stages into which the National Curriculum is divided.
Letters and Sounds	A phonics resource used by schools, published by the Department of Education and Skills in 2007. May also refer to the assigned period of teaching time.
National Curriculum	The set of subjects and standards used by primary and secondary schools.
Pupil Premium	Additional funding for publicly funded schools to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
Reception class	The first year of primary school which comes after nursery and before Year One. May also be referred to as Foundation Stage 2.
SATS	Statutory assessments carried out in primary schools in England.
SotD	Acronym for Star of the Day: a status assigned to a child in the case study class each day, giving them extra classroom duties and privileges

Chapter 1
Introduction

1.1 Personal inspirations: why socio-dramatic play?

My interest in drama springs from a lifetime involvement in the performing arts. I was brought up in a household where playing with stories was part of everyday life. My parents founded a theatre company in 1978, delivering storytelling performances and workshops across the UK and internationally. Many of their performances involved storytelling in role, with the narrator taking on multiple characters as the story progressed. I participated in workshops which encouraged the development of storytelling skills, monologues, singing, dancing, and writing for the stage, all with a focus on producing work that you felt proud of being able to share within a community. My parents' passion for drama permeated family life: it was not uncommon for one of my parents to adopt a character during family meal times and sustain the pretence for the rest of the evening, much to the amusement of myself and my siblings. This was dramatic play. Life was creative and playful. My childhood was one in which imaginative expression was highly valued and the processes and products of creativity (whether telling stories of family history, painting rocks on the beach, or composing and recording songs) were considered means by which we bond as humans and grow as communities. As our family grows, my niece has presented us with a new creative mind which inspires us all. Raised through her first years surrounded with a huge number of stories and books, at the age of 4 her fascinating play monologues convey her immense vocabulary, and her complete absorption in fantasy worlds. I believe these creative processes – storytelling and character building - are means of playing; means of expressing our own stories in ways which bring us joy and offer us new viewpoints from which to see the world. My belief in storytelling, drama and dramatic play as creative, social processes is due to these experiences. During my undergraduate studies, I was employed as a playworker, delivering community play events where I witnessed how play could act as a cohesive force in diverse communities. Later, I took a role in a storytelling company, training teachers in storytelling techniques. These professional experiences continued to ignite a spark

of curiosity about how readily children play with stories and characters, and about the value of playfulness in the classroom.

1.2 Personal inspirations: why the Reception year?

During the final year of my undergraduate degree at Homerton College, Cambridge, I carried out a research project which initiated my interest in young children's play (Stickley, 2010). It closely explored the dramatic play of a mixed Foundation 2/Year 1 class, with a comparative section regarding a drama workshop by a Creative Partnerships practitioner. This highlighted the qualitative differences between structured drama provision and freely-chosen dramatic play, whilst also bringing to my attention an aspect of play as gender performativity.

Professionally, working as an Education Consultant in Hong Kong with a focus on the kindergarten section of an education centre, I became interested in the tensions which exist between high pressured cultures of attainment and the want for young children to learn in an environment where their creative, playful experiences are cherished. The concept of playfulness interests me, as teachers work under continued pressure to reach targets yet often express their desire for children to have rich, playful experiences which engage the body and mind. As I have observed infant children in their freely-chosen socio-dramatic play, it seems that this is where the rich experience resides; in play which is physically, emotionally, and cognitively challenging. It acts as the basis for the development of the creative faculty and knowledge base of children: 'knowledge begins in childhood play, embedded in [the] playful encounter with the world that is immediately at hand' (Jones in Sefton-Green *et al*, 2011: 21). In Reception classes, children are entering their first stage of statutory schooling. Whilst mainstream Early Years pedagogies are termed 'play-based', children are simultaneously faced with the challenges of new routines and rules experienced at an age often considered to be 'the high season of imaginative play' (Singer and Singer, 1992: 64).

1.3 Early Years: political contentions

Acting as the basis for the education of each new generation, it is inevitable that decision making surrounding the content and delivery of Early Years curriculum is an area fraught with political contention. This contention runs in parallel with parental concern for the early stages of children's development: that children are in a safe, secure, and engaging environment is a continual concern for parents. Reception is the first year of compulsory schooling in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It is the period in which children are inducted into becoming both learners and pupils in a formalised system. The sector has seen heavy investment, particularly highlighted in the media and in policy since New Labour came into power in 1997. As investment has increased so has assessment and monitoring of the services provided. Early Years policy has come to be seen by some as increasingly important within a 'competitive neoliberal global race' (Robert-Holmes, 2015: 304), and as new policies have been published, implemented, or rescinded, so too have new critiques of policy emerged from the academy. Ball comments that with each change of Government, there emerge 'incoherences and contradictions as policies are laid over one another' (Ball, 1993 in Bradbury, 2013). Such incoherences will be discussed in the policy chapter, though I will describe the current framework here.

In Britain, guidelines for the provision for children aged 0-5 are set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework (Department for Education, 2014b) for all schools and childcare providers. These guidelines articulated a renewed emphasis on the expectations of children in the pre-school years (Walsh *et al,* 2010: 4) and made the outcome of this visible to the public: the results of EYFS Profiles are made available to download by the Department for Education. These results indicate what percentage of children in the school reach the Government indicated Good Level of Development (GLD), a measure described as the most widely used single measure of child development in the early years. Children are considered to have reached a GLD if 'they achieve at least the expected level in the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning […] and in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy' (DfE, 2013). These are guidelines which constitute what a 'good learner' looks like at this stage and direct practitioners to carry out an assessment which may set the 'benchmark for all future progress' for children (Bradbury, 2013: 17). In

consideration of this, the EYFSP becomes highly significant in a learner's life as it provides a projection for the learner's future.

Play forms a central part of the EYFS guidelines though the meaning and level of application of the term is contested. The guidelines state that: 'each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play' (DfE, 2014b: 9). As children's play is often considered to be a definitively child-led activity, the level to which it can be planned is questionable, along with the definition of 'purposeful' – whose purpose is being prioritised? What the balance should be between adult-led and child-led activity is of course context-dependant and therefore is an area that often remains ambiguous within the guidelines, despite parts of the guidelines becomingly seemingly prescriptive. The guidelines establish a child-centred culture in which 'practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests' (*ibid*) but voices from the professional community are questioning whether this is viable with the simultaneous pressures of monitoring and assessment. In the government's 2011 five-year education plan the term 'readiness' for school is seen as an Impact Indicator (DfE, 2010: 22). The requirement to be ready for the next stage of schooling, for example through systematic reading instruction, may not necessarily be in the interest of the child themselves but instead be an adult agenda which imposes stringent and unrealistic targets on the young child. Critics of government interventions, have decried the 'schoolification' of the Early Years and warn of its potential to damage generations as it disregards the 'value of an extended period of playful learning before the start of formal schooling' (Whitebread, 2013: 1). A perceived focus on 'school readiness' has affected the role of the teacher in the Early Years and Infant classroom, contributing to a culture in which monitoring and assessment could appear to take precedence over interaction with children. It is within this context that the activity, and concept, of play is called into question with many critics noting the reconceptualization of play as taking away its intrinsic value. Hirsch-Pasek refers to the process of play becoming an 'extraneous embellishment' in early curriculum with a 'pervasive emphasis on narrowly defined learning' within which play acts as a reward for formal work (Hirsh-Pasek et al, 2008). Changes in terminology have even been noted as reflecting a 'squeezing out' of play in the early curriculum. With the phasing out of the term 'infants' to the more formal 'Key Stage

1’ after the introduction of the National Curriculum, Whitebread argues there is embodied a ‘move away from regarding these children as still relatively young and in need of a less formal, play-based curriculum’ (Whitebread & Jameson in Moyles, 2005: 60).

These concerns have led to the establishment of groups such as the Early Childhood Action group who have proposed an alternative foundation phase curriculum and initiated the *Too Much, Too Soon* campaign, which warns of the ‘unreasonable and developmentally unsound’ requirements of young children (Too Much Too Soon website, Save Childhood Movement). Through this campaign, voices from across the sector are striving to be heard to affect change in policy implementation.

Such concerns were further exacerbated by the proposed introduction of new baseline assessments which were to be introduced from September 2016 for all children at the start of schooling (DfE, 2014a: 7). This introduction was criticised due to concerns over the effect of differences in children’s age on starting school and the potential for assessments to be harmful for children’s psychological well-being; children from a wide range of backgrounds must adapt to the school environment and baseline testing adds another strain to this already challenging experience. Though these proposals were later withdrawn, there remains concern over the testing of young children. Christine Blower, the NUT General Secretary, expresses a key issue with this culture of testing: ‘our children are amongst the most tested in the world, with children as young as five years old labelled failures’ (NUT, 2015: 5). Indeed, it is this labelling which critics worry renders the child as a product, and the education system as an essentially economic process: 'we need to ensure that our children are not viewed as numbers on a Government spreadsheet or figures in an economic model' (Leitch, Preschool Play Association, 2014). In such an economic model, play, as an intrinsically motivated activity, may be seen as antithesis to concepts of productivity rendered by the term ‘work’.

These two research interests: the socio-cultural activity of children’s play, and the current policy situation in British infant schools, led me to establish this research project which combines discourse analysis of official documentation with micro-ethnographic analysis of children’s socio-dramatic play.

1.4 Research questions

The overarching research question of the study is: how do children experience socio-dramatic play in an English Reception classroom? This question was finalised before the start of the fieldwork. Prior to the literature review being carried out, there were several research questions considered, particularly a focus upon how adults intervene in socio-dramatic play and how this may change the course of play. There was also a focus on the nature of the play/work dichotomy and how this altered between Reception and the Year 1. I was interested in the differences in routines concerning play and how children understood these changes. A focus which arose from my own standpoint was that of gender: how children performed and enacted gender roles in their socio-dramatic play. I realised that focus upon these questions was too oriented on my own experiences and did not find a centre in the children's experiences. Therefore, adopting an overarching question for the ethnographic study, allowed an unfolding of the children's experiences to guide my observations and theoretical insight. Drawing in on individual children and allowing their actions and routines to become the basis for observations allowed for new questions to evolve. This inductive process ensured I took a more child-centred approach and observations remained naturalistic rather than steered along my own conceptual paths. Questions which arose from the data then were as follows: what can we understand about children's learning experiences from their socio-dramatic play? I use the phrase 'learning experiences' rather than simply 'learning' as the latter suggests a rhetoric which may lead readers to expect a quantitative approach in which learner's knowledge is tested. Learning here incorporates the players' understanding of social roles and how they are learning to negotiate social relationships. Throughout the fieldwork, I became more interested in the spaces and materials available for, or used in, socio-dramatic play. This led me to further consider the affordances of objects/artefacts used, and how negotiations of space were a central aspect of children's social negotiations. What grew more prominent in the data generation process were the themes and narratives which players presented. I did not initially expect to address themes of socio-dramatic play, but what these

themes communicate to us about children's own classroom experience has led me to incorporate this analysis in the discussion. The prominence of adult interaction in socio-dramatic play diminished as the fieldwork progressed, for several reasons which will be addressed in the discussion chapter. In order to consider how policy is demonstrated in practice, I analyse the discourse employed in documentation from 1997 to the present to explore the representation of socio-dramatic play in the Early Years. Utilising these emergent research enquiries, I address the overarching question: how do children experience socio-dramatic play in an English Reception classroom?

1.5 Structure of thesis

The policy chapter chronologically outlines the Early Years policy shifts that have taken place in the UK[1]. This discourse analysis has a focus on the inclusion of role-play in the documentation and the wider ideology in which it is framed. This includes critiques from commentators on the ideological and practical implications of policy guidelines.

The literature chapter draws upon classic and contemporary theories of play and empirical studies which highlight the beneficial aspects of play that incorporates pretence. The chapter moves from play theory (asking 'what is play?') to play and education (identifying the centrality of play within Western understandings of education). The advantages of pretend play are outlined in three sub-sections: cognitive, social, and linguistic. The relationship between play and how gender is performed in early childhood is explored, with reference to research from a post-structural feminist perspective. Finally, the literature chapter identifies the practical and ideological challenges of play within the classroom: the tensions between current pedagogy and play-based practice, followed by studies which examine children's role-play. This leads into discussion of ethnographic studies of imaginative play. Finally, resources and spaces for play are considered, including the influence of external stimuli: storylines from popular culture texts.

[1] Applicability and statutory nature of policy document differ between England, Northern Ireland and Wales. Scotland has its own Early Years framework which has not been included in this analysis.

The methodology chapter defines my conceptual framework and theoretical perspective. The ethnographic methodology and methods are expanded upon, then ethical concerns and issues of researcher reflexivity are identified and addressed. The roots of the ethnographic method are explored and finally the process of analysis which I have utilised is explained, with reference to analytical tools and the significance of the ethnographic writing process. This includes justification for the creative writing style used in the analysis.

The context of the study moves from a macro to micro (to conceptual) introduction to the case study class: presenting the school, the people of the class, the spaces, and lastly a section on the school values particularly those influencing play.

The data analysis forms the central section of the thesis. Vignettes of each focus child are provided to give a socio-emotional context to the following play episodes. For each focus child, a table is then given, presenting an overview of content analysis for a specific socio-dramatic play episode. This episode of socio-dramatic play has been selected from video data, the analysis of which aims to rigorously explore what is taking place during play – socially, thematically, and physically. The play episode is then analysed at length, drawing out concepts for discussion. The aim of focusing on a small group of children, and placing this chapter in the centre of the thesis is intended to reflect the child-centred nature of the study; at the heart of the study are the children's play experiences.

The discussion chapter uses themes emerging from the data analysis section and draws on the categories of the literature review to link theory to children's play experiences. This includes a conclusion which outlines the implications of the findings for practice and provides suggestions for further research in the field.

1.6 Notes on key terms

In this study I use the phrase socio-dramatic play as defined by Smilansky (1968). This has allowed me to boundary the phenomenon being focused upon, as Smilansky specified that such play involves imitative role-play, uses objects in a make-believe context, lasts longer than ten minutes, is between two or more players, and centres on verbal communication. Therefore, this drew me to focus on smaller, defined units

of interaction between children. However, it is worth noting that this type of play may contain within it, the categories of play which Hughes' play taxonomy (2002) describes as: symbolic play, imaginative play, communication play, and social play. The more generic term role-play is used in the policy literature relating to Early Years, as well as other phrases such as shared pretend play. I consider these types of play to be closely interlinked (e.g. socio-dramatic play is a means of defining an episode of role-play which incorporates pretence and social communication). In the literature chapter, I generally use the term which the specific commentator or practitioner has used in their writing, though have attempted to note the often-subtle differences between the types of play which they are focusing upon.

Chapter 2
Early Years policy in England: 1999 to now

Education provision for 0-5-year olds in England has undergone significant changes since 1999. Throughout the transition from a Labour government to a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition and finally a Conservative government elected in 2015, a stream of policies have been introduced which effect the assessment, and definition of Early Years provision. Whilst a desire to 'close the gap' between the most and least socio-economically advantaged has been the consistent drive behind changes, they have been paralleled by a significant increase in Government intervention. This intervention has largely seen a push for 'school readiness': for all children to be prepared to start Year 1 with specific social, cognitive, and physical standards attained. The push for readiness has led to what some critics term the 'schoolification' of the Early Years: the formalisation of teaching leading to a change in the nature of the Early Years classroom (see Bingham & Whitebread, 2012). I will return to recently debated terms 'readiness' and 'schoolification'.

Here I outline significant changes in Early Years policy which have shaped the Reception year. These include high-level Governmental shifts; policy changes; non-statutory guidelines which maintain a high status amongst practitioners; and National Strategies which influence the Early Years. I identify references to socio-dramatic play or role-play throughout the documents to examine its relevance within the curriculum and curriculum guidance. I define each period chronologically and according to the government which took office. This serves to highlight both the subtle and explicit changes in education policy associated with specific governments since 1999. I aim to highlight the relevance of the current study within the politicised area of recent educational change and identify some of the conceptual tensions which arise from policy documentation.

2.1 'Education, education, education': the Blair years

The Labour government manifesto for the 1997 elections affirmed an emphasis on public services, with the priority emphasised through Blair's Mansion House speech

in which he declared his priorities to be 'education, education, education'. The importance of an early education for children was highlighted as part of this commitment, with Blair calling for 'proper nursery places for all our children' (Blair, 1996). Parallel to this was a drive to push standards in the 'three R's' and raise attainment in literacy levels. These two strands of improvement, Early Years and literacy, can be seen to have run as a thread through education policy to the present day.

Prior to the election of the Labour government, in pre-statutory provision, expectations of Early Years progress were defined by the *Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning* (SCAA, 1996). The demonstration that children were working towards these outcomes had to be shown by providers in order to be eligible for childcare vouchers. Once Labour came into power, the vouchers scheme was abolished, and funding went directly to providers, on condition of passing Ofsted inspections.

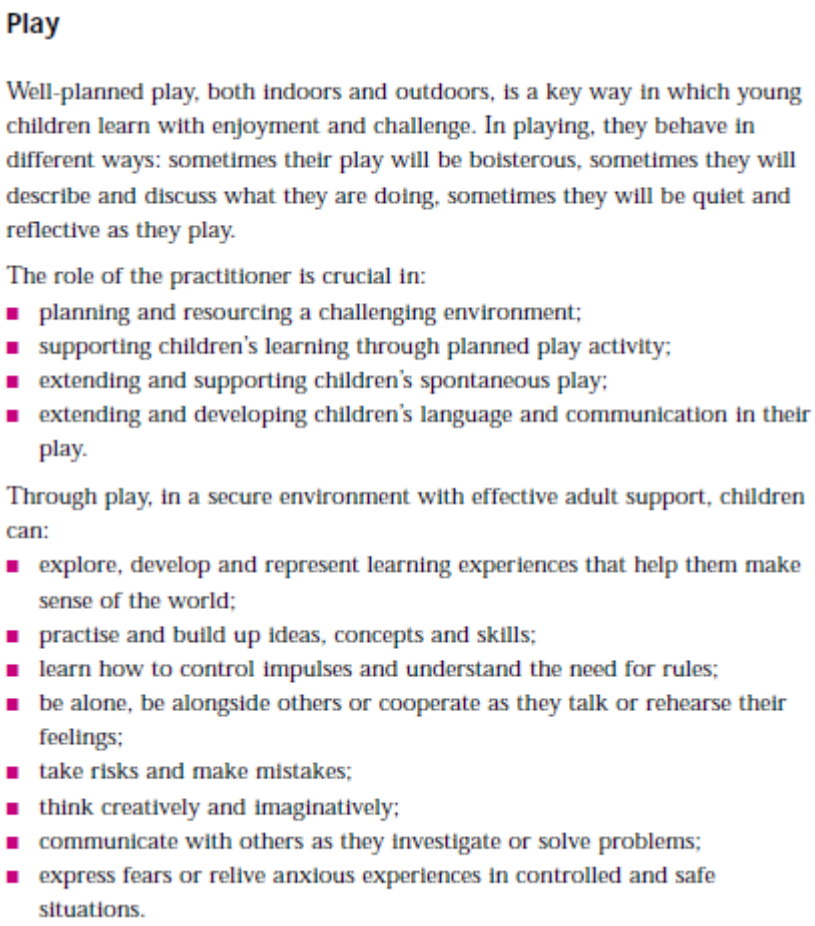
The National Curriculum was updated by Labour in 1999, resulting in more teaching time being spent on the core subjects: English, Maths, and Science. In order to tackle weaknesses in these areas and to ensure standards were raised, Labour launched several national strategies: the National Literacy Strategy was implemented in 1998, with the National Numeracy Strategy following in 1999. Here emerged a trend towards accountability, increasing calls for transparency and moves towards systematic instruction for children in the Reception year where previously free-play and child-initiated activity were prioritised. Those who advocated the formal model of teaching saw this as an important move, with the Chief Inspector of Schools, Chris Woodhead stating: 'direct teaching is crucial at this age as it is at every other age' (1999: 10). Others pointed out the detrimental effects that the targets of formal teaching were likely to have upon young children's autonomous thought:

> A situation in which a teacher is made highly accountable for moving a large group of children through a predetermined series of narrowly defined goals and targets is not one conducive to encouraging a classroom ethos in which children's initiative and their ability to think for themselves is likely to flourish (Hendy & Whitebread, 2000: 251)

2.2 The Foundation Stage

Becoming effective from September 2000, the Foundation Stage was made distinct from earlier provision in *Birth to Three Matters* (DfES, 2002) published to support provision for children below Foundation Stage age. The Department for Education and Employment and the Qualification and Curriculum Authority published the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (QCA, 2000). The foreword states that it provides guidance for practitioners, setting out 'what might reasonably be expected of children at different stages in the foundation stage' (p3) in the early learning goals. This guidance was applicable to nurseries and schools with nursery and Reception provision. It was a significant publication, as its second foreword states: 'for the first time it gives this very important stage of education a distinct identity' (p4). A greater emphasis was now placed on this period of life, as a developmentally important stage in its own right and as a time of preparation for the school years that lay ahead. The early learning goals represented a significant benchmark by which practitioners could assess children: 'The early learning goals set high expectations […] but expectations that are achievable for most children who have followed a relevant curriculum' (QCA, 2000: 4). 'Most children' suggests that inclusivity was not the emphasis here, but instead the aim was to bring as many children as possible to a standardised level of attainment. The above quotation also suggests that a level of deference to the curriculum was required, with the focus on the delivery of the 'relevant' curriculum in order to succeed, the nuance being that teachers who adhere to a different curriculum (suggesting also a particular delivery of the curriculum) may fail to bring all children to levels they are capable of.

The curriculum guidance document includes one page dedicated to play, which is shown below:



Play

Well-planned play, both indoors and outdoors, is a key way in which young children learn with enjoyment and challenge. In playing, they behave in different ways: sometimes their play will be boisterous, sometimes they will describe and discuss what they are doing, sometimes they will be quiet and reflective as they play.

The role of the practitioner is crucial in:

- planning and resourcing a challenging environment;
- supporting children's learning through planned play activity;
- extending and supporting children's spontaneous play;
- extending and developing children's language and communication in their play.

Through play, in a secure environment with effective adult support, children can:

- explore, develop and represent learning experiences that help them make sense of the world;
- practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills;
- learn how to control impulses and understand the need for rules;
- be alone, be alongside others or cooperate as they talk or rehearse their feelings;
- take risks and make mistakes;
- think creatively and imaginatively;
- communicate with others as they investigate or solve problems;
- express fears or relive anxious experiences in controlled and safe situations.

Figure 2.1: extract from Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000: 25)

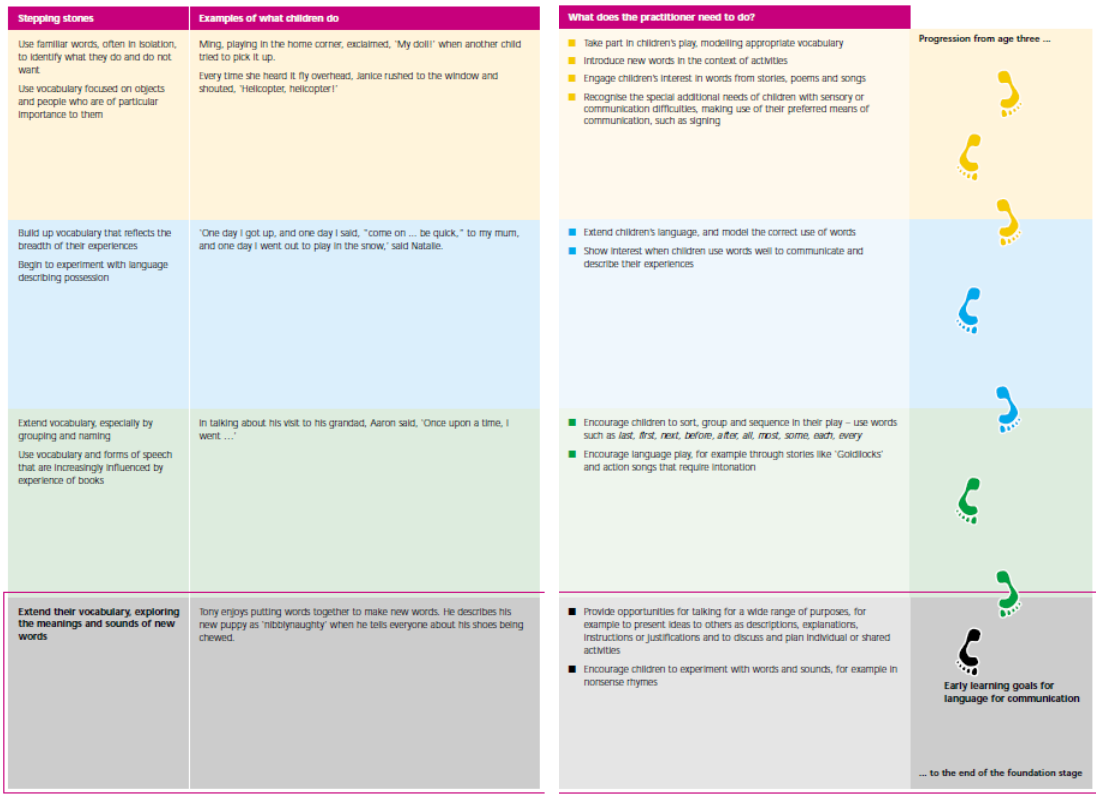
It is noticeable that play itself is described as 'a key way' that children learn. The guidance does not adopt an absolutist perspective in which play is described as 'the key way'. Play therefore sits ideologically alongside taught content as one of the ways in which children learn. It goes some way towards recognising issues of the control of play in the classroom with the term 'boisterous'. This may suggest to practitioners that play is sometimes loud and physically dominating, and this should be accepted by practitioners. Pre-planned activities are balanced with 'spontaneous' play in the guidance, highlighting the need for practitioners to be flexible and observant. Though the opening sentence 'Well-planned play […] is a key way…' suggests that spontaneous play holds less value than that which is adult-led; there is a limit set on child-initiated activity. This 'planned or spontaneous' distinction is a salient issue when considering role-play: if such play is freely-chosen and child-led, the

practitioner will need to interact in a way which is not dominating, either linguistically or physically. This balance between supporting and intervening is often discussed in the literature on role-play. This section of the guidance outlines the complexities of play and so goes some way towards problematising it as a concept, though it seems a relatively short and self-contained section compared to the amount of text devoted to 'teaching and learning' in the document.

In defining the Early Years curriculum, the document specifies six areas of learning:

- personal, social and emotional development;
- communication, language and literacy;
- mathematical development;
- knowledge and understanding of the world;
- physical development;
- creative development. (p26)

These allow practitioners to focus on learning and teaching, and to address children's diverse needs. These defined areas had not differed significantly from the earlier Desirable Outcomes, with the words 'emotional' and 'communication' added and the more formal 'mathematics' area altered to 'mathematical development'. This latter change implies recognition that an end state of mastery ('mathematics') is not possible for this stage, but that knowledge in this area is continually evolving and being put to use through activities that are not practitioner-led. In making such areas of learning separate, ideological issues do emerge. In her discussion of creative thinking in the Early Years, Craft (2003) outlines several problems with the concept of 'creative development' which are useful to consider when exploring the place of role-play in the classroom. She suggests that codifying 'creative development' thus implies that creativity only involves specific parts of the curriculum and certain forms of learning, yet creative problem solving occurs in a range of domains. Secondly, the term 'development' carries with it the implication that there is 'a ceiling, or a static end-state' to creative endeavours, which is empirically untrue. Thirdly, she identifies that play and creativity are not synonymous and whilst some play requires creative thinking, other games rely more on structure and chance. Craft's thoughts on creativity can be applied to thinking about how role-play is dealt with in curriculum guidance. For example, a focus on the outcomes or 'end-state' of the creative activity of role-play could lead practitioners to overlook its inherently social properties.



Stepping stones	Examples of what children do	What does the practitioner need to do?
Use familiar words, often in isolation, to identify what they do and do not want Use vocabulary focused on objects and people who are of particular importance to them	Ming, playing in the home corner, exclaimed, 'My doll!' when another child tried to pick it up. Every time she heard it fly overhead, Janice rushed to the window and shouted, 'Helicopter, helicopter!'	■ Take part in children's play, modelling appropriate vocabulary ■ Introduce new words in the context of activities ■ Engage children's interest in words from stories, poems and songs ■ Recognise the special additional needs of children with sensory or communication difficulties, making use of their preferred means of communication, such as signing
Build up vocabulary that reflects the breadth of their experiences Begin to experiment with language describing possession	'One day I got up, and one day I said, "come on ... be quick," to my mum, and one day I went out to play in the snow,' said Natalie.	■ Extend children's language, and model the correct use of words ■ Show interest when children use words well to communicate and describe their experiences
Extend vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming Use vocabulary and forms of speech that are increasingly influenced by experience of books	In talking about his visit to his grandad, Aaron said, 'Once upon a time, I went ...'	■ Encourage children to sort, group and sequence in their play – use words such as *last, first, next, before, after, all, most, some, each, every* ■ Encourage language play, for example through stories like 'Goldilocks' and action songs that require intonation
Extend their vocabulary, exploring the meanings and sounds of new words	Tony enjoys putting words together to make new words. He describes his new puppy as 'nibblynaughty' when he tells everyone about his shoes being chewed.	■ Provide opportunities for talking for a wide range of purposes, for example to present ideas to others as descriptions, explanations, instructions or justifications and to discuss and plan individual or shared activities ■ Encourage children to experiment with words and sounds, for example in nonsense rhymes

Progression from age three ...

Early learning goals for language for communication

... to the end of the foundation stage

Figure 2.2: Stepping Stones guidance (QCA, 2000: 53-54)

The guidance provides Stepping Stones (example shown in Figure 2.2) to 'identify developing knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that children need if they are to achieve specified early learning goals by the end of the foundation stage', though, it is explained, these are not age related. Examples of what children do are accompanied by a description of what behaviour is identified in this action, followed by how the practitioner should respond.

We can see in the way that the children's progress is visualised here, that a desired developmental end is specified: children are largely expected to reach the same point by the end of the Reception year, though their age differs. So, those children who were Easter intake will be (within reason) expected to reach the same goals as September intake. This problem, also termed the summer-born issue, puts pressure on practitioners to ensure children all reach the same end goal, though they start at considerably different ages and develop at different rates.

Though the guidance explains that the areas of learning are not discrete and may be developed across activities in the classroom, there is some emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. Whilst giving Reception teachers the freedom to organise the

timings of their ‘lessons’, the need for children to transition into a classroom environment, in which provision for these skills is set apart and accentuated, is clear:

> Reception teachers may choose to cover the elements of the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson across the day rather than in a single unit of time. In order to ensure a smooth transition to the literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson in year 1, both should be in place by the end of the reception year. (p27)

The reference to these areas as delivered through ‘lessons’ signifies an expectation that teachers adopt a formal approach to teaching, which could act to set apart 'work' periods during the day for Reception classes. This is somewhat at odds with advice given earlier in the document which states: children do not make a distinction between ‘play’ and ‘work’ and neither should practitioners (p11), alongside 'young children’s learning is not compartmentalised’ (p45). We can start to identify some discrepancies, or tensions, here between the need for practitioners to effectively integrate a ‘lesson’ daily and the desire for children to lead their own learning and exploration through play.

How, then, is the activity of role-play addressed in this curriculum guidance? The phrase ‘role-play’ itself appears 43 times in the document. This includes references to how adults can interact in role-play (to link parts of language with movement through role-play, to engage children in planned role-play which ‘interests them’ and to encourage conversation with adults) and to help children express emotions (expressing feelings and thoughts, to make sense of the world emotionally and to generate new ideas). The development of literacy is frequently linked to role-play: to encourage reading and writing, role-play as an environment where the child can write their name, to categorise and order words and items. Numeracy tasks are encouraged through role-play: children can discuss mathematical ideas through role-play; using calculators and making use of numbers.

The guidance states that:

> Children learn many skills and attitudes in well-planned role-play. It encourages individual and cooperative play and gives children opportunities to express feelings, to use language, to

> develop literacy and numeracy skills and 'to learn without failure' (p32)

Focus on the core skills remains strong here. Though role-play embodies an activity which, perhaps unlike numeracy, allows for learning without failure (after all, a fictional and imaginative situation goes beyond the realms of correct and incorrect), one of its defining features here is that it contributes to the hallmarks of the foundation curriculum: literacy and numeracy. It is a means to an end - where the end is consistently in line with targets imposed through formalised curriculum – rather than a valuable socio-cultural, emotional, and child-led activity within itself.

In summary, whilst the curriculum guidance emphasised the Early Years as a distinct stage, it may be seen as problematic in its defining prescribed areas of learning. Play was allowed a focus and many examples were given of children during play but 'areas of learning' were given more emphasis, perhaps an indication of the ongoing process of schoolification. With generalised early learning goals set, age differences were also an issue for summer-born children, and though the guidance outlined that progress as defined by the Stepping Stones was not age related, they still segmented by age.

In 2001, following from the National Literacy Strategy came the more targeted *National Literacy Strategy – Developing Early Writing* (DfEE, 2001). With the rationale that 'despite frequent opportunities, repeated encouragement and sensitive support from teachers, many children still find [writing] difficult and make very slow progress' (p7), there was a drive to create 'writing classrooms': where writing was fostered throughout curriculum provision. The strategy states that a writing classroom should include **'**the systematic, regular and direct teaching of phonics' (*ibid*). Such teaching was to become a distinct part of the Early Years classroom routine. At this point, schools were supplied with a package entitled *Progression in Phonics* (DfES, 2000). This outlined whole class teaching activities and set out what 'the Framework expects' all children to be able to do in the Reception year, including for example: 'identify and write initial and final phonemes in CVC words' (p7).

The strategy document provided teachers with guidance on how to implement a 'writing classroom' with importance put upon oral language, spelling, independent playing and experimenting with writing. The guidelines were in line with the early

learning goals from the Foundation Stage curriculum but provided further targeted statements for writing. Role-play is referenced as an activity which can encourage writing, which can be extended particularly if adults interact: 'often this will be initiated by the child and can be enhanced if you or other adults model writing in the role-play area' (p26). Modelling of literacy practices, then, seems a justification for interacting in children's play.

2.3 Statutory assessment

In 2002, the six areas of learning for the Foundation Stage became statutory, and a national consultation on the early learning goals was carried out in the autumn. This move rendered the *Curriculum Guidance* document itself statutory and in 2003 the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP) was introduced, providing a national framework for pupil assessment. This was based on observations of children throughout the year, replacing the baseline assessments that were formally used at the start of the Reception year. As there were 90 different approved baseline assessments which schools could previously choose from, the introduction of the FSP was a welcomed single national scheme. The assessment comprises 13 summary scales covering the six areas of learning, with practitioners marking Yes or No if a child had achieved an item. However, as Durant (2003) notes these 'scales are 'black and white'' – a mark can only be given if a child has or hasn't achieved a particular item but there 'isn't any 'grey' to indicate that a child is, for example, almost at the point of achieving a particular item' (online paper). Of course, addressing this difficulty would require further paperwork for teachers, but it does highlight a basic fault with the process of assessing the complex development of a number of children.

The foundation stage profiles were publicly visible records, which were published online and available to download. This was another step towards giving parents a choice of provider at all levels through a transparent system, and acted to facilitate a comparison across schools and local authorities (Broadhead, 2006: 196). Assessment such as this directly influences the way that teaching is structured, and therefore influences the organisation of classroom spaces and children's daily routines.

In May 2003, Labour published *Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools* (DfES, 2003). The terminology and tone of the report were particularly distinctive. In the foreword by Charles Clarke, the nuanced 'our system must not fail any child' (p2) gives the impression that the accountability of schools is not only pivotal for a child's education, but for their life chances in general. As well as such impassioned rhetoric, the strategy employed by the Government here was to try to ensure that schools developed their own distinct cultures, where, though exam results and rankings did significantly raise standards, schools should have the confidence to develop their own exciting curriculum. The document gives examples from 'outstanding' primary schools where:

> …children are engaged by learning that develops and stretches them and excites their imagination. [Children are] learning in many different ways: out-of-doors, through play, in small groups, through art, music and sport, from each other, from adults other than teachers… (p9)

This description contains the only use of the word 'play' in the context of children's play (not sports or playing instruments) in the document. As the document also addresses 'an overwhelming majority of primary schools [which] also act as Early Years settings, offering the Foundation Stage in nursery and reception classes' (p15), the lack of attention given to play-based learning is stark. The document places importance upon a smooth transition into Year 1 for children, and notes that a key part of the success in raising standards in primary school had been the professional force of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (p43) which is seen to have aided in the aforementioned transition.

Some academics were deeply critical of the report, particularly as its 'strategy' appeared to function through its rhetoric rather than actual suggestions for change. Looking beyond the 'ministerial machismo' of the report's language, Alexander (2004) describes it as having a:

> wilful amnesia in respect of the accumulated findings of published research on learning and teaching, not to mention the ignoring of findings from the government's own inspections, [making] it clear that the Strategy is about something other than argument and justification (Alexander, 2004: 14)

He also critiques the way that the 'soft sell' language is masking a culture of compliance to previous policies:

> Against the ostensible offer of autonomy, we have the continuing pressure of testing, targets and performance tables and the creeping hegemonisation of the curriculum by the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, with three-part lessons, interactive whole class teaching and plenaries soon to become a template for the teaching of everything (p15)

This critique seemed to be increasingly relevant to the Early Years, where statutory teaching was 'creeping' in, and worries about a process of 'schoolification' were being voiced.

Later in 2003, *Every Child Matters* became significant legislation affecting children. The foreword by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair, described the horror of some children's lives which are 'filled with risk, fear, and danger' (Chief Secretary to the Treasury, 2003: 1). This was prompted by the murder of Victoria Climbié, who experienced abuse at the hands of her carers, with local services failing to investigate before her death in 2000. The Green Paper, which led to the Children Act 2004 and the establishment of a Children's Commissioner, put emphasis on the Early Years as a critical period: 'children are particularly affected by their experience during the early years before they reach school age' (*ibid*: p18). It notes that a lack of quality Early Years education is a driver of 'poor outcomes' and focuses on improving provision as part of universal services. This led to investment in SureStart centres which linked up families and public services, and schools being seen as essential providers who were required to work 'more closely with parents to strengthen their understanding of how to help their child's development' (p41). It was hoped that this would develop the function of schools to become 'hubs for the community, providing access to a range of services for children, young people and families' (CWDC, 2009: 13).

The aim of the ECM legislation was to connect services from Early Years through to youth work, to ensure adequate protection for children at all stages. It would mean that no child would 'slip through the net' such as was considered had happened to Victoria Climbié. The protectionist rhetoric expressed here would have a profound

effect upon future legislation and provision for children, with services including schools and play organisations aiming to fulfil the five outcomes of ECM: be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being (DfES, 2004). The first point in the 'enjoy and achieve' outcome is about being 'ready for school': Early Years settings would need to ensure that their provision fostered this readiness. Play as a concept is not heavily drawn upon in the original documentation, apart from inclusion of play organisations in children's services and the need for safe places to play as part of safeguarding requirements.

A critical publication which influenced the daily routines of Early Years classes and training for practitioners was the *Rose Review on Early Reading* in 2006, by HMI director of inspection at Ofsted, Sir Jim Rose. This was published prior to the EYFS and identified the balance which needed to be struck between distinctive Early Years provision and the readiness of children for primary school:

> The forthcoming [EYFS] and the renewal of the Primary National Strategy framework for teaching literacy provide powerful opportunities to […] greatly reduce arbitrary boundaries between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, without compromising the hard won, distinctive merits of the areas of learning and experience in the early years (Rose, 2006: 3)

The result of the review was the introduction of synthetic phonics instruction across the primary years, which schools would be legally obliged to teach in an effort to improve reading standards: 'high quality phonic work should be taught as the prime approach in learning to decode (to read) and encode (to write/spell) print' (p70). The Rose review claimed that the previous 'searchlight' model of reading (described as being 'holistic') had not been effective and replaced this with the 'simple view of reading' which focuses on word recognition. The review does advocate multi-sensory techniques, especially to aid speaking and listening. Passing comments on the contexts in which this teaching would take place referenced evidence of children in Early Years settings developing reading awareness in a 'language-rich curriculum' which 'exploited the power of play, story, songs, rhymes and drama to familiarise children with letters, words and sounds' (p29). In terms of how role-play was valued it describes this as a 'worthwhile pre-reading activity' through which children can

become familiar with print and writing (p29). There is minor attention drawn to playful activities; they do not feature heavily in the recommended strategy.

The Department for Education and Skills proceeded to publish and implement the Letters and Sounds programme. The resource *Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics* (DfES, 2007) opens with the reiteration that although they are advocating and guiding practitioners through a formal programme:

> The aim is to embed the Phase One adult-led activities in a language-rich provision that serves the best interests of the children by fully recognising their propensity for play and its importance in their development (*ibid*: 2)

The use of the word 'propensity' here suggests that children are considered as naturally adopting play and any teacher-led strategies should not devalue children's right to play. The document makes several references to children's role-play and recognises this as an important part of a language-rich classroom. Four references are made to children writing in the role-play areas as part of independent writing habits. Similarly to within *Curriculum Guidance*, role-play appears to be seen as a means to an end where the core skill of 'literacy' is given the most emphasis. The images in the *Letters and Sounds* document do advocate an active approach with adults collaborating with children in imaginative play (Figure 2.3). The captions assume that adults *will* interact with children in the role-play area. When compared to previous documentation on the teaching of reading, the inclusion of such images and the need to mention children's propensity to play seems odd in a document which aims to give guidance on a highly teacher-led strand of the curriculum. The extent to which teacher-led provision balances with child-initiated activity in the classroom is, of course, contextually variant.

After the publication of the Rose review, and the introduction of the teaching of synthetic phonics as a legal obligation for schools in England, just as Broadhead (2006) describes, the balance between child-initiated and teacher directed activity continued to be precarious with play seeming less and less evident in the face of multiple initiatives (p196).



Figure 2.3: extract from Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics (DfES, 2007: 8, 24)

2.4 Brown leadership of Labour government

In June 2007, Tony Blair resigned and Gordon Brown took over leadership. Brown's most significant education-related act whilst in office was to raise the school-leaving age to 18. The years between Brown taking up office and the election of a new government were to see children's play heralded through both the play strategy and the Early Years Foundation Stage legislation.

In April 2008, the Department for Children, Schools and Families alongside the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published *Fair Play – a consultation on the play strategy*. The strategy outlined a commitment to spend £235 million on helping children to play, focusing on changing communities by ensuring that more outdoor spaces would be made available where children could play safely, and by 'taking action to address negative perceptions of children and young people' (DCSF, 2008: 17). The strategy certainly spearheaded a positive attitude towards play, stating that 'play should be at the heart of children's everyday life' and they believed it should become 'an integral part of our wider policies for children' (*ibid*). With only one

reference to nurseries, the statement 'Play needs greater prioritisation locally' seems to emphasise play in the home and community, rather than linking play to schools.

In September 2008, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) legislation took effect (DCSF, 2008a). This laid out the statutory framework for Early Years settings, offering a 'long-awaited and distinctive educational phase' (Rogers, 2011: 8). It replaced both the *Curriculum Guidance* document and the *Birth to Three Matters* as the mandatory framework. Its purpose was stated as aiming to fulfil the outcomes of *Every Child Matters* and setting standards of quality for all providers. The framework included the Reception classes, largely to alleviate the transition between nursery and school through a gradual move in teaching and learning from play-led to a formal approach (Faulkner & Coates, 2013: 255). The framework document outlines 13 early learning goals: 'the knowledge, skills and understanding which young children should have acquired by the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of five' (DCSF, 2008a: 11). These Learning and Development requirements stated in the legislation applied only in England, with welfare requirements applying inclusively to the rest of the UK. The play-based approach is outlined in the following extract: 'all the (six) areas must be delivered through planned, purposeful play, with a balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities' (*ibid*). This section is developed further with an extended discussion about the nature of play, in the updated 2012 EYFS document. This is considered later in the chapter.

Critics have commented upon ideological issues with how 'play' is presented in the EYFS framework and accompanying documents. If one considers play to be a freely-chosen, spontaneous activity, ambiguities seem to arise when discussing its purpose. The term 'purposeful' in relation to play, first appeared in the 1990 DES document *Starting with Quality* (the Rumbold report), which stated: 'For young children, purposeful play is an essential and rich part of the learning process' (DES, 1990: 7). As Rogers and Lapping, (2012) suggest, the use of 'purposeful' merging with 'play' situates play within a performance model that is associated with 'explicit specialisation of distinct curricular pathways' (p246). 'Play' then is evaluated not in terms of the perceived abilities of the child, but 'in relation to perceived absences in the child's practices' when defined by 'an externally regulated curriculum' (p249). Indeed, if we were to see play as an intrinsically valuable activity then we could only

define its purpose as self-fulfilling. Rogers and Lapping suggest that though the documentation makes some claims towards play being a freely-chosen activity, the 'purpose' of this activity must be in line with an imposed curriculum. This renders the way that the word 'play' is employed in the EYFS document as ambiguous, and therefore pedagogically contentious.

How does 'play' (and 'role-play') feature in the actual wording of the 13 assessment scales which capture the early learning goals? It is worth noting here that in each of the 13 categories there are 9 points, and children are expected to achieve the first 3 before moving on to the latter points: 'most children will achieve all of these three points [of each category] before they achieve any of the early learning goals' (p44). Firstly, the importance of the social aspect of play is highlighted in: 'plays alongside others' in the category 'Social development' (p44). This is the first point of this category; therefore children are expected to achieve this before moving on to later points. In the category 'Creative development', the first point requires that children 'engage in representational play'. Points 7-9 contain the phrases: 'uses imagination in art… and role-play', 'expresses and communicates ideas' using '…role-play' and 'communicates, ideas feelings and preferences through… role-play and imaginative play' (p48). Role-play is recognised as a creative activity, and as one through which children express opinions and thoughts. It follows that practitioners are encouraged to observe and record children's role-play. Practitioners are encouraged to identify representational play and *only then* the more mature form of representation in role-play. However, the word 'play' does not feature in any of the points under the categories: Communication, Language and Literacy; Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy; Knowledge and Understanding of the World, or Physical Development. This means that only 5 out of the 117 assessment points supplied to practitioners make reference to children's play. This is not to say that the remaining 112 points do not describe 'playful activity' but that the distinct lack of reference to the word 'play' itself may be signal of an avoidance of the word, despite the framework being heralded as play-based.

The *Practice Guidance for Early Years Foundation Stage* (DCSF, 2008b) was published alongside the EYFS, and though the document was non-statutory, it was recommended for use in all settings that were preparing EYFS Profiles (2008b: 5). It supports practitioners in using the early learning goals to make a summative assessment of each child's development at the end of the Foundation Stage, instructing practitioners that: 'you must undertake the EYFS Profile for all children of an appropriate age and assess them through observational assessment against the 13 scales and report 13 scores for each child' (p13). It is stated that this assessment can also be formative, as continued assessment informs practice throughout the child's time in the Foundation Stage. The document provides examples in practice to support this continuous statutory assessment (p5), setting out chronologically what to look for in children's development.



Communities

	Development matters	Look, listen and note	Effective practice	Planning and resourcing
Birth-11 months	■ Concentrate intently on faces and enjoy interaction. ■ Form attachments to special people.	■ How young babies respond to your attention. ■ The attachments babies make to special people.	■ Provide support for young babies when they are not with their key person, to give them manageable experiences with others, for example, ensure that others know a young baby's special characteristics and preferences.	■ Ask parents to share photographs of special people from home and place them where babies can see them.
8-20 months	■ Recognise special people, such as family, friends or their key person. ■ Show interest in social life around them.	■ Differences in the ways that babies respond to and communicate with adults and other children.	■ Nurture babies' sense of themselves, while also helping them to feel that they belong to the group, for example, saying "This is Max's cup and there is a cup for Earl, Frankie and Lacey too".	■ Collect and share some stories and songs that parents and babies use at home.
16-26 months	■ Are curious about people and show interest in stories about themselves and their family. ■ Enjoy stories about themselves, their families and other people. ■ Like to play alongside other children.	■ Young children's questions about differences such as skin colour, hair and friends.	■ Talk to young children about the special people in their lives. ■ Talk with young children about valuing all skin colour differences.	■ Give opportunities for talk with other children, visitors and adults.
22-36 months	■ Are interested in others and their families. ■ Have a sense of own immediate family and relations. ■ Begin to have their own friends.	■ How children play, socialise and talk about family life.	■ Encourage children to take on different roles during role-play. ■ Support children's friendships by talking to them about their characteristics, such as being kind, or fun to be with.	■ Provide a soft toy for children to take home overnight, in turn. Talk with children about what the toy has done during these excursions.

	Development matters	Look, listen and note	Effective practice	Planning and resourcing
30-50 months	■ Express feelings about a significant personal event. ■ Describe significant events for family or friends. ■ Enjoy imaginative and role-play with peers. ■ Show interest in different occupations and ways of life.	■ How children respond to a significant event, such as the birth of a baby or the death of a pet. ■ The ways children recall special events such as a wedding they have attended.	■ Introduce language that describes emotions, for example, 'sad', 'happy', 'angry' and 'lonely', in conversations when children express their feelings about special events. ■ Use group times to share events in children's lives. ■ Listen carefully and ask questions that show respect for children's individual contributions. ■ Explain the significance of special events to children. ■ Visit workplaces and invite people who work in the community to talk to children about their roles. Wherever possible encourage the challenging of stereotypes by, for example, using a male midwife or a female firefighter.	■ Plan time to listen to children wanting to talk about significant events and give them time to formulate thoughts and words to express feelings. Provide the support of adults who share languages other than English with children. ■ Provide ways of preserving memories of special events, for example, making a book, collecting photographs, tape recording, drawing and writing. ■ Invite children and families with experiences of living in other countries to bring in photographs and objects from their home cultures including those from family members living in different areas of the UK and abroad.
40-60+ months Early learning goals	■ Gain an awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others. ■ Feel a sense of belonging to own community and place. ■ **Begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people.**	■ The interest children show in stories, music and dance from a range of cultures. ■ How children talk about the practices and beliefs of their friends. ■ How children express their attitudes such as about differences in skin colours. ■ How children respond to information about people's unfamiliar lifestyles.	■ Introduce children to a range of cultures and religions, for example, tell stories, listen to music, dance and eat foods from a range of cultures. Use resources in role-play that reflect a variety of cultures, such as clothes, symbols, candles and toys.	■ Provide opportunities for children to sample food from a variety of cultures, such as a traditional Caribbean dish. ■ Provide books that show a range of languages, dress and customs. ■ Use appropriate resources at circle time to enable children to learn positive attitudes and behaviour towards people who are different to themselves.

Figure 2.4: extract from Practice Guidance document (DCSF, 2008b:89-90)

The document is comprehensive in its supply of examples for practitioners to look for, with 81 out of 116 pages devoted to these lists (see Figure 2.4). However, there is a problematic aspect of this information and the format in which it is provided: the table format suggests sequential age-related goals, whilst at the same time the

document describes the stages with 'these do not represent age-related goals' (p11). The need for a chronological arrangement of developmental goals supports the expectation that all children should reach the same end-point, specifically the state of school readiness.

In both the EYFS framework and the *Practice Guidance* document the word 'play' when referring to activities initiated by adults is accompanied by 'based': 'play-based'. Again, as Rogers and Lapping point out in their discourse analysis, this treatment of the word renders it potentially ambiguous. Semantically, 'play' - as a signifier - 'is overloaded with confused and potentially inconsistent meanings', Rogers and Lapping comment, also sometimes appearing as interchangeable with 'experiences'. They argue that this may be symptomatic of a specific rhetoric which is being avoided: the document seems to avoid an assertion of the universal benefits of play and 'requires a web of other meanings to fix the meaning of 'play' as a more controllable education activity' (p250). Indeed, it could be argued that the function of policy is to control and label human activity and a categorisation of play as both freedom and as ambiguous, (such as was asserted by early play theorists) renders it both difficult to control and to define. This leads to Rogers and Lapping's next point: there appears to be no mention of play that can be 'something potentially unbounded, excessive, and emotional' (p251).

So, whilst play is treated in a 'confused' manner its content is not problematised. There is no mention of the 'troubling excess, the sex, death and violence' in much young children's play, and the fact it can sometimes be 'brutal and unpleasant' (Sutton-Smith & Kelly-Byrne, 1984). Through essentially 'taming' the unruly aspects of play, it appears that articulations of play in policy 'sustain an illusion of coherence, order and control' (Rogers & Lapping 2012: 258). Finally, in both the framework and the guidance document the word 'spontaneous' is used to refer to children's play and often to their movements, but never to adults' involvement in play. It is not clear that there is an appreciation of adults' involvement in play which is unplanned and spontaneous, that is – improvised action. It could be considered that this is a twofold assumption about the nature of play: if adults are involved in play then it is necessarily planned, and children's play is necessarily spontaneous. This may be overlooking the planning which children do within play regarding spaces, play objects

and peer interaction (*ibid:* 250). I support Rogers and Lapping's critique of pedagogies of play as expressed in policy discourse, and argue that whilst the EYFS and accompanying guidance document proclaim a defined educative period based upon learning through play, the treatment of what play actually *is* appears far from comprehensive.

In terms of specific attention given to role-play, the *Practice Guidance* document references role-play twenty-five times, recognising it as both spontaneous and receptive to prior planning and adult interaction. This includes encouraging practitioners to 'provide for, initiate and join in imaginative play and role-play' (DCSF, 2008: 50), give 'opportunities for children to work through routines in role-play' (*ibid:* 85), encourage children to take on different roles (p89) and to recognise the enjoyment of role-play with peers (p90).

Developing verbal communication was to become a focus for practitioners with the publication of *Every Child a Talker* (2008c). The materials provided followed closely the themes set out in the EYFS and gave the chance for lead practitioners to have extra support from early language specialists. During the first year of the ECAT programme, fifty-one local authorities participated and each school was expected to monitor and evaluate the difference that ECAT was making on children's language learning (DCSF, 2008c: 4). The guidance outlines role-play as one of the activities typically taking place in an Early Years setting and how the practitioner can sensitively interact in this, for example: 'Listen to what the child says. Respond by answering his questions, or expand what he said. Avoid asking too many questions yourself' (p75). Such guidance seems very simple, but allows practitioners to navigate the line between encouraging positive communication, which values the Unique Child, and asserting their own topic on the child's chosen activity. Though the ECAT guidance is not statutory, it seems closer than other documents which I have explored here, to promoting interaction in role-play (and later 'dressing up') in a sensitive way which sees the child's own experience, rather than an adult agenda, as central.

In 2010, the DfE published a report on practitioners' experiences of EYFS, which would inform a review of the framework (Brooker *et al*, 2010). The study obtained the views of 190 practitioners across six English regions. It found that overall

practitioners felt that the framework improved the experience of both young children and their parents. It is described as a child-led and play-based framework which recognises birth to five 'as an important phase of development per se' (p2) and it was commented that the EYFS had 'contributed to the professionalism of the workforce' with practitioners generally calling for its continued use. The largest number of concerns was with the emphasis on learning and assessment, which a small number of respondents described as being 'contrary to the ethos of their work' (p2) though this was particularly the case for play-worker and childminder groups, rather than schools. The study also notes that there was concern over the 'appropriateness of the later statements and goals in the EYFSP', specifically in the language and literacy, and reasoning and numeracy sections (p3). It is noted that: 'for reception teachers, assessing children against these statements in preparation for year one is often a cause of tension and frustration' and that 'achieving continuity in the assessment of children is challenging' (p3). Some practitioners took issue with the labelling of children through the Development Matters statements in the documents and found this 'contrary to the principle of the Unique Child' under which they were working (p3).

Whilst the framework does mean that this phase was made more distinct from later phases of schooling, concerns over assessment and how assessment reflected the unique development of each child still prevailed. However, the timing of the Brooker *et al* report was unfortunate. The proceeding change of Government meant a level of 'greying out' of documents such as this one took place, a commonplace process when governmental departments are dissolved and superseded. This process did appear to take place excessively once the coalition Government came into power; schools and other providers were faced with more change. Proceeding EYFS documentation does not make direct reference back to this study.

2.5 Conservative Liberal Democrats coalition: 'effective' schooling

In May 2010, the Conservative coalition government took office. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (with its somewhat egalitarian departmental branding) was superseded by the Department for Education (Royal coat of arms

branding inclusive). Significant changes were to take place in policy wording and implementation. In terms of the language of government, focus on the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters* was replaced by 'Help children achieve more' (Puffett, 2010). This shift from more holistic terminology to that which prioritised achievement (perhaps in an academic sense, though this is not explicit) signalled a move back to a focus on raising standards. The Department for Education moved to implement a centralised system with the option for both secondary and primary schools to convert to academy status, thereby reducing the autonomy of Local Authorities and allowing academy trusts to oversee the running of schools. Concern over this bill was conspicuous, with it being branded 'undemocratic' (Wolfe in The Guardian, 6th June 2010), there having been 'no formal consultation' (Morris, 2010) and completely disempowering local communities (Bangs in the Guardian, 6th June 2010). The Government insisted that the introduction of this bill was in order to address the educational inequality which was evident in the UK; to drive up academic standards and to ensure the governance of 'failing' schools was overhauled. This inevitably had an effect on all years of schooling, particularly where forced 'academisation' was seen as a threat for schools judged to be in special measures by Ofsted. Schools were facing the pressures of performativity. The Reception year then, was the phase in which children were being prepared to face the pressure of schooling which was to come. So called 'academisation' was subsequently announced as being rolled out to all schools by 2022, legislation which was met by criticism from teaching unions, particularly in the face of teacher shortages and concerns about accountability. These plans were later withdrawn, with the choice to convert being left with schools as previously, although struggling schools would still be forced to convert.

During 2010, the Government announced a forthcoming synthetic phonics check for Year 1 children. This inevitably directly affected Early Years practice. Focus fell once again on the statutory requirement for 'all schools and Early Years settings in England [to] teach 'phonemic awareness' and 'phonic knowledge' (DfE, 2010). Where before synthetic phonetic instruction took the form of Letters and Sounds, the systematic teaching of phonics was now to be delivered through suggested programmes. 'Effectiveness' was key to this instruction and the department published 'core criteria that define the key features of an effective systematic synthetic phonics teaching

programme' (DfE, 2010: 1). Independently produced programmes and materials for schools to select for teaching, were then assessed by the Department during 2013-2014. Pressures to meet standards for Ofsted inspections and to demonstrate an adequate provision of systematic phonics instruction meant that phonics tuition with specified programmes became, for all Reception classrooms, an integral part of daily classroom life.

In 2012, the Government published changes to the EYFS. Changes were made to the areas of learning, with three areas termed as prime areas which are: 'particularly crucial for igniting children's curiosity and enthusiasm for learning' (DfE, 2012: 4), and four other specific areas - which could be argued to constitute subjects - where the three prime areas constitute effective learning qualities. These three *prime* areas, are:

> - communication and language;
>
> - physical development;
>
> - personal, social and emotional development.
>
> Providers must also support children in four *specific* areas, through which the three prime areas are strengthened and applied. The specific areas are:
>
> - literacy;
>
> - mathematics;
>
> - understanding the world;
>
> - expressive arts and design.
>
> (DfE, 2012: 4-5, original emphasis)

It is of interest here that since the publication of EYFS in 2008, 'literacy' has been separated from 'communication and language'. Here, skills of speaking and listening are made even more distinct from reading and writing. Phonic knowledge is assigned to the category of reading, and to the knowledge used when writing. Engaging in speaking activities, anticipating and responding to events is assigned to listening and attention. What could the effect of this be upon role-play in the classroom? Though

previous documentation had described role-play as being useful for the development of core skills, this document mentions role-play with the 'expressive arts and design' section, with role-play embodying 'being imaginative' later in the document. Unless role-play includes aspects of children noticeably reading and writing themselves, it may be termed as merely an expressive activity, not given the same importance as other core skills. This slight change in the ordering of terms reflects a compartmentalisation of children's learning. When compared with the EYFS 2008 documentation, the 2012 document provides a little more discussion of the importance of play, as shown below:

> 1.9 Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity. Play is essential for children's development, building their confidence as they learn to explore, to think about problems, and relate to others. Children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults. There is an ongoing judgement to be made by practitioners about the balance between activities led by children, and activities led or guided by adults. Practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interaction. As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1. (DfE, 2012: 6)

The guidance emphasises planned play here as opposed to spontaneously chosen play, and even play which is child-*initiated* can perhaps be subsequently led by an adult to move it towards the learning aims. This part of the guidance also recognises the need for practitioners to make their own 'ongoing judgement', in effect, indicating that the practitioner's judgement itself is key – they must know the child well and respond to the child. 'Emerging needs and interests' as grouped together with the topic of play reflects the ideology that it is through playful activities that children express their own needs. The closing part of this clause in the guidance implicitly suggests that as children move towards formal schooling, play habits will necessarily wane. In this case then, do the 'interests and needs' of those children also wane? Or are they simply less relevant to the agenda which emerges in Year 1? No

changes were made to this section of the EYFS framework in the 2017 update (DfE, 2017).

Overall, in this statutory framework document, 'play' (referring to children's play as a verb and noun) is mentioned 11 times, compared to the word 'assessment' which is mentioned 20 times, representing a shift in rhetoric which some practitioners and theorists deem to be objectionable and even alarming.

A new Early Years inspection framework was introduced by Ofsted in 2012, which included more focus on how teaching and learning moved children towards achieving the early learning goals, or as Ofsted phrased it: 'tougher arrangements' (Ofsted, 2014: 12). Published in 2014, the foreword of Ofsted's *Early Years Report 2012-2013*, explains their intention of 'raising the prestige and profile of the important work done by practitioners in early years' (p5). There is particular focus on children who had not yet started Reception: on nurseries and children's centres. This targeting of providers other than schools, and a tighter focus on teaching and learning suggested that schoolification was taking effect on providers not directly affiliated with schools. The importance of parental responsibilities was also emphasised, with Ofsted explaining that services were not adequately supporting parents who are ultimately responsible for the development of their children, this lack of support particularly having an impact on those from low income backgrounds. The terminology of the report is heavily centred on 'quality', 'effectiveness' and 'accountability'. This was also self-referential for Ofsted, who detailed how their inspections would be tougher and provide more insight into systematic monitoring. In terms of how the concept of play is dealt with (even the 'quality' of play – quality being a problematic term itself) - it seems almost absent from the document. In fact the only use of the word 'play' in reference to children's play is halfway through the report as a heading to a section introducing statistics:



Figure 2.5: extract from Early Years Report 2012-2013 (Ofsted, 2014: 18)

Of course, the phrase aims to relate the gravity of the lack of rising standards in Early Years provision to the effect of this upon children's futures. However, as a sector which aims to base its pedagogy on the value of play, and children's natural propensity for play, the phrase seems ill-placed, if not scathing. The image of the faceless, nameless child which accompanies this seems to decontextualize the proceeding data further: these statistics are simply about that – numbers. This perfectly reflects the argument of the 'Too Much, Too Soon' group, and those opposing the introduction of tougher assessments for children: our children are not statistics, but culturally situated, emotional, complex beings. Dealing with the complex nature of child development through an analysis of 'accountability' and 'outcomes' does not sit comfortably with the image of a child in a state of freely-chosen play.

The quality of pre-school provision was about to come under more scrutiny with a particular focus on the school readiness of children, just as the five year plan had outlined. Ofsted published *Are You Ready?* (2014a), which outlined best practice examples from providers in preparing disadvantaged children for school. The study was based on 43 case studies conducted during 2013. Ofsted note the 'gaps' and delays for many children in deprived areas citing social and emotional, physical, and communication delays (p4). The document highlights the need for partnerships with

parents to create a positive home learning environment, partnerships between institutions, and seamless sharing of assessment data. The aim was to ensure children were in line with national standards of attainment. Once more, the terminology of 'national standards' emphasised the competitive nature of British education policy and the term 'attainment' seems more suited to the analysis of later educational qualifications, rather than the developing passion for learning and discovery in children. What does seem to be an admission by Ofsted here is the claim that 'readiness' itself has no set definition: 'the precise characteristics of school readiness and the age of the child to which it applies are interpreted variously by the providers we visited. *There is no nationally agreed definition'* (p6, my emphasis). It creates the impression of a paradox, an ambiguity, when 'national standards' are being aimed for, yet the central concept of this particular report has no nationally agreed definition. Whilst they express 'no clear consensus about what constitutes being ready for school', Ofsted are able to suggest that it is contextually dependent: 'reflect[ing] the particular views and pedagogical approach of the individual settings' (p7).

What is of interest are the examples of role-play which are cited as addressing various needs. One of the key findings cites an impact on communication when staff engage in 'children's imaginative role-play scenarios' (p5). Role-play is seen as a way children can learn to think about school routine: 'there was a role-play area which was made into a school classroom with school uniforms, and staff shared books with children about going to school' (p15) allowing child-led routes into the emotional and physical embodiment of the school day. There is also mention of modelling language in the role-play area through teachers taking on characters:

> In the doctor's surgery […] teachers played and pretended to be a doctor or nurse, modelling the kinds of questions that encourage children to respond. The school videoed this role-play and put it on an interactive white board so children were continually exposed to the language […] children were able to copy, learn the vocabulary and then extend the role-play using their creativity and imagination. (p17-18)

In citing such best practice, Ofsted exemplifies this play-based interaction, setting it in balance with taught sessions: 'staff [worked] effectively through leading sessions

directly and through high-quality interactions with children during planned and child-initiated play' (p54). They also cite an example of best-practice where 'most ready' children were required to work writing the date and learning objectives in an exercise book whilst 'least ready' children were 'provided with a more child-initiated play based provision, with additional adults to communicate and interact with' which 'worked for their children' (p23). This is the opposite dynamic to the process of giving those falling behind extra structured teaching and those seeming to be ahead chances for play as a reward. But, the tone conveyed in 'put simply, it worked for their children' could suggest the author deeming this approach unusual and unlike standard policy suggestions. Some tension does remain. Although the report reiterates: 'direct teaching should not be taken to imply a certain style of teaching. It is a broad term' (p54) and 'we do not advocate any particular style or approach to teaching, nor do we suggest that direct teaching is undertaken to the exclusion of child-initiated activities' (p24), there still remains more advice on discrete adult-led teaching than child-led activity. This may be sign and symptom of the 'schoolification' of this stage. Indeed, the document states: most children begin Reception class at age four, and that for most parents and carers *this is when school life begins*' (p6-7, my emphasis).

Critics have responded with a sense of uncertainty about the term 'school readiness'. Children's rights advocate Wendy Ellyatt asserted that 'readiness' was 'a dangerous and confusing term' particularly the rhetoric that we must prepare children to learn, as, she explains: 'we are innately natural learners and are programmed to interact with our environments in ways that serve each of us as unique individuals' (Ellyatt, 2011). She critiques the universal and generalising nature of 'readiness': 'it assesses the child according to his or her lack of opportunity, judges the child on the pre-defined norms and makes little allowance for age or gender' (*ibid*). Noting the depth of this debate, Bingham and Whitebread (2012) speak of 'a widening conceptual divide' in Early Years and a lack of agreement on terminology encapsulating 'a fundamental difference in conception of the purpose of early years education' (p4). They argue that the 'earlier is better' approach in the UK is not supporting children's development to become 'emotionally well-adjusted citizens' (p5) and a 'mere

‘curriculum’’ as opposed to a pedagogy is insufficient in addressing holistic development.

Ofsted’s Early Years report in 2015 continued to explore tensions between play and teaching. In comparison to the stark references to play in their 2012-2013 report, the 2015 report placed play as a central context for children’s experience. In their discussion of the crucial nature of early education, they seem to justify and defend themselves with:

> Nor does describing this work as early education exclude play, exploration and enjoyment. On the contrary, the quality of every early years provider is judged against the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The EYFS is very clear that the way that children learn at this stage in their lives is in the context of play (Ofsted, 2015: 7)

They also note an example of practice in which play support from adults helped to ‘bridge the gap’ for disadvantaged young children:

> …in one outstanding school, all of the experiences provided for the most disadvantaged two-year-olds involved adult direction and focus. Staff constantly played alongside the children, one-to-one and in pairs, to model the self-regulatory behaviours associated with play (p21)

Though the focus of this was perhaps the adult interaction itself, it shows recognition that play which is supported by adults is beneficial – the term ‘alongside’ suggests a sense of sharing in an experience, rather than being led by either adult or child.

2.6 Conservative government: landslides and U-turns

In 2015, the coalition Government was dissolved and the Conservative party took over leadership, winning with an unexpected ‘landslide’. Governmental decisions regarding education were to cause tumult and objection from many, with several instances of ‘U-turns’ in their decision making, as I will outline. Firstly, the Early Years was to feel the grip of re-invigorated assessment policies. The Government announced that schools could opt-in to administer baseline assessments to Reception aged children, with plans for the assessments to be rolled out to all schools by September 2016. The executive summary of the DfE research report which aimed

to gather views on Reception baseline assessment states: ‘from the reception cohort in 2016 onwards, all schools that wish to demonstrate progress for accountability purposes will have to adopt an approved reception baseline scheme’ (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2015: 5). This data would be used to assess the progress children had made by the end of Key Stage 2. It seemed clear that accountability relied upon children themselves being assessed through Government approved programmes.

Reaction to the introduction of the assessments was widespread. The Institute of Education at UCL and the NUT published a report, the title of which concisely expressed the view that children were being pushed too hard: 'They are children... not robots, not machines' (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2016). A series of 'serious concerns' were put forward in the report, including doubts about the validity and accuracy of the assessments, significant effects on teachers' workload, and the discomfort felt by school leaders at the use of private providers. Further to this, from their survey and case studies, they identified that a vast majority of schools already had 'less time-consuming' and 'sufficient' assessments conducted upon entry to Reception (p23). Nevertheless, they recognised that schools would feel a pressure to opt-in as no other assessments will be recognised as demonstrating 'value added' (p7). They concluded that the baseline assessments were potentially damaging and noted that their introduction at this point embodied 'a major shift in approaches to accountability in primary education which involves the early years phase more than ever before' (*ibid*).

The Government conducted their own research to discover the responses of teachers, school leaders, and parents to the baseline assessment. They reiterated the need for ease of comparability between the assessments (as comparison was demanded by schools themselves), stating that: 'the evidence suggests that schools will want to compare their performance with other local schools and schools nationally. They are therefore concerned about consistency in the administration of the reception baseline' (NFER, 2015: 10). It might be significant to note that the study itself was carried out by CEM and NFER – the two organisations providing two of the Government approved assessment options. That this affects the validity of the study

is a dubious assertion to make, nevertheless the fact that the third provider is not mentioned in the study may lead us to question whose agenda is being prioritised. Alongside this fact, the assessment from the provider omitted from the study, Early Excellence, proved to be the overwhelmingly most popular option for schools.

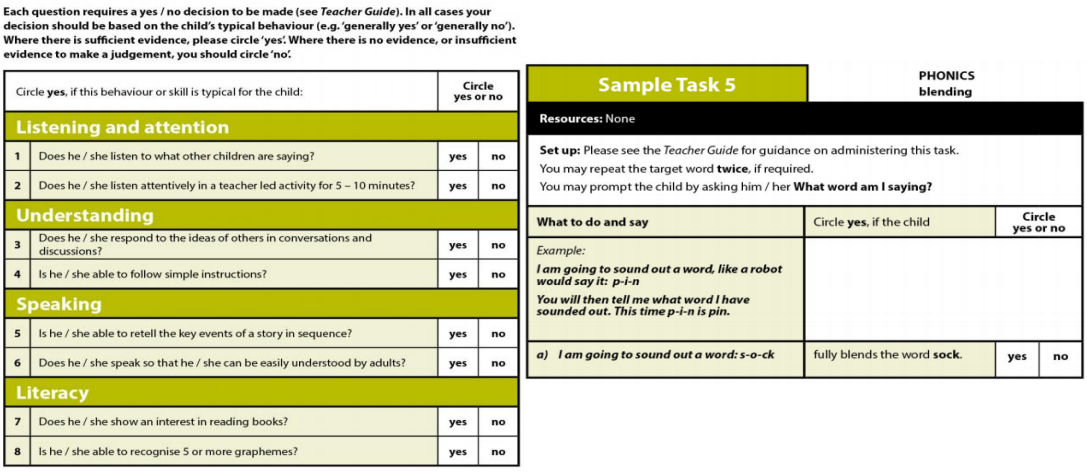
The tests were delivered in different formats and are completed by differing means, prioritising particular areas according to *what* is assessed and *when*. Both the subtle and the explicit differences in these assessments serve to represent different strands of thinking about what should be spearheaded as the most noteworthy aspects of children's experiences. I will outline the Government approved products provided by CEM, EE and NFER.

The Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) at Durham University offered a 15-20 minute computer based assessment, with the basic package covering literacy, numeracy and communication (CEM, 2016). Other aspects of the child's experience are considered as CEM explain: 'other areas are also very important for children's development, therefore BASE Progress and BASE Inspection Ready include an observation-based assessment of Personal, Social and Emotional Development' (www.cem.org). Nevertheless, the assessment of these 'important areas' incurs an extra charge for the school. CEM advise carrying out the test within the first few weeks of a child's time in Reception.

The Early Excellence (EE) baseline assessment is formed of three parts: a screening of the child's Well-Being and Involvement; an assessment of 'Characteristics of Effective Learning'; finally, an assessment of 'the Areas and Learning and Development' (Early Excellence, 2015). The second two parts of the assessment consist of 47 statements for which the practitioner answers Yes or No, according to their observations of children. This is practitioner led and does not involve pre-set tests for children. What is noteworthy here is *when* practitioners are advised to undertake the second and third parts of the assessment. It is suggested that an 'optimum point' must be found for completion, hence the need for the initial screening of Well-Being. The handbook advises: '…children are screened for their levels of Well-Being and Involvement using Leuven Scales' and it is only 'when a child begins to demonstrate consistently high levels of Well-Being and Involvement' that

they are assessed (Early Excellence, 2015: 14). In providing this initial screening, EE focus upon the child settling into a new environment and insist that an 'accurate picture' of the child is taken once their level of Well-Being is high, instead of the 'unhelpful and inaccurate' picture of the child at a very early point in the Reception year. In the guidance provided, particular reference to role-play is made in an example given for the Characteristics of Effective Learning category 'Creativity and critical thinking: Having own ideas' (2015: 8). With the focus on the naturally occurring behaviour of the observed child, this assessment format places a high value on social interaction, an area in which a computer based assessment may be lacking.

The baseline assessment devised by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) supplies tasks for the practitioner to administer with the child in a one-to-one setting. It lasts around 30 minutes (www.nfer.ac.uk). The assessment comprises three sections: maths and literacy tasks for which resources are provided; communication, language and literacy observations assessments; and an optional Foundations of Learning checklist. Examples from the assessment are shown below:



Each question requires a yes / no decision to be made (see *Teacher Guide*). In all cases your decision should be based on the child's typical behaviour (e.g. 'generally yes' or 'generally no'). Where there is sufficient evidence, please circle 'yes'. Where there is no evidence, or insufficient evidence to make a judgement, you should circle 'no'.

	Circle **yes**, if this behaviour or skill is typical for the child:	Circle yes or no	
Listening and attention			
1	Does he / she listen to what other children are saying?	yes	no
2	Does he / she listen attentively in a teacher led activity for 5 – 10 minutes?	yes	no
Understanding			
3	Does he / she respond to the ideas of others in conversations and discussions?	yes	no
4	Is he / she able to follow simple instructions?	yes	no
Speaking			
5	Is he / she able to retell the key events of a story in sequence?	yes	no
6	Does he / she speak so that he / she can be easily understood by adults?	yes	no
Literacy			
7	Does he / she show an interest in reading books?	yes	no
8	Is he / she able to recognise 5 or more graphemes?	yes	no

Sample Task 5 — **PHONICS blending**

Resources: None

Set up: Please see the *Teacher Guide* for guidance on administering this task.
You may repeat the target word **twice**, if required.
You may prompt the child by asking him / her **What word am I saying?**

What to do and say	Circle **yes**, if the child	Circle yes or no	
Example: ***I am going to sound out a word, like a robot would say it: p-i-n*** ***You will then tell me what word I have sounded out. This time p-i-n is pin.***			
a) I am going to sound out a word: s-o-ck	fully blends the word **sock**.	yes	no

Figure 2.6: sample from http://www.nfer.ac.uk/schools/baseline-assessment/

The NFER assessment relies both on the professional judgement of practitioners to make decisions about children's capabilities, and on prescribed tasks. This seems to add more weight to the literacy and numeracy aspects of the assessment and less to the personal development of the child, which is a non-compulsory add on to the assessment.

The Government published a comparative study of the assessments in March 2016. The results of the study communicate clearly that the previous plans would no longer be carried out. After undertaking quantitative and qualitative analyses of the three assessments, the conclusion of the report states: 'while there were relatively high correlations, particularly between NFER and CEM, these were not sufficient to suggest that concordance is appropriate' (Standards and Testing Agency, 2016: 20). It seems somewhat ironic that the assessment model which does not result in high correlations, was the model adopted most readily by schools. The study culminates with: 'we therefore conclude from this study that there is insufficient comparability between the 3 reception baseline assessments to enable them to be used in the accountability system concurrently' (*ibid*). It is explained that primary schools can continue using the tests, but they would not be used to measure accountability. Whether this was due to pressure from external groups is unclear, but this 'U-turn' in Governmental decision making seemed both an admission from ministers and a victory for opposing groups.

In May 2016, a number of parents of Year 2 children in England kept their children off school in protest of SATS. A petition signed by 40,000 parents was handed to the Department of Education, complaining of a culture of over-testing in primary schools which can lead to stress and anxiety in children (Coughlan, BBC News, 3rd May 2016). Complaints were also made that some test content, particularly referring to the assessment of grammar, was too abstract for young children and forced teachers to 'teach to the test' rather than develop children's propensity and desire for writing. Though these protests specifically related to children at the upper end of the primary years, a boycott at this time highlighted the growing voice of opposition from parents faced with Government policies which they saw as unfair and inappropriate. As the point at which children are made 'ready' for school, this boycott may indeed have increased the attention given to such issues in the Early Years, accentuating views that children may be starting formal schooling too early.

2.7 Schoolification?

From desirable outcomes to goals, ongoing assessment, robust moderation and calls of ‘Too Much, Too Soon’; the complex teaching and learning which takes place in the Early Years has been subject to the ‘tensions and contradictions’ (Wood & Bennett, 1999) of continually changing policy. As Reception faces what some have called ‘schoolification’, the rhetoric of ‘raising standards’ and ‘maximising achievement’ through the tools of assessments and inspections seem to have become more tenaciously engrained in Early Years classroom culture. Due to this, as Rogers and Lapping (2012) argue, play itself has become 'recontextualised' through 'discursive shifts'. These shifts can be traced back to the Rumbold report in 1990 which set 'an agenda for a more explicitly regulated and accountable educational provision for all three and four year olds' (p249) which was then followed through by Labour policies. I would argue that with such a recent focus on accountability through assessment, this trend has continued to the present day. Whilst the policies employing the rhetoric of 'raising standards' have an overarching aim of improving education for all children and in closing the gap between richer and poorer, the pressures of continual assessment for children and those that teach them is clearly damaging and essentially counter-productive.

In summary, since 1999 the Early Years sector has seen:

- a push to close the gap between the highest and lowest achieving through a focus on core skills supported by nationally implemented strategies;
- a heightened concern for the protection and care of children leading to increased collaboration between children’s services;
- a distinct curriculum for the Foundation Stage with statutory assessment requirements introduced, retaining a key focus on literacy and numeracy skills;
- a spotlight on the Reception year to produce children with a ‘readiness’ for school within the context of an increasingly monitored school culture, subject to (what may be forced) ‘academisation’ and tougher assessments.

Whilst some of the initiatives explored here acted to promote children’s play cultures

(Fair Play for example), initiatives with a focus on 'closing gaps' relied heavily on adult-directed teaching in the classroom. As I have discussed, this is a particularly problematic point for Early Years practitioners, who work with the philosophy that play is children's work. As Governments change, a continual flow of new strategies and initiatives are put in place for implementation. These initiatives play out at a micro level in classrooms (and playgrounds) where there is a struggle to fulfil the often competing desires of many people: Governmental desires to develop a world class education system, teachers' desires in their professional duties to learners, parents' desire to have happy and healthy children, and finally, the desires of children themselves who are rarely consulted in policy making, through which their everyday lives are altered beyond their control.

Chapter 3
Literature review

3.1 'Seizing bubbles'

When exploring the literature related to play there are many routes down which the reader can wander. These could be signposted by the paradigms under which they fall: positivist studies of play employing scientific methodology, and cultural studies of play which focus on the people and situations behind play. The path towards understanding this phenomenon, whether we render it to be more heavily psychological or social, is certainly strewn with diversions and epistemological obstacles. Moyles phrases her struggle perfectly when she comments that: 'grappling with the concept of play can be analogized to trying to seize bubbles, for every time there appears to be something to hold on to, its ephemeral nature disallows it being grasped!' (2005: 4). Play can be fleeting, highly personal, detached from reality, laden with imagery, linguistically rich or silent, social, or solitary; grappling with it is both pleasure and pain!

In this chapter, I have aimed to forge a path through the complex literature on this topic. I draw from a wider view of play to more targeted studies of play in school. The chapter begins by exploring definitions of play, and discussing how we can describe, contain, or quantify play. This draws on theories from biology, cultural anthropology, and history. I then explore the specific definition of the play in which I am interested: socio-dramatic play.

The second section of the chapter considers play and education, including the influence of philosophers and pedagogues who have shaped early education in Europe, from Rousseau onwards.

The third section outlines how pretend play relates to learning. This starts with a focus on the theories of Vygotsky, which act as a vein throughout the section. I explore three key areas of development and learning that are seen to be enriched by pretend play, or through which we can understand pretend play: cognitive, linguistic and social. Clearly, these are interdependent areas which cannot truly be severed,

therefore the function of separation here is merely for categorisation of the studies discussed.

The fourth section looks at the relationship between gender and play; an important standpoint in my research. After outlining overarching feminist thinking from the 1980s onwards, I move on to explore key theorists writing about early childhood and gender followed by the links made to studies of 'gendered' narratives chosen by children.

The fifth section of the literature review focuses on play in contemporary schooling. This includes discussions of tensions between pedagogy and play-based practice according to teachers and children, followed by ethnographic studies which examine children engaging in role-play. Finally, I consider resources and spaces for play. Writers who comment upon toys and popular culture are included, with the so-called 'Death of Childhood' considered, alongside voices from commentators on lack of play.

Throughout these five sections, I highlight which commentators have been influential upon my thinking in the research process and explore the particular space occupied by my study of children's play.

3.2 Definitions of play

Definitions of play provided by educational and cultural commentators, laid the foundation for my interest in the area, causing me to consider the concept of play as something which is simultaneously a biological necessity, a social tool, and a cultural practice. Play as a phenomenon was explored in-depth by biologists and philosophers who moved the discussion from the study of play in animals to play in humans. Following Darwin's foundational work on evolutionary biology, studies were made of the play of animals. Spencer (1873) had outlined a theory of play as a result of surplus energy in the young, based on a principle developed by Schiller. Subsequent to this, Groos' *The Play of Animals* (1898) and *The Play of Man* (1901), laid out a perspective of mammal play as preparation for later life.

In 1938, historian Huizinga published the seminal *Homo Ludens,* on the human play culture, in which he asserts that play is *within* culture itself. As his understanding of

play is cultural rather than biological, his approach is to explore play culture historically, not scientifically. His justification for this approach is relevant for those interested in the child immersed in play: 'this intensity of, and absorption in, play finds no explanation in biological analysis […] the *fun* of playing, resists all analysis' (Huizinga, 1938: 2). He goes further to explain that 'we play and know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational' (p4). Despite this declaration of irrationality, and difficulty of analysis, Huizinga does offer a set of characteristics by which we can define play. He states that play is voluntary and that one cannot be forced to play (p7). He labels it as: 'free, [it] is in fact freedom' (p8). Secondly, he defines play as involving stepping out of 'ordinary' or 'real' life (*ibid*). Huizinga assigns a quasi-religious profundity to this experience:

> …the consciousness of play being "only a pretend" does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture and, temporarily at least, completely abolishes that troublesome "only" feeling (p8)

This is a pertinent descriptor for role-play. Huizinga's explanation is supported by play theorists who witness the sincerity and tenacity with which children enter into character during role-play. Though the label of pretend attached to play scenarios could be seen to render it as frivolous, Huizinga reinforces the fact that is an act which displays seriousness. Thirdly, he defined play as being carried out in certain limits of time and space, with repetition and alternation, and dedicated spaces of performance (p9). It is defined as an act which creates order and has elements of tension and solution (p10) and finally, he states that it is an activity 'connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained from it' (p13). Huizinga critiques the paradigm in which play is commonly studied stating that the value of play is often threatened by positivist analyses: 'they attack play directly with the quantitative methods of experimental science without first paying attention to its profoundly aesthetic quality' (p2). This is still a pertinent view of play in an education system which values play instrumentally and perhaps fails to identify play's essential aesthetic value. Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* focuses particularly on social contests, and though, as Duncan (1988) critiques, it is largely an analysis of the 'exploits of the

powerful' – mostly upper-class males (Duncan in Henricks, 2008), it nevertheless provides valuable definitions.

Sutton-Smith similarly explores play from a cultural angle, arguing that instead of a 'universal science' having explained the play phenomenon, play itself has ambiguity at its centre. In *The Ambiguity of Play* (1997), he challenges the view that play is that which belongs to the child, and outlines several rhetorics through which we can identify play as permeating human culture and nature. In defence of masteries of play in both adulthood (specifically gambling) and childhood, Sutton-Smith aptly comments:

> given that there is nothing more characteristic of human achievement than the creation of illusory cultural and theoretical worlds, as in music, dance, literature, and science, then children's and gamblers' full participation in such play worlds can be seen not as a defect, or as compensation for inadequacy, but rather as participation in a major central preoccupation of humankind (*ibid*: 54)

The above definitions render play an inherent part of human culture. The implication of such a view is that current limitations on play for children, certainly in the West, may not only affect children's development and emotional well-being (Gray, 2011) but their basic human rights to partake in cultural experiences.

Prolific in the literature is the problem of defining play, as a set of actions/behaviours, and a cultural phenomenon. If we ask: 'what is play?' in order to define and study it, then descriptive characteristics could be assigned to it, such as the definition given by Garvey (1991), who works within a psychological paradigm. She offers a five-part 'inventory' to characterise play as: pleasurable (she relates play to the natural development of the smile), having no extrinsic goals, being spontaneous and voluntary, involving active engagement by the player and having systematic relations to what is not play (p4-5).

Defining play by the freedom it embodies and as an activity from which no material interest arises – no extrinsic goals, links both Huizinga's and Garvey's definitions to the later theory of Csikszentmihályi, who identified the psychological state of 'flow'. After studying painters who worked on paintings and who 'persisted single-mindedly, disregarding hunger, fatigue and discomfort' and yet lost interest in their completed

art work, he theorised that these individuals were experiencing a state of flow (Csikszentmihályi, 2014). That is, during intrinsically motivated activity, they showed intense concentration and a 'distortion of temporal experience' (*ibid*: 240). Describing flow as a state of mind which is reached through participating in intrinsically motivated activities, Csikszentmihályi states that 'the most typical kind of flow experience is play' (p137). Here he was referring to all manner of play activities (chess and rock climbing are commonly referred to in writings on flow), not merely the play of children. In this theory play is seen as that which 'is supposed to depend least on external incentives' (p135). In consideration of this, if a child experiencing flow in play (*ludus*) has this flow broken (*interludes*) and external incentives attached to their activity, this effectively rationalises play and changes the nature of the motivation behind it.

Mitchell (1988) discusses this effect, suggesting that as play is changed into competition 'actual play is abandoned in favour of discussion and comparison of other's performance' meaning that 'impulsiveness [and] individual creativity, are discouraged; regimentation, precise execution, and routine are demanded' (p56). Thereby, the flow state is hard to achieve and motivation is lessened. This could be seen as a simple explanation for the tension that is felt in the Early Years, where intrinsically motivated and extrinsically motivated activities merge.

Based at the US Institute for Play, psychiatrist Brown proposes that as humans we have an inherent need to play. He studies the role of play in individual's childhoods and adulthoods, and has mapped out individual's 'play histories' to ascertain the effects of play on their life courses. He views play as an essential factor in being a fulfilled human being, it being both 'preconscious and preverbal' (Brown, 2009: 15). Drawing on Huizinga's definitions, he suggests the additional properties of play are: 'inherent attraction', having 'improvisational potential' (open to serendipity) and a property of 'continuation desire' (we find ways to keep play going) (p17-18).

In considering the emotional implications of the play state, Brown's colleague, Eberle, offers a six element process of play:

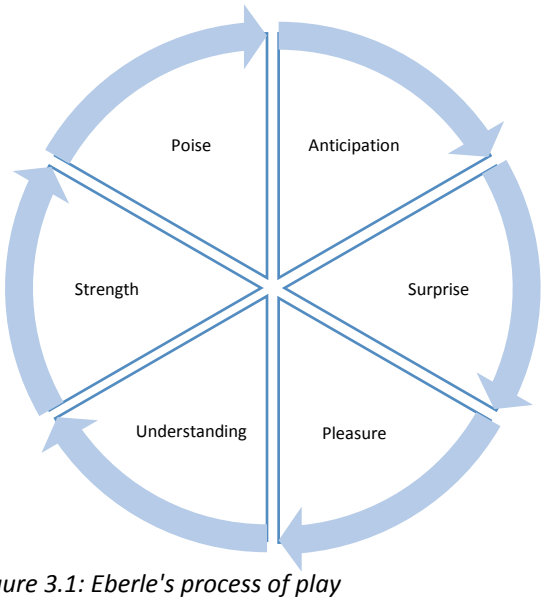


Figure 3.1: Eberle's process of play

Anticipation leads to surprise, which gives rise to pleasure. Pleasure enlarges understanding which builds strength, which in turn contributes to poise. Poise enables anticipation and the sequence continues (TEDx Talks, 2010). It is an emergent process, Eberle demonstrates, with each element held together by the pleasure of the activity. Any activity that does not include all these six elements 'does not qualify as play', he states (Eberle, 2014: 214).

Whilst Eberle's diagrams of the elements of play are effective on an abstract level in displaying psychological processes, he gives some mention to play's socio-cultural context: '… it is not possible to extract play from player's viewpoints or intentions: play cannot be pulled away from where and when and with whom it takes place' (Eberle, 2014: 230). So, whilst Eberle and Brown are working from the sphere of neuroscience, their theories about the play needed for a good life run parallel to, and support, socio-cultural theories about human play. Brown and Eberle's work highlights emerging areas of research and contributes to discussions regarding play policies. Brown's work particularly is characterised by an almost evangelical zeal for the importance of play, seemingly set against a US culture where attainment, competition, and professional competence is valued - he proposes - over concerns about mental health. One of Brown's epistemological insights about the study of play

has rung true throughout my own methodological journey - if we forget to identify the emotionality of play, it is hard to fully comprehend its meaning: ‘there is no way to really understand play without also remembering the feeling of play. If we leave the emotion of play out of the science, it’s like throwing a dinner party and serving pictures of food’ (Brown, 2009: 21).

Semiotician and anthropologist Bateson discusses the unique encounter of play in his essay *A Theory of Play and Fantasy* (1972). He applies his theoretical approach to psychotherapy, though his crossing of disciplinary boundaries has allowed his theory to have a wider impact. Through identifying the meta-communicative messages which are implicit in human interactions, Bateson reasons that the evolution of play may have been an important step in the evolution of communication; it is a means of discovering that 'signals are signals' (Bateson, 1972: 184). After observing two monkeys play fighting he realised that this phenomenon of play could only take place 'if the participating organisms were capable of some degree of meta-communication', that is, each participating monkey appeared to be aware of the other's signal which said "this is play" (p185). This led him to deduce: 'the playful nip denotes the bite, but it does not denote what would be denoted by the bite' (p186). This is to say; within play we recognise our actions as being at once serious and also *not real*; ‘the play experience is both true and not true at the same time’ (Jonson, 1999: 19). The message of ‘this is play’ then forms a ‘frame’, which 'enables the receiver to discriminate between mood-signs and those other signs which resemble them' (Bateson, 1972: 195). This concept of frame is inherently psychological, Bateson states, and one analogy for the understanding of the frame concept is that of the picture frame. 'The frame around a picture, if we consider this frame as a message intended to order or organize the perception of the viewer, says, "Attend to what is within and do not attend to what is outside" (p193). This gives some indication not only to the exclusive nature of the play state but also leads us back to Huizinga’s *seriousness* of play and the tendency of players to become absorbed in their play. The signal that ‘this is play’ allows players a notion of safety as they consider what their behaviour in the given situation should be. When this situation is one of fantasy: '[players] are usually communicating about something which does not exist’ (p188). Just as Sutton-Smith identifies play in myriad human activities,

Bateson identifies the complexity of the fantasy frame as leading to ‘a vast variety of complications and inversions in the fields of play, fantasy, and art' (p188).

Similarly to Huizinga, Bateson sees a tension which emerges in play, which both characterises it and renders it a fragile state: ‘the ritual blows of peace-making are always liable to be mistaken for the "real" blows of combat’ (p188). This, at once, provides the excitement and the threat of the fantasy and indeed, is the very characteristic which is problematic for teachers who observe children in play. The concept of the frame was later taken up by Goffman (1969, 1974) to look at face-to-face interaction and is comprehensively ‘the way in which we are able to make sense of what is happening in particular situations’ (Franks, 2015: 232).

Smilansky (1968) defined and widely adopted the term ‘socio-dramatic play’ as a specific form of symbolic play. Her studies in Israeli pre-schools identified that middle-class children engaged in more pretend play that lower class children, leading her to analyse play instruction for groups of immigrant children. She defined socio-dramatic play as follows: it involves imitative role-play, uses objects in a make believe context, lasts longer than ten minutes, is between two or more players, and centres on verbal communication. Through this play, she states, a child develops his 'physical prowess, his creative ability [and] his budding social skills' (*ibid*: 6) and this type of play is highly beneficial for success in school life as it 'stimulates emotional, social and intellectual development' (p12). It could be critiqued that Smilansky’s labelling of immigrant children as somehow disadvantaged in play may have failed to recognise cultural subtleties, and that play is a culturally situated activity. It has also been suggested that there could be misattribution of causality here and it is merely the act of spending time with an adult that positively influences the child’s successes.

To explore this further, analysis of play training was then built upon by Saltz and Johnson (1974), Rosen (1974) and later Trawick-Smith (1998). Rosen studied disadvantaged pre-school children to determine the generalisability of Smilansky’s work on other cultures. The study found that after 40 days of socio-dramatic play instruction, the sample demonstrated development in group-facilitative behaviours and role-taking skills (Rosen, 1974). Trawick-Smith developed a model to demonstrate the ‘complex chains of adult and child initiations and responses’ which

are possible in intervention. This includes consideration of meta-play and non-play behaviour, and the time, space, artefacts and peers available within play episodes. Due to these factors, Trawick-Smith claims that 'there are infinite pathways for intervention' (1998: 125). To implement such a model into teacher's practice 'flexibility is required, since evolving play situations compel drastic shifts in approach' (p127). This may be seen as a consideration of the cultural and social nuances of each play interaction, and a recognition that rather than a one-way process where the presence/actions of an adult benefit children, collaboration in socio-dramatic play is a multi-faceted and reciprocal process.

Smilansky went on to collaborate with Shefatya to define 'mature play' in which children's interaction functions at a higher level (1990). Such 'mature' players convey multiple rather than single roles, focus on the abstract rather than concrete qualities of an object and adhere to clearly defined rules, thereby developing self-regulation. This type of play usually demonstrates a larger vocabulary and may be complex in its planning – with children sustaining a theme over several days. Smilansky and Shefatya's classification may be beneficial when identifying play competencies and differences in the focus children. Smilansky's socio-dramatic play scale has since been adopted as a tool with which to evaluate the complexity of play (Umek and Musek, 2001).

3.3 Play and education

Philosophers and pedagogues have long debated the relationship between learning, play, and schooling. We can refer back here to Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education* (1763), on education in relation to the nature of man. Through tracing the development of the fictional figure of Emile, Rousseau proposes a system of education whereby man's natural goodness can be maintained even when entering a corrupt society. He established the romantic view of the child as an innocent, whose learning is largely intertwined with natural development. The nature of childhood as a definitive stage is set out in the preface of *Emile.* Rousseau says of writers: 'they are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man' (Preface). His treatise then calls for the growth of infants free from physical constraints (e.g. swaddling clothes) which deny their ability to explore the

world. The work was seminal due to its challenge of the fundamental pedagogy of his contemporaries. He attributes corruption to teachers themselves: ‘children are corrupted less by what they see than by your own teaching’ (Book II). There follows a proposition that the child can learn with independent exploration: ‘with our foolish and pedantic methods we are always preventing children from learning what they could learn much better by themselves’ (Book II). Rousseau instructs his readers and his fellow philosophers to: ‘love childhood, indulge its sports, its pleasures, its delightful instincts’ (Book II).

From this stems the concept of putting the child’s interests over adult interests, and the centrality of play as a natural and freely-chosen activity springs from Rousseau’s romantic concept of early childhood. Jenks describes this concept as that of the ‘Apollonian child’ and that this is still the predominant Western view of the child which underlies contemporary play-based pedagogies (Jenks, 1996: 73).

Froebel, who developed the concept of the kindergarten, described play as ‘the highest expression of human development in childhood’ (Froebel, 1912: 50) and 'the purest… activity of man at this stage... it holds the source of all that is good' (Froebel, 1885: 55). With the introduction of his play gifts, including the sphere, the cylinder and the cube, Froebel's pedagogy highlighted the symbolic development of the child and the link between physical interactions and higher realms of experience. His recognition of children’s individual creative needs brought learning through play to the attention of pedagogues in nineteenth century Europe.

Prior to the influential theories of Freud, Piaget, or Vygotsky, Montessori began her pedagogical practice by attempting to alleviate the immobility faced by young children due to the furniture they were required to use (Montessori, 1965). Children’s abilities to move and to interact socially were restrained, and this, alongside with Montessori’s understanding of the stages of development, led to the establishment of the Montessori pedagogy. In 1907, she established the *Casa dei Bambini* in Rome which was the precursor to her training programme implemented in schools established internationally. A key characteristic of the Montessori pedagogy is the freedom of children within the space: ‘opportunities to move freely both inside and outside the classroom guide children towards spontaneous choice,

reflecting their interest in the environment and also in social interaction' (Isaacs, 2012: 14). This freedom of choice defines the time spent by children in Montessori classrooms and whole class activities are rare, meaning that teachers must respect children's choices as those which lead their 'self-construction'. The teacher acts as director, directing children towards self-construction and allowing the needs and attitudes 'which would otherwise remain hidden or repressed', to be expressed (Montessori in Isaacs, 2012: 46).

What is the effect of this pedagogy then on the status of play in the classroom? The phrase 'makes choices' seems to take precedence over usage of the term 'play', though as one practitioner explains 'Montessori described the things that children do as *work* so that adults would stop trivializing the importance of play!' (Dyer, 2010). Indeed, within the pedagogy it seems that work and play are not contradictory concepts, but are aligned in the nature of spontaneous choice: 'we could define everything a child does naturally and spontaneously as 'play'. Equally we could describe it as 'intrinsic motivation' driven by positive emotions toward self-development with a need to experience one's own worth' (Montessori Schools Association, 2008: 17). There are parallels between the themes of the EYFS and those found in Montessori practice: an emphasis on children's decision making, experiential learning and a focus on the environment. Though, as Gueterbock (2010) acknowledges, the statutory targets of the EYFS and the related planning pose a difficulty for those in Montessori environments. The concept of children's choice not only relates to the daily activities of children, in terms of what resources they use, but also to the point at which certain areas of learning are pursued. As Isaacs describes, the materials available in classrooms 'serve as preparation for more academic learning when literacy and numeracy are introduced to those children *who express an interest in it*' and later phonics and arithmetic '*when they* express an interest' (2012: 62, 63, my own italics). In comparison to English policy, where daily synthetic phonics instruction is statutory, the Montessori approach places more emphasis on the inclinations of the child towards areas of learning.

There are debates about how far Montessori settings resource children to engage in imaginative role-play, particularly as real objects are used for practical tasks rather than the representational play objects commonly found in a role-play area. This

differs according to setting, though in documentation from the Montessori Schools Association, role-play is referred to as taking place spontaneously, according to the interests of the child, rather than being adult-led or initiated (2008: 9, 32).

Reggio Emilia is a child-centred pedagogical philosophy which has inspired practice in nurseries and Foundation units. Within the approach, which was developed in post-war Italy by Malaguzzi, children are seen as individuals who express themselves in a large variety of modes, commonly referred to as the hundred languages of children. There is 'a systematic focus on symbolic representation' (Katz in Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1993: 3) with, for example, art work by children used as resources for deepening knowledge on a topic, not just as a finished product. The learning in Reggio Emilia inspired classrooms is 'multi-modal' (*ibid*: 7), and is characterised by project work in which children are researchers or 'natural anthropologists' (p23). Katz explains that child's activities 'include direct observation, asking questions of relevant participants and experts, collecting pertinent artefacts, representing observations, ideas, memories, feelings, imaginings, and new understandings in wide variety of ways, including *through dramatic play*' (*ibid*: 20, my own italics). Dramatic play is therefore upheld as one of the hundred languages. The free-flow movement in the classroom means that children are not asked to transition between activities very frequently. This would allow more time for socio-dramatic play to develop in narrative and characterisation, perhaps allowing the flow of the play to develop. The emergent curriculum is described by Malaguzzi, who developed the approach: 'the teachers follow the children, not plans' he explains (in Edwards *et al*, 1993: 24). The teacher has an important role as attentive observer and researcher of the children's processes of expression (Rinaldi in *ibid*: 106), and 'studies the children […] intervenes at critical moments, and shares the children's heightened emotions' (*ibid*: 152). For the researcher of socio-dramatic play, this concept of sharing the children's 'heightened emotions' is apt; socio-dramatic play episodes frequently contain heightened emotion, and therefore practitioners using the Reggio Emilia approach would benefit greatly from interaction in such play.

3.4 Pretend play and learning

a. Vygotsky's influence

The theories of constructivist Vygotsky are foundational to this study. His theories are based predominantly on the argument that it is through interactions with other people that psychological functions originate in the child; knowledge appears interpersonally, with such knowledge only later becoming intrapersonal (within the child) (Taylor and Woods, 1998: 158). From a Vygotskian perspective, play is social symbolic and its function is socio-emotional. He labelled play as 'the leading source of development in the pre-school years', defining its basis 'as the imaginary, illusory realization of unrealisable desires' (Vygotsky in Bruner *et al*, 1976: 539). He saw pretend play as not simply a cognitive process, but as an affective situation in which a child practises self-control and develops abstract reasoning through repeated experiences of separating objects from referents (Lillard, Lerner & Hopkins *et al*, 2012: 8). I will outline theories from Vygotsky's major works which have had a significant effect upon theorists studying play, followed by examples where Vygotskian theory has shaped pedagogy.

In *Prehistory of Written Language and the Role of the Gesture*, Vygotsky identifies 'gestures and visual signs' which comprise pretend play, as a central component of 'the entire history of sign development' which leads finally onto the child's understanding of written language (Vygotsky, 1978: 106). He suggests that it is only through experience of symbolic gestures and then representation of symbols through drawing, that a child comes to master the skills of writing. He notes the representational actions involved in children's drawing: when a child is drawing a figure jumping, the child's hand will jump off the page and the resulting marks represent jumping. These scribbles represent gestures (p107). This is related to pretend play, in that it is an early stage of the child representing symbolically through gesture and is therefore, Vygotsky asserts, a system of "speech":

> …therefore, children's symbolic play can be understood as a very complex system of "speech" through gestures that communicate and indicate the meaning of playthings. It is only on the basis of these indicatory gestures that playthings themselves gradually acquire their meaning – just as drawing,

> while initially supported by gesture, becomes an independent sign (p108)

Instead of an appreciation of children's symbolic gestures, he asserted, children are taught to write through 'artificial training' which is 'given to them from without' (*ibid:* 105), that is, without the context of their symbolic understanding which develops through early childhood. Though this criticism of pedagogy was directed at his contemporaries in 1920-30s Russia, Vygotsky associated play experiences with the imaginative capabilities of humans in general. In *Imagination and Creativity in Childhood* (originally published in 1930), Vygotsky commences by expounding the idea that 'the everyday perspective, which draws a strict line between fantasy and reality, is incorrect' (Vygotsky, 2004: 13). Instead of these being separate, he states that imagination combines them and thus becomes 'an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific, and technical creation alike' (*ibid:* 10). After stating the importance of the imagination to all culture, Vygotsky discusses how imaginative capabilities specifically develop in children. Whilst imaginative processes create something new, he argues, they are only possible because of the individual's real world experiences. These are then shaped by the individual's desires and, in the case of children:

> A child's play is not simply a reproduction of what he has experienced, but a creative reworking of the impressions he has acquired. He combines them and uses them to construct a new reality, one that conforms to his own needs and desires (p12)

Here we might note that it is the breadth of a child's experiences which directly impacts their play. Vygotsky lays out imagination's close relationship with emotion, noting that though concepts of the imagination may not be tangible, the emotions which they prompt are truly felt: 'This means that every construct of the imagination has an effect on our feelings, and if this construct does not in itself correspond to reality, nonetheless the feelings it evokes are real feelings, feelings a person truly experiences' (p19), and, 'in addition, the actual emotional roots of the child's imagination are as strong as those of the adult' (p34). We may deem Vygotsky's words here to be justification for a continued recognition of the emotional aspects of

children's play: their play is a construction of a new reality which ignites strong emotions.

A section of Vygotsky's essay is devoted to children's theatricality. Though Vygotsky puts an emphasis on complete theatrical plays staged later in childhood (with costumes sewn, set constructed etc.), I would suggest that children's spontaneous socio-dramatic play is the underpinning of this activity. 'It is easy to understand why children find this type of creativity so compatible', he states, giving the reason that it is the closest creative activity to real life: 'drama, which is based on actions, and, furthermore, actions to be performed by the child himself, is the form of creativity that most closely, actively, and directly corresponds to actual experiences' (Vygotsky, 2004: 70). Theatrical creativity closes the imaginative curve, that is, uses elements of real life, re-imagines them and re-enacts them. In theatrical productions: 'the drive for action, for embodiment, for realization that is present in the very process of imagination here finds complete fulfilment' (*ibid*). Describing theatrical creativity as 'the complete fulfilment' of the process of the imagination, certainly justifies such activities in childhood settings. He goes on to strongly state the relationship between theatricality and play: 'Drama, more than any other form of creation, is closely and directly linked to play, which is the root of all creativity in children' (p71) and it is drama which, he asserts, allows children to portray events with one's own body, that is most 'compatible with the child's imagination' (p74). Herein lies the roots to a pedagogic approach which takes seriously the business of children's dramatic play: Vygotsky links embodied experience to children's imagination and sees the action of play as the outward sign of an inward processes. Further to this, proponents of some Early Years education policy rhetoric which focuses upon the results of play, may be challenged by Vygotsky's reminder that: 'the basic law of children's creativity is that its value lies not in its results, not in the product of creation, but in the process itself. It is not important what children create, but that they do create' (p72). The product of creative activity should not be where value lies; in Vygotsky's terms the root of this creativity is play. This ideology may diverge with policies which attribute an instrumental value to play, placing emphasis on results rather than process.

Vygotsky's further theories on play were outlined in his influential essay *Play and its Role in the Mental Development of the Child*, first published in 1933. In this, he

questions the definition of play based on pleasure, posited by Freud. Vygotsky revised this notion, stating that play is connected with pleasure but this pleasure is reached through following the line of greatest resistance that is through renunciation of impulsive action and subjection to rules. He goes on to cover three major aspects of play. Firstly, the affective aspect. He states that play is closely related to incentives to act: needs and motives of the child. 'A very young child tends to gratify his desires at once', he states, but play acts to address 'unrealizable tendencies' (Vygotsky in Bruner *et al*, 1976: 538): it is a tool of learning to delay gratification. He rejects the idea that play is merely 'symbolic action' as this would render it close to algebra and play would be judged by the same measures.

Secondly, he proposes that there is no such thing as play without rules, though the rules of imaginative play are rules of behaviour: 'the child imagines herself to be the mother and the doll a child, so she must obey the rules of maternal behaviour' (*ibid*: 541). Therefore, even though rules are covert in imaginative play (unlike the overt rules of later games and sports play) children in play do still adhere to rules. Therefore the 'freedom' of play is illusory, as the rules always remain. He states also that in games with rules, there is 'an imaginary situation in concealed form' (p543), meaning that all play has both rules and an imaginary situation. Here he extends from (and praises) the part of Piaget's theory when he defined the highest category of three levels of cognitive play in which rules emerge as taking place between the ages of 7 and 12. This emphasis on social rules could be seen as later being extended in the field of sociology by Bateson, when positing the notion of framing of behaviour in play interaction.

Thirdly, Vygotsky moves on to the cognitive aspect of play. He explains that through the process of play, the child separates the field of meaning from the visible field, using a pivotal object: 'at that critical moment when a stick – i.e., an object – becomes a pivot for severing the meaning of horse from a real horse, one of the basic psychological structures determining the child's relationship to reality is radically altered' (p546). From a developmental viewpoint this is 'a means of developing abstract thought' and is hugely significant in the development of cognition. This 'severing' of object from its initial meaning guides the child's behaviour, as action arises from this meaning. 'This is such a reversal of the child's relationship to the real,

immediate, concrete situation that it is hard to evaluate its full significance' (*ibid*), Vygotsky states. In expounding this cognitive process, he provides a crucial narrative on the profound activity of pretend play.

Fourthly, he returns to reiterate the function of delayed gratification. In play, he argues, a rule becomes an affect, that is 'play teaches [the child] to desire by relating his desires to a fictitious "I"'. It is through this process that a child relates his desires to 'the game and its rules' (p549) and thereby his action progresses so that 'a child's greatest achievements are possible in play – achievements that tomorrow will become his average level of real action and his morality' (*ibid*).

Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (1976), in which a child extends their abilities through adult guidance, also provides justification for adult interaction within children's play in order to extend their problem-solving and imaginative capabilities. Vygotsky asserted that play itself 'creates' the ZPD, and 'in play a child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behaviour; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself' (Vygotsky in Bruner *et al*, 1976: 552). The interaction which occurs in play is central to Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory; that humans develop fundamental cognition through human interaction and that the child is culturally determined.

Holzman discusses the practical utilisation of Vygotsky's concept of play in education with her performance-based methodology. She argues that Vygotsky failed to elaborate on the role of play in later life, beyond early childhood. Her methodology is largely based on Vygotsky's critique of the cognitive-emotional divide (a deeply rooted dualistic view of human development) and the premise that in Western culture, emotion is treated as 'inferior to cognition, the enemy of rationality' (Holzman, 2006: 3-4). It is this treatment of emotion which acts as the "meta-script" behind 'education's version of mainstream psychology's theory of human learning' (p60). Educational practices are based upon this learning theory, namely homogenous grouping and standardised testing. Holzman suggests the need for a reinforcement of a shared affective space in the ZPD (Goldstein in Holzman, 2006: 47). This space can be created through looking at how children learn in play, she suggests, where experience and learning are not separated but are concurrent. She

demonstrated this in application through a lab school in New York in the 1980s, which used a Vygotskian play and performance pedagogy. Here different ages were grouped together, grade levels removed, and there were increased 'opportunities for spontaneous, unsystematic and heterogeneous groupings to come together and drift apart and play without rules' (2006: 56), to give the message that inherently 'learning is social'. The improvisation used by staff and students within this learning space, she says, bridged 'education's cognitive-emotive divide with its simultaneity of action and reflection and socially produced and shared thinking and feeling' (p62).

Vygotsky's focus on social interaction as central to cultural development and to the acquisition of literacy skills influenced me to explore the nuances and potentials of adult interaction in play. A Vygotskian approach sees human interaction as incremental in shaping children's understandings of the world; my focus on the social nature of play in the classroom reflects this stance.

b. Cognitive development

My research is located firmly within the socio-cultural paradigm. Though identifying aspects of the cognitive development of the focus children is not my aim, and I do not claim to make positivist statements about the causal effects of socio-dramatic play on brain activity, it is worth briefly outlining cognitive development research. As one of the central tenets of play theories, studies from developmental psychology run parallel to socio-cultural studies of play, identifying the potential benefits of play as identified through experimental means.

In developmental studies of his own children, Piaget explores symbolic play as part of cognitive development in the 'pre-operational stage' - between 18 months and 6 years. For Piaget, pretend play aids the 'assimilation of the world to the ego' (Piaget, 1951: 145) and social play is an important process by which children 'de-centre' as they gradually become able to recognise and act upon the intentions of others. Some have criticised Piaget's theories on play proposing that he saw episodes of make-believe play as compensatory; 'necessary only until the child can engage in more adaptive problem-solving through realistic coping' (Bretherton, 1989: 395) which suggests a devaluing of its creative significance. Nevertheless, the concept of

egocentrism provides a useful means by which to consider the cognitive benefits of pretend play.

The concept of egocentrism links closely with the later developed Theory of Mind (originally defined by Premack and Woodruff, 1978) in which a child attributes emotions and intentions to others, recognising these as distinct from their own. As Lillard (1993) comments, 'children precociously manifest in pretend play certain skills that are also relevant to a theory of mind' (*ibid*: 350) and 'demonstrate understandings in pretence that are beyond those that they show in non-pretend domains' (p367). Theory of Mind may be demonstrated through more mature socio-dramatic play as, in this activity, children are 'constructing and maintaining the same fantasy framework that the other child is working in' (Dunn & Dale 1984 in Lillard, 1993). Whilst it cannot be proven that it is pretend play itself (rather than the interaction involved) which causes a child to develop a Theory of Mind (Lillard, Lerner & Hopkins et al, 2012), there are implications in identifying a link between the two for the consideration of social relationships, language development, and meta-representational skills amongst infants. Lillard suggests that in pretence, children create a 'Twin Earth' in which 'the child invents circumstances and responds to them, just as philosophers do' (Lillard, 2001: 22). This requires verbal and non-verbal communicative acts to signal to others that this world has been entered into, allowing a child to practise skills of reading intentions and social referencing (*ibid*: 23).

Similarly to Lillard, others have noted the centrality of verbal and non-verbal communicative acts used to 'enter into' play, terming these as metacommunicative acts. Whitebread and O'Sullivan (2012) studied social pretend play through a developmental psychology lens, drawing from a Vygotskian socio-constructivist perspective and emphasising the importance of metacommunication. They suggest that studies in this area have underestimated children's abilities and more developmentally appropriate methodologies are now being used to capture the significance of pretend play, where previous 'play training' remained 'largely experimental' and therefore may have been 'unclear' in its relation to everyday Early Years settings (2012: 208). Whitebread and O'Sullivan use a broad definition of social pretend play as that in which: 'children begin to communicate their transformations and collectively transform objects, people and situations in order to create non-literal

'as if' situations' (p198). Whilst avoiding attributing a causal relationship between social pretence and cognitive maturity, they explain that 'collective planning and maintenance of the 'as if' world necessitates the practice of a broader range of metacognitive and self-regulatory behaviours' (*ibid:* 201). By self-regulation, they refer to 'the control of all aspects of behaviour including social, motivational and cognitive aspects' (*ibid*) which promote intentional learning. Whitebread and O'Sullivan set out the argument that it is largely through metacommunicative strategies used in play that children develop self-regulation. Drawing on Bateson's concept of frame, they identify that in pretence, 'children are required to interpret non-literal behaviour within the frame differently to literal behaviour outside of the play frame' (p203). Young children must also use meta-communicative strategies to negotiate the play frame collaboratively with peers, with strategies potentially becoming more implicit as children become more familiar with each other, leading to greater co-regulation (p204). It is suggested, that children's metacommunication in play may 'function similarly to private speech […] it clarifies the child's own actions for themselves in addition to providing information to the play partner' (p205). Through this discussion of metacommunication, the complexities of social pretend play are exposed. Whitebread (2010) suggests that certain aspects of pedagogy may be particularly important in supporting self-regulated learning: describing 'provision of emotional warmth and security', 'supporting children's feelings of control', 'providing cognitive challenge' and 'stimulating articulation of learning' with an aim to guide children from other-regulation to self-regulation. The suggestion is made that sensitive adult mediation in pretend play can help children to master a range of metacommunicative skills (including both out-of-frame and within-frame strategies, and implicit and explicit strategies) so that play is 'nurtured without becoming adult-driven' (p209, p210). These metacommunicative skills developed by children in play are also linked to their linguistic development.

c. Linguistic and narrative development

Pellegrini and colleagues have conducted studies into the correlation between children's socio-dramatic play and their ability to generate narrative events. In a study in which the play of dyads was observed, Pellegrini comments that 'by enacting

everyday events in a fantasy context children gain practice at analysing and reconstructing the temporal and causal structure of narrative-like events' (in Galda & Pellegrini, 1985: 81). The conflicts which emerge in play situations, demand that children accommodate each other's perspectives. Pellegrini notes that players used endophora (which measures speakers' linguistic rendering of meaning) in the process of conflict resolution. Use of this strategy meant the children were communicating in an unambiguous, socio-centric manner; which is necessary for successful narrative generation. The process outlined in the study is twofold: 'the fantasy component of social-dramatic play has players executing symbolic transformations; the social component has children communicating the transformations to other players' (p92). Within the latter stage of the process, Pellegrini noted that 'highly organised play was structured with temporal and causal conjunctions' and that children were using 'future tense markers to plan or organise the enactment' (p93). Such skills are vital in generation of written narratives. Though the directionality of relations is not entirely clear here (whether such play develops narrative language or the relationship is converse), Pellegrini proposes that socio-dramatic play puts into practice the linguistic and cognitive skills needed to generate narrative events. When analysing the rounds of problems and solutions in the socio-dramatic play of 5-6 year olds, Sachs *et al* identify that children used various markers to indicate the barriers between fantasy and reality, which may contribute to narrative abilities (Sachs *et al* in Galda & Pellegrini, 1985). Garvey and Kramer (1989) went on to note the two major linguistic characteristics of social pretend play: 'playing out or "staging" a fiction (enactment) and that of "setting up," or preparing for the drama (emplotment)' (p378). They state that language used during social pretend play differs from language used in non-pretend interactions, specifically with expressions of temporality and location occurring more frequently in pretend clauses (p377). Therefore, social pretend play encourages use of a specialised form of language.

Trawick-Smith (1998) explores further the negotiation of the play frame through children's meta-play (the process of suspending role-play to step outside of the frame and communicate about the plot being enacted (p433)). He specifies three types of linguistic meta-play behaviours: initiations, responses, and constructions, which all increase with children's age. Curran (1999) proposes that there are explicit and

implicit rules which aid in the initiation and continuation of pretend play (p49) and teachers who recognise these rules can assist children in extending their pretend play sequences (p55). These studies offer useful terminology and means of systematically categorising the linguistic content of socio-dramatic play.

d. Social development

When making links between socio-dramatic play (and the root of this in symbolic pretend play) and children's social development, we must look back to the early stages of life. Psychoanalyst Winnicott understands play as originating in the space between mother and baby: the first social contact. According to Winnicott's theory, satisfaction arises from the contact between mother and baby, particularly during the bonding of breastfeeding, when there are 'parts of the body-person that belong solely neither to the mother nor to the baby' (in Schechner, 2013: 99). The breast then becomes a transitional object for the baby. This transitional status is then transferred to other parts of the mother's body then is transferred to objects such as blankets, and then to toys. Play with these toys produces a sense of comfort. This quality of play remains throughout our lives, Winnicott suggests. Therefore, the influence of play permeates, and culture finds its origin within play: 'there is a direct development from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences' (Winnicott, 1971: 69). The psychopathologist Hobson, explores how children acquire the ability to think. He theorises that cognition is interpersonally situated, placing social interaction at the centre of a child's development. He explains what is involved in this interpersonal progression: 'the processes through which thinking arises […] appear to involve cognitive/affective/motivational communicative transactions that occur *between* people' (Hobson, 2008: 394). An initial communicative transaction which is especially relevant for the development of cognition is the emergence of symbolic play:

> The first is the appearance of symbolic play as a new and exciting element in the child's repertoire of activities. The second is the growth of a new awareness of self and others. And the third is the most marvellous of all intellectual accomplishments – the emergence of language (Hobson, 2002: 76)

Hobson illustrates symbolic play with an example of his 2 year old son transforming a spoon into a car. He comments that in this pretence 'he had created an alternative reality which I would (when I caught up) enter with him' (*ibid*: 77). Hobson here speaks of a symbolic abstraction that was explicated by Vygotsky's stick which becomes a horse, though he is further emphasising the essential social nature of this interaction: that it was *through* the knowledge that his father would understand his pretence that the action was performed and made sense of. Therefore 'pretending is a mental kind of doing' and 'entails a sophisticated form of self-reflective awareness' (*ibid*).

Alongside her extensive commentary on the social value of young children's play, Broadhead developed the Social Play Continuum (2001, 2006) as 'a potential tool for observing, better understanding and more appropriately intervening in children's play in order to promote the growth towards cooperation' (Broadhead, 2001: 23). To assist in the process of observing which is so prominent within the EYFS, this categorisation tool allows practitioners to assign levels of social interaction (from Associative to Social, Highly social, and Co-operative) to children's play. Role-play is used as an example in Broadhead's publications on the tool. In the Highly social play category, reciprocal action and language can be identified as occurring more regularly. One of the socio-cultural characteristic of highly social play is: 'role-play may be evident with combined dramatic intent through sharing of ideas' (*ibid*: 29) She similarly references examples of role-play in her description of a moment of transition from social play to highly social play, suggesting the significant social benefits of role-play:

> The key moment seemed to reveal Matthew as becoming aware of how to make a dramatic response, through his use of voice as well as related actions. This use of voice and character and scenario in role-play was a new dimension as compared to the play of nursery children in the earlier study (*ibid:* 33)

The 'new dimension' suggests that the ability to make a response in the context of the drama to fellow dramatic players, is an important achievement in this child's process of becoming a sociable player. Progress, she explains, can be impeded or

enhanced by what educators know of purpose and meaning in play (Broadhead, 2006: 194).

The emotional content of socio-dramatic play is a factor that has not only been studied in the context of socio-cultural understandings of play, but also using a positivist quantitative approach. Russ developed *The Affect in Play Scale* to measure the emotion that children display during pretend play (1993, 2004). This aimed to score children on cognitive processes such as 'divergent thinking, coping ability, amount of emotion in memories, and emotional understanding' (Russ & Dillon, 2011: 332). Using this scale, Russ suggests that despite a perceived decline in the time children have for unstructured play, positive affect and the variety of affects demonstrated in play have not changed substantially. Bretherton, in an exploration of the 'astonishing' feat of make-believe play, notes the opportunities which it allows for emotional mastery. She identifies three particular aspects of symbolic functioning which the child develops: the ability to manage multiple roles, the playful transformation of reality through counterfactual thinking and the ability to play with the play frame itself (Bretherton, 1989), which all contribute to emotional mastery.

3.5 Gender and play

Key feminist theorists provide a theoretical foundation for my stance as a feminist researcher. Some theorists explored here have influenced my process of analysis and my reflexive thinking about my responses in the classroom. Their work has influenced how I frame interactions which take place (for example, taking note of how the teacher divides the class or refers to children) which then in turn affects my own choices (for example: am I encouraging girls to consider changing their characteristics whilst in role-play, but not boys?). These writers have contributed to my understanding of myself as a subjective researcher and their work flows beneath my intentions to undertake a critical analysis of socio-dramatic play.

Davies' post-structuralist work explores the view of gender as being 'created by and within individuals as they learn the discursive practices through which that social structure is created and maintained' (Davies, 1989: 12). After sharing feminist stories with pre-school children, she analysed children's play and conversation, to discover

how children internalise a male-female dualism at an early age. She found that children's discursive practices demonstrated 'category-maintenance work' around gender boundaries (*ibid*: 29) whereby they explicitly rejected behaviours which went against traditional notions of gender, thus strengthening their own gender identity. Her work is successful in noting expressions of femininity and masculinity, and recognising the dilemmas faced by educators when trying to challenge what children consider to be acceptable gender behaviour.

In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler made a significant contribution to the post-structural feminist debate, particularly her discussion of pervasive heteronormativity in traditional Western cultures. Her argument is grounded in the idea that whilst sex is a biological difference, gender is a distinct concept from sex and is not innate. Instead, gender is constituted by a set of norms which are socially constructed, by which we understand ourselves. These social constructs begin from early childhood as we are instructed in particular behaviours according to our sex. The instructions become our active understanding of our gender, are 'performed' by us and thereby norms are perpetuated. We can see this in the example of a male child being described 'as 'so like a boy' – this 'identifies a repeat performance of gender, but simultaneously reaffirms a prior truth of 'boyness' through its very citation of the norm' (Brady & Schirato, 2011: 56). She argues that a 'compulsory and naturalised heterosexuality' (Butler, 1990: 22) is at the centre of these perpetuated norms and thereby bodies are judged by standards of heterosexual desire. A seemingly favoured format in which men and women are constructed as opposite beings can indeed by seen in many narratives from Western (popular) culture, with the uniting of the male and female reinforcing their gender identity. These are examples of perpetuated narratives which Butler believes act to keep us in our traditional gendered place. She explores 'the best way to disrupt… and overcome the police function' of such practices which can lead to a damaging male/female duality (Big Think, 2011). I consider Butler's concept of gender performativity as significant and challenging in the analysis of children's socio-dramatic play, as play is a manifest performance of children's understanding of social roles, including gender roles.

Similarly writing from a post-structural feminist perspective, Blaise analyses how children 'do' gender by constructing meanings around masculinity/femininity within

heteronormative ideals. She is concerned with hegemonic masculinity and emphasised femininity in socio-dramatic play. Using case studies of Australian kindergarten children, she presents ways in which children's understanding of gender 'differences, norms, and ideals' are communicated through dialogue, social behaviours and physical presentation of the self (Blaise, 2005: 102). She calls for interventions to confront the 'powerful, influential and marginalising force' of the heterosexual matrix and suggests a need for more gender scripts for children to explore, to 'reinvent multiple ways of being girls and boys' (*ibid:* 105-6). Blaise's microethnographic analytic style influences my research with its focus on individual traits of children to demonstrate social processes.

In an ethnographic study, Thorne (1993) identifies the 'lines of division' which she argues reinforce a distinction between boys and girls in pre-schools. These lines are constructed by behaviour management practices, verbal habits of teaching staff and the ways in which groups of children are organised. She argues that gender relations are continually created and recreated 'through social interaction and collective practices' (p38). Imaginative and socio-dramatic play are examples of these collective practices; analysis of play in the context of my study may help to define what 'lines of division' are in place. Jordan (1995) studied the characters adopted in children's fantasy play to identify how divisions between femininity and masculinity are constructed. In the study, she suggests that there is a dominant definition of masculinity, the influence of which functions in early childhood: it is a position of power, strength, and physical prowess. Boys who do not conform to this dominant version of masculinity, she argues, do not wish to be seen as similar to girls and therefore adopt warrior narratives in their play to enact positions of power. This then leads on to the rejection of groups of girls and proliferates a boy/girl dualism (Jordan, 1995: 75). This ideological assertion that superhero play acts to reinforce a dualism in the classroom is valuable to consider when analysing possible gender divisions in socio-dramatic play.

Marsh's research (1999, 2000) investigates gender differences within superhero play in the Year 1 classroom which is already, she describes, 'a highly gendered world' (p219). She explores, from a feminist standpoint, how control and power dynamics are set up and negotiated through children's play. She describes superhero narratives

as ‘desirable’, and fulfilling a ‘primeval function for the human race' (p210) but as somewhat of a 'cult' which is a 'commercial lure' at the centre of a 'consumerist universe' (p210). Marsh goes on to express the 'harmful stereotypes' (p212) which superhero narratives offer to girls and the need to offer 'alternative versions of masculinity' to boys (p219) rather than those which are 'repressive' (p211). Marsh set up a ‘Bat cave’ between classrooms and equipped this with reading and writing materials and Batman-themed costumes. She then monitored, over 10 days, the number of boys and girls using the space and their chosen literacy activities. It was identified that generally boys entered the play space on a daily basis more often than girls, though by days 9 and 10 the numbers of visits made by girls had overtaken that of boys. This could be indicative of a growing confidence on the part of girls or a change in attitude amongst boys (p213). She did note that teachers often held control over who entered the cave. Marsh concluded that superhero play is ‘strongly attractive to girls’ (p209) suggesting that this is a play theme which needs more exploration in the curriculum in order to encourage girls’ participation.

Hilton’s discussion of the narratives of the toy industry provides a concise explanation of psychoanalytical theories and how these might throw light upon the construction of masculinity and femininity in the toy industry (Hilton, 1996: 37). Hilton’s discussion still bears relevance to contemporary popular media texts, within which can be identified the ‘construction and repetition of a ‘hegemonic masculinity’ and its corollary: ‘emphasized femininity’’ (*ibid*: 35), the latter of which, she describes, acts as a ‘necessary support structure’ for the former. Drawing on psycho-analytical theories, she discusses the implications of unconscious desires which are satisfied through engagement with text narratives (text in a broad sense, not merely written texts). Such popular media texts, she asserts, point towards female patterns of loss and desire and a pattern of desire to establish separate masculine identity in the male, through a fantasy of violence. She reminds the reader that these patterns are in no way reductive. So whilst children have a need to fantasize through repeated ‘powerful magical fantasies’ of ‘potent desire’ there is evidence of children using toy narratives in other ways. She refers to children engaging in dreams of other ‘adult competences’ and also being drawn to the nature of narratives which ‘work according to rules’ (p42). Knowing the rules of a narrative: the ‘tingling of unsatisfied

but expectant pleasure' of the beginning and the satiation provided by the ending, provides satisfaction and the space in between this is the 'delightful dilatory space' (p42). It is this space that children inhabit when they play with toys, Hilton asserts. But it is the *fabula* - the detail, language, setting and context of these narratives, in which children 'invest desire'. It is for educators to understand and sympathise with the pleasures of the play within this *fabula* which will in turn 'unlock' further texts. Although Hilton's commentary originally refers to written texts, she also advocates for narratives which open up 'possibilities for play', narratives which do not simply accept the 'narrow, consumerist, temporary and deadly cultural *fabula* in which many popular culture narratives are set' (p44).

3.6 Play in school

What is the part of play in the pedagogy of Early Years settings? Here I discuss some key terms in the Early Years play debate, different understandings of what defines play in the classroom, and identify aspects of the relationship between theory and practice highlighted in the literature. This is followed by reference to studies which have attempted to identify what constitutes 'effective' practice. Finally, studies are considered which have focused on role-play/socio-dramatic play in the classroom and adult interaction in child-led socio-dramatic play.

There has been long standing debate about what constitutes a play-based pedagogy. This debate often appears to be based upon semantics – what do these terms mean and how can they be identified in practice? Incorporated in this debate are several terms that refer to activities in the classroom: formal and informal, adult-initiated (or led) and child-initiated. A central part of this debate is the level to which these terms are indeed dichotomous. Policy documents have devoted large sections to providing examples of adult-initiated and child-initiated activities in the classroom to guide assessment (for example *Practice Guidance for the EYFS*, 2008b). A simplistic interpretation of these terms could be considered to be that *formal* equates with adult-initiated teaching which is the opposite to play, with play more likely to be child-initiated. A high level dichotomy such as this is too simple a distinction though, and some theorists have referred to a continuum from 'pure play' to 'non-play' into which both child-initiated activity and playful teaching can be placed. Though, as Bennett,

Wood and Rogers discovered in their research, dedication to play could amount to ‘platitudes’ which conceal a conceptual vacuum: 'practitioners have difficulty in justifying their aims, articulating their principles through practice and, in particular, defining what constitutes an appropriate pedagogy' (Bennett, Wood and Rogers, 1997: 4). Whereas Ofsted have outlined in their literature a ‘balancing act’ of teaching and play that ‘leaders did not think of teaching and play as separate endeavours. In every playful encounter we observed, adults, consciously or otherwise, were teaching’ (Ofsted, 2015a: 5). This is similar the definition given by Wood (2009), in which playful teaching and decisions on the play/learning environment are incorporated in an all-encompassing pedagogy of play (p27). From a dichotomous definition which bisects classroom practice along lines of ‘who initiates?’, to a continuum of what may be or not be play, and finally an all-encompassing approach to what playful teaching is – the terms used to define Early Years pedagogy are indeterminate, culturally subjective, and often ambiguous.

In explorations of the relationship between teachers’ theories of play and their practice, theorists note that there has been a distinct lack of clarification on the nature of teaching and learning through play, with constraints such as a low adult-child ratio, lack of space and the controlled structure of the timetable contributing to teacher’s inability to engage in play (Wood and Bennett, 1997). Socio-dramatic play specifically, is identified as a more complex form of activity, meaning teachers may be less inclined to enter into the ‘child’s world’ (*ibid*: 24, 26; Bennett *et al*, 1997: 6, 39). Bennett *et al* also suggest that teachers’ theoretical bias concerning play leans towards ‘Piagetian, constructivist perspectives, which reflect the belief that the true value of play is inherent in the activities and peer interaction, rather than in adult involvement’ (Bennett *et al*, 1997: 42). The literature highlights that whilst adults value play, this value derives largely from ideology on play and not from pedagogical evidence, and the rhetoric does not always match with the reality of practice.

Practitioners have different understandings of what defines play. These understandings are associated with variations in pedagogic interactions with children (initiations of interactions, open or closed questioning, language of control and choice) and, in turn, these understandings affect children’s own perceptions of play in their daily classroom experiences. A study by McInnes, Howard, Miles and Crowley

(2011) emphasises the effects of terminology used by teachers to refer to activities deemed to be play: such as 'learning', 'busy', 'doing'; and differences in curriculum framing between staff who never used the term ‘play’ but instead referred to play activities as ‘work’. The authors suggest that there is an unhelpful ‘bipolar construct of work and play’ and the language used here is powerful in rendering children’s activities as lacking value (*ibid:* 130-131). McInnes *et al* suggest that if children are engaged in a pedagogical approach which uses mixed framing (neither strong nor weak) and allows for co-construction of activities which offer them control, then they are likely to approach more activities in a playful manner which can improve performance and result in behaviours that facilitate learning, as well as increasing emotional well-being (Howard and McInnes, 2012).

What in practice has appeared to be a common effective pedagogical strategy in English Early Years settings then?[2] Two overlapping reports by the Institute of Education indicate the prevalence of opportunities for freely chosen play and sustained shared thinking in effective pre-school settings. These studies emphasise what pedagogical choices are made by staff in settings. They are set within the context of a 'long debate' about the extent of formal or informal provision, 'summarised by the extent to which the curriculum is 'play' based' (Sylva, 2004: 13).

The *Researching Effective Pedagogy* (*REPEY*) report noted that 'effective' practitioners, model appropriate language, 'encourage socio-dramatic play' and 'interact verbally to encourage sustained shared thinking' (Siraj-Blatchford *et al*, 2002: 13). These characteristics were seen often in the settings labelled 'excellent', where there was judged to be an almost equal balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated activities. Sustained shared thinking was deemed to arise regularly during freely chosen play activities, which are noted as being the 'best opportunit[ies] for adults to extend children's thinking'. Therefore the *REPEY* report suggests a two

[2] ‘Effective’ is a contentious term, in relation to the judgement of ‘quality’ of a setting, as the word may lead us to ask, ‘effective *for whom*?’. As Moss and Dahlberg comment ‘quality involves looking for what has been predefined, discarding what does not figure in the template' and is therefore 'inscribed with specific assumptions and values' (Moss & Dahlberg, 2008: 7, 4). It therefore asserts a notion that very particular results reflect what the normative standard is of ‘effective practice’.

pronged approach of extending both child-initiated and teacher initiated group work as vehicles for learning (*ibid*: 12).

The *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education* (Sylva *et al,* 2004), a longitudinal project from 1997-2004, investigated the effects of pre-school education on the development of children aged 3-7. It explored settings' effectiveness at promoting children's development and the impact of pre-school provision on later school life. Three thousand children from 141 settings were recruited at age 3, including a sample of children with minimal pre-school experience. The study made recommendations concerning the initiation of activities, suggesting an equal balance with adult initiated activities which promote sustained shared thinking. These activities, they state, were not observed very frequently in the case study settings (p36). Again, freely chosen play was emphasised as providing the 'best opportunities' for such interaction, with centres assessed in the study requiring a substantial portion of the day dedicated to free-play in order to score highly. In an associated paper, Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva (2004) comment that in order to achieve the time spent in free-play in the most effective settings, worksheets and 'over-directed or didactic teaching was observed as unhelpful' (p722). They comment that 'the socio-dramatic play of the 'home corner' provides a particularly useful context for such interactions' (*ibid*). Direct involvement in children's play and open questioning by practitioners is encouraged.

a. Role-play/socio-dramatic play in school

Studies by Rogers and Evans follow the re-conceptualisation of the Reception curriculum in 2000, and recognise the importance of the Reception stage as the point of school entry. Firstly, they suggest that role-play is 'sometimes overlooked' precisely because it is such a common activity in early childhood (Rogers and Evans, 2008: 2). Alongside this they explain that their research is conducted within the context of 'the increasing culture of 'performativity'' (Rogers and Evans, 2007: 155) being experienced in primary schools, with this being closely related to the significant curriculum change outlined in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (Rogers and Evans, 2006: 44). Rogers and Evans look at both sides of planned play: the teachers' provision ('the *offered* curriculum') and children's responses to that

provision ('the *received* curriculum'). They note the specific space that is of interest to them: 'a themed role-play area […] typically located in a corner of the classroom separated from other areas by a screen or furniture' (Rogers and Evans, 2006: 45). This specificity of the space, recognising the distinct physical allowances for role-play, distinguishes Rogers and Evans' studies from other studies of play which take place in the home or playground.

Employing interviews with teachers, participant and non-participant observations, and video recordings of role-play meant they were able to generate data which included conversations with children, photographs taken by children and children's drawings of role-play themes. I recognise in Rogers and Evans' research the sensitive and co-operative participation demanded, and an emergent quality as they 'develop[ed] methodologies for studying children's role-play' (2007: 156). They used a grounded approach in their analysis: they generally present a problematic context in which play takes place, and use children's conversations and play transcripts to draw out central themes. The methodological decisions made by Rogers and Evans, as well as the way they utilise and present their data, are all influential to my research process.

Rogers and Evans observed that during sessions of freely-chosen play restrictions were placed upon children by teachers who allowed four children at a time in play areas (Rogers and Evans, 2007: 157). They note that teachers and teaching assistants 'did not generally engage with children's role-play other than to monitor behaviour' (*ibid*). In their exploration of children's own opinions of role-play they note that children clearly understood the difference between real and pretend, and noted the pleasure associated with role-play. They note the relationship between play and the curriculum with children's responses to the question 'what is role-play for?': children's answers focused on learning specific topics – the meaning it took on for them was related to the curriculum. A key theme which emerged from their data was the utmost importance of friendships and children utilising role-play so they could associate with particular peers: 'children's desire to affiliate with others and maintain friendships often took precedence over the content and nature of the play' (2006: 48). Vitally, they conclude that 'in spite of recent initiatives' to promote a play-based approach, 'classroom organisation and routine often militate against children's

attempts to make choices, pursue friendships, and develop complex play narratives over extended time periods, overriding the children's voices' (2006: 53). This observation from their data draws attention to daily classroom practices. I am concerned with identifying what this classroom organisation entails in relation to play.

Rogers and Evans identify themes which I hope to explore further: firstly, popular culture which they refer to as children's shared interests. Secondly, space and time negotiations of play, which may embody power and control in the classroom. Finally, I hope to analyse the representation of stereotypical gender roles in play.

Rogers and Evans' commitment to exploring role-play from the child's point of view is a particularly important example for policy makers and teachers wanting to expand opportunities for play, as they act as advocates for children's voice. They claim that adult themes 'may dissuade children's propensity to play in new ways that transform and find new meanings' (Rogers and Evans, 2008: 37) and reiterate the pressing concern of available time for play versus academic accountability: '[play's] intrinsically motivated, spontaneous, and voluntary characteristics are hardly compatible with the demands of an educational culture that prioritises accountability, measurable results and tangible outcomes' (*ibid*: 16).

There are beliefs among some commentators that play is the freely-chosen domain of the child and that adults should not be involved. Other studies have challenged this, stating that adults can become joint players (Hakkarainen *et al*, 2013) who through intervention which is 'spontaneous, improvisational and creative' (p222) and has an 'emotional involvement of the participants' can reach a state with a 'flow of mutual experience' (p224).

If adults are to interact in classroom-based socio-dramatic play then, what might the benefits of this be? Meachem *et al* explore teacher and child language-use in shared dramatic play (2013). They identify four types of teacher play-instruction talk and note correlations between the usage of these and the accompanying child utterances and word types. It is interesting to note that it was when teachers engaged in play-embedded instructional talk that children spoke more frequently, suggesting the benefit of adults taking an active part within the frame of play, rather than from

outside the frame of play (Meachem *et al*, 2013). Kontos notes several variations of roles that adults take on during pretend play in US classrooms, identifying that intervening teachers spent relatively little time in pretend play (Kontos, 1999). Kontos audiotaped 22 teachers interacting in free-play and analysed their verbal exchanges with children. She concludes that in 47% of the free-play time, teachers adopted a stage manager role, which involved: 'helping children to get ready to play […] and physically helping children use materials' (p373). Second in frequency, teachers adopted an enhancer/playmate role, consisting of 'actually entering children's play and talking with children about their play' (*ibid*). Kontos argues that the former role does not serve to extend children's play but just to keep them involved (*ibid*). Generally, she states, the observed practitioners provided a 'less than ideal' quality of support for children's play during a time when teachers have 'maximal latitude in their involvement' (p377). This focus on verbal interaction does mean that teacher's non-verbal interaction in free-play may have been overlooked. For pre-schoolers who are developing their symbolic meaning-making, gesture and movement are important expressions of communication and therefore participating adults in play should consider this during interactions.

This 'less than ideal' support provided by teachers is also commented on by Kitson (1997) who provides suggestions for the type of 'intervention' needed, which has the potential to 'capitalise upon its great learning potential' (p33). He suggests incorporating factors which children find it difficult to introduce: problem solving opportunities and moments of tension. Using this kind of selective interaction, he says, can 'make the zone of proximal development and the corresponding learning more precise' (*ibid*: 34). Kitson advises that while, as a facilitator, practitioners may be able to stretch children's interest 'essentially the play and action must be that of the children' (*ibid*: 35), meaning that adults should avoid directing the play. This has influenced the ways in which I interact with socio-dramatic play.

The above studies have led me to consider further how I should integrate the practice of the teacher into my research. The studies give insight into which parts of daily practice and interaction can be considered theoretically challenging in the classroom, and suggest methods by which to capture and analyse interactions. Reflexive practice for the teachers is emphasised, with the use of video strongly advocated. Involving

teachers in reflection and critique of video of children's socio-dramatic play is intended to allow them to improve their own practice and consider the interests of children through a mode which presents the verbal and bodily experiences of children. The above studies have also prompted me to consider more extensively my own interactions as co-player, adult and researcher amongst groups of children. Studies which focus on the terminology that teachers use has made me increasingly aware of this in my initial ethnographic fieldnotes; I am more in tune with the language used in the classroom and wish to speculate how this might affect power relations within children's lived experience.

b. Play culture in school

Scholars of children's play are indebted to the Opies, the founders of modern playground ethnography. As folklorists, they are considered pioneers in their documentation of the rhymes, songs, jokes, and games of UK children (Bishop, 2014). Children's language use in play is preserved in *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (1959) alongside audio recordings. This work was followed by *Children's Games in the Street and Playground* (1969) which describes the results of surveys of 10,000 children, aged 6-12 in schools across England, Scotland, and Wales. The Opies identified persistent practices and regional variations in structured games over time.

During the sixties and seventies, as now, there were fears that children's play was diminishing. The Opies countered this fear with vivid findings presenting the 'spirit of street play, its zest, variety, contradictions, and disorderliness' (1969: vi). Their work advocates the child-to-child complex which they claim was largely being ignored in scholarship, and emphasised the discrete nature of children's culture: children 'are also people going about their own business within their own society' (*ibid*: v).

Though the chapter outlining pretend games in this publication is briefer than chapters concerning more physical games, pretend themes that have persisted over time are presented. The Opies express their belief in children's ability to combine and copy influences from around them: 'the young do not commonly invent, merely imitate […] juvenile performances have varied only as their surroundings have varied' (*ibid*: 330) and imply that performances subtly represent the negative characteristics

that children encounter: (in a game of mothers and fathers) 'indeed it seems traditional for the breadwinner to be self-indulgent' (p332). Themes of play are particularly interesting here, as we can note persistent patterns. For example, playing schools has 'long been ritualised' (p333). Hospital themes also persist: 'over and over again it is evident that 'Hospitals' is a comforting and even joyful game' (p334). As well as these, 'horses', war games, 'storybook', 'cops and robbers', 'fairies and witches' were also frequently occurring themes in play (in the latter of which 'the more grisly the details' – witches generally cooking and eating the captured – 'the more the girls enjoy the game' (p342)). The accompanying materials for pretend play are mentioned, and clearly promote joy: 'when children speak of dressing up, their accounts become long and detailed' (p332). These records provided by the Opies provide researchers with the context of British children's play themes over several decades.

Later Iona wrote *The People in the Playground* (1993), presenting extracts of her fieldwork diary during 1979-80. She comments on the 'ingredients' of pretend games, though also the disparaging attitude that children may have towards these in retrospect:

> Children also create pretending games, using ingredients from life, books, or television programmes, which can continue evolving over a period of weeks; these they are rather shy about since they are 'not proper games', and are 'rather silly, really' (Opie, 1993: 12)

The Opies have inspired the continuation of play documentation such as that by Roud (2010). Roud points out a methodological flaw particular to this research, which adults should consider: 'adult observers, often viewing the playground through the rose-tinted spectacles of their own childhood, tend to assume that if children are not playing precisely as they did when they were young, then nothing much can be going on' (*ibid*). The Opies' work has most recently been highlighted in the 'Childhoods and Play' projects between the University of Sheffield and the British Library which has digitised and archived their work and combines further projects which document contemporary children's play (Burn *et al,* 2009; Marsh & Bishop, 2013).

Richards continues in the vein of the Opies and has undertaken ethnographies of UK playgrounds, to analyse children's play cultures. Through vignettes of play scenarios and interviewing children, Richards explores children's social groupings in play; the specificity and relevance of spaces provided for play; understandings of play modalities; and issues surrounding reactions to and restrictions imposed upon 'rough' play. With reflections on his own childhood, he pays particularly interest to the latter: play fighting and the meanings surrounding it, including children's own assigned meanings. The terms used here carry their own subtleties which affect how such play is viewed: 'fighting' might not always be 'violent', and 'rough' play may not involve narratives of 'fighting'. Richards writes with complete awareness of the ambiguities of language.

In the chapter *Agonistic Scenarios* (2013), Richards explores two concepts arising from children's combative play: modality and emotion. The first concept arises from the issue of play being watched by others. He writes: 'most play events are not constructed *primarily* to address or to communicate with non-participants' though children at school are 'watched virtually all the time', and the relevance of modality lies in the judgements of modality made, both by participants and onlookers (2013: 171). Herein lies the difficulty of adults in the classroom judging the nature of 'agonistic' play. In terms of identifying stimulus for play, he notes that the sources of the stylisation of play fighting vary, though some persist (e.g. Star Wars) and though others may not (e.g. Westerns), 'they co-exist and elements are transposed from one to another' (2013: 174).

In a 2016 chapter, Richards identifies the reasoning with which adults curtail or prohibit children's play fighting: that such behaviour may be 'transposed to the real world in the children's own impending adolescence' (2016: 94). This future projection, therefore, has direct bearing upon adults' reactions in the present. In the case study school, he notes that 'for the Head, play fighting was associated with 'war and crime' whereas for [the playing children] play fighting was fantasy' (*ibid*). Richards seeks the children's own opinions on his videos of play: 'they seemed to conclude that none of what they had seen was problematic […] it lacked the detail of properly simulated combat and this had a low modality' (p95), and that attention given to maintenance of the game structure meant that the 'crafted pretence' did

not ‘slide’ into genuine fighting (p96). For a researcher studying play, it is vital to consider the judgements of modality made by players and audiences.

Richards comments on combative play as a shared emotionally expressive experience. He notes one of difficulties inherent in emotional expression amongst boys, describing the double bind that they face: there is an expectation for them to express power, resilience and strength as part of what he terms ‘the regime of masculinity’ upon boys even as young as 4. However, as fighting is often seen by adults as ‘provoked by and productive of negative and damaging emotions’, boy’s play in this vein is often prohibited or restricted. Though Richards does not go far to discuss the similar problematic nature of fighting play for girls, he provides a defence for combative play in general, writing evocatively of the ‘gleeful hyperbole’ of playful expression. For boys, he notes the physical value of combative play, noting its potential for intimacy: ‘boys were able to be together, to touch each other and to share in intensely exciting fantasies of power and vulnerability’ (p101). Here he links physicality closely with emotion, considering the personal experience of individual players, rather than just an over-arching discussion of what play fighting might mean pedagogically. Richards places an emphasis on the emotion inherent in play and his rich descriptions explore the deep emotion provoked and expressed in fantasy/dramatic play.

Richards focuses on the playground as a symbolic space noting that in the past it may have been deemed as merely a place for leisure and therefore not scrutinised as a setting where learning takes place. This focus is justified with the claim: ‘the space of the playground is as much a part of the school as the classroom’ (Richards, 2016: 89). The playground is subject to surveillance as much as the classroom. This forms the introduction to Richards’ explorations of how children conduct themselves through play and the effects of surveillance upon play ‘performances’ (Richards, 2012). He notes that though play is a creative pursuit, and therefore synonymous with freedom, in fact the designated spaces and times for play, render it, to some extent, an obligation. His reference to Foucault’s work is pertinent:

> Foucault’s account of ‘disciplinary mechanisms’, informed by the design of the Panopticon, a ‘laboratory of power’, with its ‘location of bodies in space’ (1979, 205), sometimes seemed

> remarkably appropriate to the interpretation of what we observed. The children's activities in playgrounds at playtimes were watched and they were made aware that they were watched […] for example, in an assembly to mark its opening, the Head reminded the children that her office overlooked the new playground… (2012*:* 374-5)

With this reference, Richards places himself in the position of a critical pedagogue, noting the requirements for docility which children are sometimes faced with, and the difficulties that children have in reconciling their play-selves, with the selves that are monitored and scrutinised. As aligned with Foucault's thinking, Richards uses vignettes of play to show how this state of *being watched* is creatively re-interpreted in children's play and contributes to children's growing ability to self-monitor their physicality in different indoor and outdoor school spaces.

He describes the controls over space as linked to control over time, specifically development that is temporally linked: behaviour regarded as inappropriate inside is more readily permitted outside, 'but its containment and its location as, precisely, 'outside' defines it as conduct from which children must move on, both daily and 'developmentally'' (2012: 375-6). Here Richards refers to the continuing relevance of commentary on nineteenth-century English schooling to contemporary schooling, relating to the regulation of children's bodies. He goes on to cite Butler's writings on matters of 'performance' and 'fabrication' of gender, saying her theoretical sketches are 'vividly evocative of the performances we have witnessed' (2012: 376). The lens of Butler's theory of gender performativity is applied to discuss the public masculinity of boys who are lone players, to the shared sociality and sense of belonging amongst a group of girls.

In a study of a London playground, Richards describes his child-as-researcher methods. He gives a hand-held camera to an 11 year old boy and asks him to record his own play. Two short inter-related videos are then analysed to draw attention to the 'dramatic staging' of the boy's play and the way the child negotiates control. He notes that, instead of the sense of continual surveillance hindering opportunities for extended pretend play, 'boys but also girls, frequently constructed pretend play scenarios in which they positioned themselves as at risk, under attack, pursued, watched and threatened' (2013a: 389). So, their status as being watched was re-

interpreted with their play to enrich the play themes and perhaps, through this re-enactment, give a sense of reassurance (2013a: 389) He notes the therapeutic nature of the play and that the 'exhilaration and excitement' of such forms of play might be comparable with the risk involved in sport (2013a: 389). What is also pertinent in his studies is reference made to Levi-Strauss' concept of bricolage, as Richards witnesses children borrowing what is to hand for use in their play (2013a: 395) with styles of play flowing 'from one form to another' (2012: 379). This concept emerged as an important aspect of my own analysis. One of the strengths of Richards' analyses in relation to my own research, is that he aims not to reduce interpretations of play to any one theoretical stance, but to 'bring a variety of perspectives' to the data. The data brings to light emerging themes and thus Richards avoids a reductive approach. He also recognises the performative quality of play, which influenced me to consider the intended audience of children's play whether that be adults, peers, or themselves.

c. Spaces for play

Roger and Evans (2008) note that since 2000 there has been a renewed drive to improve the quality of play spaces in early childhood settings, though this has focused more heavily on outdoor than indoor spaces (p102). In their observations, role-play areas in classrooms tend to be small when compared with areas for formal activities. The way that existing spaces for play are demarcated and allocated, they propose, sends a message to children about the value of the activity which takes place there (p103). In drawing conclusions around role-play space, they note the distinction in the use of space along gender lines: boys tended to control more of the space than girls, and boys' play would often exceed the boundaries of what was acceptable in the classroom. This made 'containment' of play a contentious issue for teachers in their projects. They noted that children would often move the boundaries of role-play to spaces that were deemed out of bounds, and this made salient the issue of a deficiency of space for role-play in the classroom.

The outdoors, and extended provision for children in outdoor spaces then, signals an extension of flexible areas where role-play may take place. Canning (2010, 2013) notes particularly the suitability of woodland areas as spaces where children are able

to create a world of make-believe, with flexible materials that children can use to fulfil their own play objectives. In her studies, the potentiality for den-making in such spaces allowed children and practitioners to enter into extended 'what if' thinking following the theme of bears in the wood (2010). White et al (1995) and Moore (2015) also note that outdoor provision often provides private and secluded, even secret places, which allow children to play away from adult gaze. Within studies that consider the space children have for play, we can note that how the spaces (and resources within them) are demarcated and occupied carry with them a 'disproportionate aspect of power, in terms of play expectations, learning outcomes, approaches to behaviour and rules, and can limit children in their exploration of their physical space and imaginative capacity' (Burke, 2008). Certainly, in early education settings in modern Western societies, opportunities to engage in outdoor play are hampered by a pervasiveness of 'surplus safety'. This may include a fearfulness of the risks of outside environments, suggest Wyver *et al*, meaning practitioners put 'regulation over pedagogy' in their daily practice (2010).

d. Media influences

Themes which arise often make connections between popular culture narratives, therefore it is advantageous to explore research concerning play and popular culture. Popular culture narratives are often noted as forging links between children's socio-dramatic play and their literacy practices, and the way to build stronger links between these practices is often of pedagogical importance to Early Years practitioners.

Let me first explore the problematic relationship between children's popular culture and the view of children's imaginative free-play set within the context of childhood as innocence. Here I am largely referring to childhood in the Western world; concepts of childhood from other global cultures may be affected by cultural shifts in significantly different ways – though it is not within the scope of this chapter to discuss these. With the ever changing technological landscape, we witness changes in the nature of popular literacies across a globalised world. A sense of moral panic has arisen at various points about the effect of popular culture upon children. Taken to its furthest conclusion, this view, often termed the 'Death of Childhood' thesis, considers that lines between public and private lives have become blurred and the

media is a permeating cultural and economic force which leads to the erosion of childhood innocence. In Postman's *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1994) the television is the mode of communication criticised as that which creates images which are available to everyone and which 'does not need to make distinctions between the categories "child" and "adult"' (p79). Postman's argument is based around the premise that television 'makes public what has previously been private' (p83) and thereby diminishes a sense of shame, causing an 'adultification' of children. Even the representation of children within television has altered, he notes: 'they are depicted as miniature adults' (p122) (though he does touch on this being a repeated cultural pattern as it is similar to how children were portrayed in fourteenth century paintings). He links this 'adultification' to a change in the play of children, suggesting that play has re-emerged as that which is done for external purposes such as 'renown, money, physical conditioning, upward mobility, national pride' (p131) rather than for spontaneous joy. Whilst Postman's argument that television has been a huge force for change in Western culture cannot be denied, other childhood commentators further expand this discussion with the concept of the child as cultural bricoleur and co-performer, shaping new media in creative ways.

Other commentators have expressed concern not with the mode of communication, but with the powerful companies behind productions, who create a world in which children are consumers. Giroux and Pollock (2010) draw attention to the messages of Disney's worldview (p92) which, particularly in American and British culture, penetrate into 'every aspect of social life' (p94). They suggest that many 'mainstream reviews overlook the … overt racism… [and] retrograde gender roles… which permeate the Disney films that 'captivate the imaginations of very young children' (p93, p92). Their concern about these covert messages is combined with their concern for the status held by the Disney Corporation as a monopolising 'megaconglomerate' (p208), and that what lies behind such messages is a huge economic force.

So what of the status of free-play when set alongside the concept of a powerful global media? Singer *et al* (2009) published a study which concluded that across sixteen countries 2,400 children used free-time for watching television, and there is a general decline in other free-play activities particularly outdoor play. They also noted that it

was of 'special interest' the low percentage of mothers who reported their children taking part in imaginative or pretend play. Though they consider that this type of play may take place at moments beyond parental observation, Singer *et al* suggest that there is a need to inform parents that their children 'would benefit from [engaging in] role-play and sociodramatic play narratives' (p308). In conclusion they speak of parents' worry that children are 'missing out on the joys of childhood' (p309).

However, when children do engage in role-play narratives, there are further worries about its content. The (often hyper-masculine) superhero characters that children encounter through popular culture texts are often represented through play. That superhero play has the potential to lead to aggressive behaviour is a concern for many educators and is an often problematic aspect of play. Howe's study (2006) was conducted to explore whether superhero characters influence character roles and levels of aggression in boys' play. After using both superhero and non-superhero toys with a sample of boys, Howe suggests that there is actually little valid data which links aggression to superhero play. The study did note that there was a high level of physical activity in each condition and the children took up a higher number of character roles when playing with the superhero toys, suggesting that such toys encourage a high level of active, imaginative play. Of course, the constructs within such studies can often be subjective: what one practitioner personally considers to be aggressive may differ to another practitioner from a different cultural/professional background.

Walkerdine (1999) provides a commentary on popular culture in relation to childhood gender. She describes several conceptions of childhood and how these are formed amongst the suggestible 'children of the masses' (*ibid*: 5). She outlines four of these gender specific conceptions as the: 'rational middle-class explorer, the proto-violent and addicted working class boy, the well-behaved proto-mother and the little seductress […which] are constantly created as modes of subjectivity' (p20). These modes of gender subjectivity are closely aligned with popular music and computer games which, in the 'sanitised space of childhood, [are] understood as very harmful' (p14). Though Walkerdine's use of language concerning sexuality clearly reveals a moral panic surrounding sexual identities in childhood, her rhetoric at times seems heightened (phrases such as: 'virgins that might be whores' seem to lack some

nuance of a reasoned argument). Whilst for some this language may be alienating, such rhetoric invites a questioning of contemporary views of childhood in relation to popular culture.

Kline's *Out of the Garden* scrutinises the rise of mass marketing of toys and the impact of marketing strategies on children's play. In a discussion of the implications that toy marketing has upon children's imaginative play, Kline compares contemporary childhood to the pursuits of children in the Victorian age. His thesis is that with the introduction of toy mass production in the late twentieth century, children's imaginative tendencies in play were significantly altered. With what seems to be a wistfulness for a past era, he states: '[Victorian children] did not rely upon toys as a tool for projecting the imagination or on television narratives to script their imaginary adventures. Rather, they searched out some deeper repository of cultural memory' (Kline, 1995: 144). Play traditions, he states, were transmitted socially. With the rise of mass production there came the rise of the promotional toy – largely character toys linked to on-screen universes. This meant that toys adopted a completely different symbolic inference and in turn altered the very concept of play:

> Meanwhile our conception of play has narrowed its scope: the very word 'play' now conjures first and foremost the activities that revolve around the relationship between child and toy, along with changes in the shape design and reference of toy, the child's experience of play has changed (1995: 147)

Kline approaches the 'delicate-matter' of the portrayal of imaginative activities in children's toy advertising. By firstly grounding the discussion on the basis that pretend play 'is a complex and varied mental activity' he recognises that different styles of pretend play develop and some need more support than others (p249). Such play involves 'transformations of a child's understanding, attitudes, and self-concepts' and social-dramatic play specifically is 'dependent upon [children's] understanding of the social universe they are entering (p249-250). 'Children don't need toys to imagine' Kline states (p250) due to the 'object transformative' power of pretending. Kline asserts, however, that toy commercials 'teach the child that social-dramatic play is much more exciting if you have the right toy and use in in the right

way, portraying 'object specific social fantasies in which the child must enter the field of reference of the toy' (p251). This can be seen to have significant implications for children's self-concept. Especially in use of the word 'teach' we can ascertain that both advertising and the design of the toy (such as the gender specific symbolic design of the Barbie) itself impose the style of play that children will most likely engage in.

With specific reference to Transformers and Barbie adverts, Kline makes a comparison of toy adverts in the late 1980's according to which gender they were targeting. 'Girls play, it seems, is more like a spectacle or performance than an act of imagination […] girls are rarely personally engaged in creative make-believe' (p253) whereas advertisements for action toys showed that 'identification demands a transformation in the child's whole sense of self' (*ibid*). He cites a Transformers advert in which a boy is animated to look as though he is gradually turning into a robot warrior. This was much more readily the case in adverts which showed boys' play: boys became personally engaged whereas adverts featuring girls showed play 'characterised by a ritual autoerotic stimulation' – kissing, admiring and touching (p259). Character advertising, Kline summarises, 'has the most gendered portrayal of play, promoting its own specific form of make-believe' (p253).

Kline argues that though children who are engaged in group social-dramatic play combine 'the mental activities of scripting with role enactment' that there is another element in force that he has observed. This is 'another voice' heard in the vocalisations of playing children: an announcer, or storyteller – a narrator. Kline asserts that whilst this is evidence of a new complexity which shows children as playwright and director concurrently, it also suggests a close link between pretend play and television. In this case, he argues that the child is using 'simple-minded, off-the-rack scripts' to 'serve up mediocre and shallow entertainments' (p339). But at this point it seems his ontological vehicle is slowed by an epistemological speedbump: 'it is possible that children have very elaborate internal fantasies and interior dialogues during their play; but these are not in evidence in character play or in the descriptions children give of play' (*ibid*). The complexity of pretend play comes to the fore once more: we cannot fully reveal the thought processes of that player's experience. Whilst a striving for a positivist project does bring difficulties here, Kline's

well-articulated arguments strongly support his view that sex-exclusive advertising is 'agonising' and has a profound effect on the nature of play.

Perhaps in his commentary on the power of television, Kline may be too damning of the cultural memories that exist for children of the 1980s and 1990s, suggesting that necessarily children have a somehow less valuable 'cultural memory' than children of the pre-industrial age. The concept of children as active meaning-makers seems to counter this. Particularly in more recent play studies children are often considered to be developing a 'ludic bricolage' (Willet *et al,* 2013) – an understanding and representation of media texts that is interwoven. Their knowledge of texts often acts as currency in social relationships (just as in adult relationships), and, as Rogers and Evans (2007) explore in their studies, the most readily made explicit driving motivation behind children's play choices is to develop and reinforce the peer relationships in which they are engaged.

Since the 1980s, from theorists such as Postman, Walkerdine and Kline, it seems there exists a critical attack on a contemporary culture which is characterised by a prevalence of 'screen time' and the commercial interests of corporations. What voices are there which counter this attack, with focus on children's culturally embedded play? In his discussion of children's rights in the contemporary world, Oswell (2013) aptly spearheads children's agency despite the perceived domination of corporations over the toy market:

> …despite this huge intensification and proliferation of investment, children and parents still make toys from scratch and that toys both handmade and bought are played within creative, 'local' and embedded spaces. We can easily punk up a Barbie's hair; we can turn a hairdryer into a ray gun; and we can mix teddies with Action Man in a game of intergalactic ice cream wars (p19)

By reminding us that creative potential of a toy in the hands of a child (or adult) is by no means absent simply because of how a toy may be mass-produced or advertised, Oswell is touching again on children as bricoleurs, who draw on 'whatever is to hand in order to create something new' which does 'not have a central privileged text' (Marsh, 2014: 268). Marsh has conducted extensive research on the ways in which children engage with media texts, children's online practices, and the relation of

these practices to play and literacy. In response to 'constant cries that children's play is disappearing in the new media age' (2014: 270), she explores play practices in relation to two Disney films: *Davy Crockett* (1955) and *Frozen* (2013) both of which had a huge impact on audiences, when compared to other children's films of the same period. In seeking to identify the discontinuities and continuities of such practices in response to films, she describes a 'viral playground': sites of play where 'rhymes, games, secrets and cultural knowledge are passed from child to child virally, being transformed' (Marsh, 2014: 271). This occurred in the 1950's just as it has occurred more recently, but the spread of knowledge has become quicker due to the 'fast global exchange of cultural knowledge' through internet blogs, fan fiction sites and YouTube. Similarly, material merchandise and the music related to both films formed a large part of children's media consumption. Inevitably, Marsh notes, new creative digital activities available to children allow players to engage differently with media in 2014 than in 1955 but, she argues, creativity and innovation endure. She suggests that children in the twenty-first century face a lack of opportunity to engage in role-play outdoors, a factor which could possibly contribute to an increased engagement with film characters and games online. Their play still demonstrates creativity though it has been transformed by the modes available to them. Marsh notes that the emergent techno-literacy practices of young children go largely unacknowledged, with a focus in research 'almost entirely on print literacy' (Marsh, 2004: 51). She identifies that one reason for this is a negative view amongst many educators towards the role of media in children's lives. This view may be situated in the paradigm of the child as 'passive victim' of media, rather than as active meaning-maker.

In a study of 26 families with pre-school children in a working-class English town, Marsh highlights the various emerging literacy practices through media texts, which are often overlooked (Marsh, 2004). Her findings link play closely with the texts that children are engaging with. Data suggested that children watching television did sit quietly at times, but at other times were active 'co-performers', acting out aspects of viewed programmes. Parents often took part under the child's direction. They reported feeling more comfortable taking part in popular narratives than unfamiliar narratives (*ibid*: 56-58). Marsh identifies parallels with the treatment of play relating to television/film narratives with Huizinga's classification of play as ritual: parents

provided space and material objects which allowed children to respond to narrative texts in a ritualistic manner.

Furthermore, Marsh notes that there are opportunities for play which replicate offline practices (such as fantasy play) afforded by virtual worlds used by children ages 5-11 (Marsh, 2010). This narrative related play allows children to dress imaginary personas in costumes and engage in what Marsh proposes is a form of socio-dramatic play as defined by Smilansky (1968), using adult-focused cultural scripts, though with verbal communication replaced by text-messaging (Marsh, 2010: 31). She asserts that online worlds allow children to 'construct, re-construct and perform identities and learn how to engage with others' (*ibid*: p36). Concerns raised by the commercial aspects of these online worlds should be considered and educators encouraged to enhance children's critical stances, Marsh states. But due to the popularity of online worlds, they should not simply be derided as 'potentially harmful environments' but their affordances explored and online experiences built upon (*ibid*). Indeed, socio-dramatic and fantasy play narratives may be an avenue by which educators can engage in playful discussion around such experiences.

Although the focus of my study is not specifically upon children's techno-literacy practices or online worlds, Marsh's work highlights salient points regarding children's play. Firstly, how popular narratives (such as *Frozen*) are closely linked to play practices. Secondly, how children re-imagine and interpret popular narratives as co-performers and bricoleurs. Finally, considering how techno-literacy practices are often enacted within socio-dramatic play prompts us to explore where the intersection may be between online and offline fantasy play worlds.

Chapter 4
Methodology

4.1 Conceptual framework

My assumptions about reality have a significant bearing on my chosen methodology and in turn act as justification for the methods employed (Crotty, 1998). More specifically, my ontological understanding of the nature of childhood influences my choice of methods. Central to the study is my ontological understanding of childhood as a culture in itself and not simply a period in which young people learn to become adults. That is, children's actions have a value of their own rather than purely acting as preparation for the future. Children's play, therefore, has intrinsic value as an imaginative process, through which children develop social skills and create culture. Consideration of a culture of childhood is particularly pertinent in the study of socio-dramatic play as children often enact adult characters/roles and therefore interpretations can be made that children are qualifying themselves socially and emotionally for later life. However, if this is the only interpretation applied to this type of activity, the relevance of play experiences shaping children's social world in the present, could be devalued. Play is a central part of childhood culture, the creative, social and imaginative facets of which can be overlooked if it is framed purely instrumentally.

Children cannot always be understood through labels assigned according to class, gender, race, and age, though these do all have a complex effect on what they experience in the classroom. Additionally, young children's experiences are often dictated by the influence of those more powerful than themselves: parents, teachers, politicians, policy makers and, indeed, researchers. Through my research, I aim to render children as important social actors in themselves who are seen as 'beings' themselves, rather than simply 'becomings' (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998: 207). During my analytical writing, I was aware that there was the potential to move towards a stance in which I saw play actions as signals of what children may become (for example 'Kylie treats the doll as a baby, as she sees herself as a future mother'). This would have been imposing my own conceptions of development and adulthood onto

the data. As well as this signalling a specific view of play as preparation, it also suggests that the role she was creating was purely for future benefit. To avoid drawing such conclusions, instead I have discussed propositions for how play in children's present allows them to shape, interpret and understand the social world around them. This is also to help the reader to understand participants, 'not in terms of any imperative as to what they must become, but in terms of what they are' (Oswell, 2013: 40).

Following from this view of childhood as a created culture, is the premise that childhood is unique to children. Therefore, whilst adults can interact and attempt to understand a child's experience, 'children are experts in their own lives' (Gallagher in Tisdall et al, 2009: 67). This stance places my research firmly in the philosophical interpretivist category, that is, research in which I seek to understand the world from the perspective of the participants recognising that they each 'inhabit subjective worlds of meaning through which [they] interpret the social world' (Pring, 2000: 98). In adopting this theoretical perspective, I am rejecting the view that meaning exists separately from consciousness, and accepting that meaning is made through interactions between individuals.

I use the term 'data generation' as opposed to 'collection' to reflect my epistemological stance: I consider the research process to be collaborative, and children are active agents rather than separate objects of study. Further to this, I participated in children's play, altering, and challenging the play; the very process of this means new experiences for the children were being formed during the research – I am not simply observing from without, but from within.

These ontological assumptions about childhood feed into my own epistemological position: children, have the ability and desire to express themselves creativity and imaginatively. Through observing and participating in children's imaginative expressions in play we can gain insights into their values, emotional experiences, and social lives. Expression takes place through different forms and different mediums, therefore when researching with children I made use of a variety of methods.

4.2 Theoretical analysis

Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective which analyses day-to-day, often unnoticed, actions of individuals in order to understand society itself. It can be traced to the theories of Weber, who asserted that individuals act according to their interpretation of the meaning of the world, therefore society is construed not as a separate entity, but as being constructed through human interpretation.

Analysing socio-dramatic play employing this perspective presents an insightful microcosm into children's culture. A central proponent of symbolic interactionism was Goffman, who described it as exploring 'our sense of what is going on' (Goffman, 1974: 10). He engages with the notion of the 'frame' (a term introduced by Bateson, 1978) as a means of recognising a situation's context. Goffman identifies the cues, rhythms and patterns involved in human play as an example of 'keying': how one frame is understood in terms of another (*ibid*: 45). He recognised that players use specific verbal or non-verbal cues to introduce, negotiate and terminate episodes of play.

A symbolic interactionist perspective focuses on the activities that take place between actors (Goffman, 1969). Accordingly, interaction is the basic unit of study. It is these interactions which create individuals, while collectively, social interactions produce society itself (Charon, 2004: 31). This can be seen as a pertinent theory when analysing socio-dramatic play, as the 'actors' are simultaneously shaping their imaginative worlds through social interactions, whilst reinforcing and developing their actual world of social relationships, and their understanding of technical conventions, processes undertaken in particular situations and ability to evoke conventional scripts in that situation. Children engaged in socio-dramatic play need to continually consider the contributions of fellow players, 'interpreting the other person's make-believe play correctly' (Ariel, 1992: 129), adapting their own actions accordingly and mobilising their 'empathetic ability' to bring them into the actions of others (Sandberg & Heden, 2011: 318). Such a development of empathy may also be a vital process for future social interactions as symbolic interactionism maintains that 'in interaction, human beings are continuously attending to their own actions while adopting other people's views' (Baert & da Silva, 2010: 103).

Symbolic interactionism is a form of interpretivism which aligns with my epistemology as it aims to understand, contrasted with the explanatory paradigm central to natural sciences which seeks to make causal explanations (Blaxter et al, 2001: 61).

4.3 Methodology

The ethnographic methodology accommodates the view of childhood as a distinct culture, as ethnography requires the researcher to step into a culture and observe its social practices and routines. It was deemed an appropriate methodology as the methods involved are flexible and wide-ranging, which accommodates my view that children express themselves through a variety of modes. The participant observation which is central to the ethnographic methodology, allows the researcher time for interaction in the routine of the studied community, and scope to alter methods as the research progresses. My approach followed the over-arching definition given by Hammersley and Atkinson: ethnography involves studying people's actions in everyday contexts, gathering data from a range of sources, a focus on a small case and analysis which involves verbal descriptions incorporating interpretations of meanings and functions of human actions (2007: 3). When everyday contexts are studied, meanings emerge from both the researcher and the participant's perspectives. In the case of studies using micro-ethnographic analysis, these meanings include that which arises from 'the interwovenness of language, bodily movements, artefacts, images, and technologies' (Flewitt, 2011: 296).

The approach requires the researcher to have an exploratory starting point as opposed to a hypothesis which needs testing in the field. Therefore, my theoretical approach is inductive: not only does the research direction move to incorporate issues important to the collaborating participants but the theories arise from the data. An inductive approach which is a central characteristic of ethnography, is particularly appropriate when researching with children as it 'allows the researcher to gain insight into what factors are significant to those children under study rather than assuming what we as researchers see as significant' (Greene and Hogan, 2005: 135-6). I attempted to immerse myself in the culture of the classroom, generating fieldnotes of my observations to produce an analysis of routines, friendships, use of

space and verbal interactions. Corsaro notes that taking up a child-centred approach as opposed to one which privileges the researcher, and becoming a participant, is 'necessary to gain insight into what matters most to them in their everyday interaction' (1985: 28).

In consideration of the generalisability of the study, I recognise Stake's (1995) comment that case studies are highly personal to the researcher. This means that: 'persons studied are studied in depth […] the quality and utility of the research is not based on its reproducibility but on whether or not the meanings generated, by the researcher or the reader, are valued' (Stake, 1995: 135). I aim to create 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) in which the task is 'not to generalise across cases, but to generalise within them'. As this is a case study with a small sample, I cannot make applications of conclusions to other groups of children, though I have aimed to provide insights for further research. The purpose of the research is to explore, illustrate and understand the processes and events of socio-dramatic play.

4.4 Methods

a. Participant observation and fieldnotes

Data generation took place over an 8 months period, from December 2015 to July 2016. I visited the class for 3 days a week during the first three months of fieldwork. In the latter months, and once I had ascertained the routine of the class and began to analyse the data, I visited for two days each week. Having regularly spent time in the school during the first year of the study, I was familiar with the routine of the Foundation Stage in general, and therefore the pattern of days when I visited did not have a significant effect upon the data generated with children.

The ethnographic methodology necessitates a diverse range of methods in order that the researcher can develop the story of their participants. Therefore, I used a range of methods as discussed below. Despite this declared diversity of employed methods, participant observation and the fieldnotes that this process yields are often considered central to ethnographic processes. DeWalt and DeWalt effectively summarise participant observation as: 'a way to collect data in naturalistic settings by ethnographers who observe/or take part in the common and uncommon activities

of the people being studied' (2010: 13). This is one of a number of qualitative methods by which we can come to understanding social meanings. I became a participant observer in the classroom and aimed to generate rich and detailed fieldnotes. My participation was necessarily overt rather than covert, with children, staff, and parents aware of why I was present (though as discussed later, my presence was not without its problematic aspects). My participant observation involved differing levels of participation; sometimes I would withdraw to observe children's play and other times I would be deeply involved in the unfolding narrative. I felt this was necessary to explore the role of the adult in socio-dramatic play, as prompted by one of my initial research questions.

I attempted to make fieldnotes which captured the various and complex social and learning processes of each day of observation. Fieldnotes incorporated: the basic context of observations (what was the day, time, space, children involved), loosely captured transcripts of socio-dramatic play episodes, before and after contexts of the play episodes, pragmatic notes to myself, reflexive notes about my own practice, conversations between children, teacher's comments and descriptive elements (such as the classroom setting, description of the activity a child was involved in). Memos which linked to theory and emergent themes were used. I had initially planned to keep a separate journal of reflective comments, though I found within the often constantly moving format and sporadic routine of the Reception class, maintaining a main fieldnotes book, a children's accompanying book and a reflective journal at the same time as controlling a camera and helping in the classroom was not pragmatically feasible! My conclusion after the first few days of note taking was similar to ethnographer Connolly who describes his note taking thus: 'I'd write something down, put [my notebook] away again and just walking around the playground basically sort of tracking children and following them around. I mean it was pretty hectic and chaotic' (Connolly in Walford, 2009). Typing up my hand-written fieldnotes after observation day was an important initial coding process as it allowed me to divide reflective and theoretical notes from observation notes, and to realise what changes could be made in my writing process during the next visit. This allowed me to gradually conquer the feeling that the participant observation was 'chaotic', and feel a sense of order to what I was detailing. It also allowed me to

elaborate on what Emerson *et al* refer to as 'in-process memos' – notes taken at moments when 'it is helpful to take a specific, "rich" field note and explore its theoretical implications' (Emerson *et al*, 2011: 124). This then helped me to identify a focus for writing 'more detailed and vivid descriptions' (p126).

b. Focus children

A month into fieldwork, I chose to refine my observations of socio-dramatic play and focus on seven key children, whom I could shadow over consecutive days. Though there were many categories by which I could have selected these children (age, socio-economic etc.), I selected them for the patterns and characterisations they showed in their play (though I did also focus on an equal number of girls and boys). Caden had an interest in superheroes, Ryan expressed his love of computer games through his socio-dramatic play, Kylie and Issabelle maintained a particularly close friendship which was demonstrated and displayed in their play, Emily adopted a variety of roles and was very precise in her gestural actions during play. Isaac was verbally dextrous, expressive, and maintained a close relationship with Charlie. Claire was an exuberant player who gained more confidence in her socio-dramatic play than in other group settings, particularly when enacting adult roles. Additionally, these were children who engaged often in socio-dramatic play during the first month and who had attempted to develop a friendship with me. I did not want to choose as focus children any child who appeared uncomfortable with being observed. The focus children had varied academic abilities as noted in their Baselines Assessment data. I had initially selected one further focus child, though chose not to engage in writing about this child for ethical reasons. These choices have allowed me to discuss a range of themes which emerged from the play: the development of social relationships; gender performativity; re-enactment of routine and roles of power; and how space was used in play.

This has allowed me to maintain a largely inductive approach, also permitting me to draw attention to smaller aspects of socio-dramatic play interaction. Richards gives a justification for this narrowing of focus in his ethnographies of play: 'repeated observation, sometimes focused and selective, choosing […] a particular child, can gradually reduce the sense of confused bewilderment that […] accompanies

observation' (Richards, 2011: 311). Although I believe the 'bewilderment' which he describes diminished for me during the first few months of fieldwork, I would agree that in the Reception classroom it was vital to make selective observations.

There are inevitable limitations to my participant observation. I accept that children's families and home lives are an integral part of their webs of significance (Geertz, 1973: 5) which have a direct influence upon their school life. Whilst my focus was on the space and interactions of the classroom, I did consider the family situations of the focus children when meeting their parents, attending parents' evening and in discussion with teaching staff. In a longitudinal ethnography it would be insightful to follow children into their homes to observe socio-dramatic play. This limitation is commented upon by Hammersley, noting that there has been a move 'from the older anthropological model of ethnographic fieldwork to its more recent forms, in which we study only parts of people's lives over relatively short time periods, perhaps only being in the field a few days each week' (Hammersley, 2006: 6). I do not aim to make any claims about their family life, though do offer suggestions for how this may determine some roles which they take on. I have attempted to uphold an awareness that my research is situated in a classroom space and to draw insights from spaces other than this would diminish the reliability of the research.

c. Video data

An essential method was the use of video. This was used principally to capture socio-dramatic play which I went on to analyse through microethnographic analysis. There were wide-ranging benefits to using video data, in preference to only fieldnotes, photographs or audio data. I take influence from Flewitt's writings on multi-modal research, when she comments that the camera is effective in:

> allowing the researcher literally and metaphorically to 'zoom in' on individual children's use of different communicative modes with different people, at particular activities in particular moments of time, to 'pan out' by observing the children over time and across different social settings and to explore the relations between these different perspectives (Flewitt, 2006: 30)

Firstly, the communicative modes used in socio-dramatic play are of interest to me: utterances, intonation, performative sounds, and speech patterns which combine to form children's complex verbal expression. The camera allowed me to record these and to consider how these interweave with children's physicality: facial expression, gaze, symbolic gestures, and movements. I would argue that my use of the camera allowed me to 'zoom in', as Flewitt's metaphor suggests, whilst observation fieldnotes acted as the 'panning out'. I was able to explore the relationship between children's socio-dramatic play and the routines of their school culture. In Flewitt's comment we can see how the method directly matches the ontology of socio-cultural theory: that the way individuals act is a product of the social settings they are in, the people around them and their cultural routines. Video also allowed for the details of the space to be recorded, giving the potential for a more rich 'thick' description. Video data is reflective of a recent wider interest in embodied analysis, considering spaces, aesthetics, and the interaction of bodies in social spaces (Flewitt, 2006: 30).

I was also influenced by the practice of microethnographic analysis which Garcez defines as analysis which aims at describing how interaction is socially and culturally organized in particular situational settings (2008: 257). Rooted in Bateson's context analysis, linguistic anthropology, and the symbolic interactionism theories of Goffman, this practice influenced me to consider episodes of socio-dramatic play as units of interaction which demanded detailed scrutiny. This is founded in the belief that social actors in face-to-face interaction are involved in discourse which reproduces and alters macro social structures (*ibid*: 267).

The most significant limitations to using video data is that the researcher cannot capture the whole experience, such as interactions just outside of the frame. Fieldnotes are used to accompany and give context to videos. Though in sometimes literally focusing on one child I may be imposing boundaries which are somewhat arbitrary, 'through a process of researcher interpretation that reflects particular research aims' (Flewitt, 2006: 34-35). In my sections of analysis, I have attempted to note what was beyond the frame of the video image in terms of persons present and the learning content of the day.

d. Children as researchers

Participatory methods were used to generate data. Children in the sample class were given the opportunity to make video tours of their classroom and playground to show what spaces and objects they enjoyed using during play. Similarly, they were asked to take photos of objects (and spaces) they liked to play with, which were then printed, viewed, and sorted by the children, and used to make maps of play. Clark and Moss (2001) developed participatory methods with child researchers and claim that use of photographs helps children to connect their physical experiences of their environment with map making (p28). During mapmaking, I filmed the discussions and storytelling which took place about spaces and what aspects of play were important for them. I was influenced in use of this method by Barrs (1988), whose chapter *Maps of Play* describes 5-year-old Ben's creation of fantasy maps which acted as diagrams of play, plans for games, and prompts for discussions of narratives with an adult. I aimed to create a hybrid mapmaking process, whereby the children's physical world around them intermingled with their imaginative world, thereby giving insight into relationship between these two domains. The process was both a means for children to work in a variety of modes (through photography, ordering of images, writing, drawing and speech) and a process which led to a deeper understanding of the spaces used by children (see Figure 4.1).



Figure 4.1: Isaac's map of play

For three of the children, they then took this map with them and used it over the day for navigating the classroom; it became a prop to explore the areas they had

highlighted. It was important that they had a sense of ownership and made relations between a created artefact and the spaces they experience. As Clark summarises, this visual method enabled them to 'play an active part in constructing multi-layered artefacts which provide opportunities for bringing different languages or modes together (Clark, 2011: 328).

Important in this project was the 'book like Matilda's': a notebook that looked very like my fieldnotes books, but was solely for the children's use. This had a pragmatic use: children wanted to write where I was writing and the book meant they could write concurrently with me. Secondly this was used for scribing stories. I informed children that I could write stories in this book which they dictated to me. I was inspired by Gussin Paley's Storytelling and Storyacting curriculum (Paley, 1990), in which she scribes stories verbatim as told by young children and then encourages Author's Theatre – acting out of the stories as directed by the story's writer. When evaluating Gussin Paley's technique as facilitated by a theatre organisation working in primary schools, Cremin et al (2013) concluded that it encourages active participation in stories, a focus on spoken language, 'contributed to a developing sense of agency through respect for children's voices' and fosters an awareness of written language (p7-8). Though I did not go on to engage the children in Author's Theatre, this was one part of my presence in the classroom which benefitted the participating children. The book was used as a prop in socio-dramatic play and as a means of the children being part of my research in a physical manner. Two girls in the class often asked to write in the book and sat next to me as I wrote, watching, and mimicking my continuous writing. This was an appropriation of an adult task, and essentially an act of pretend play: observing and mimicking my literacy practice. In this sense, it became an act of interpretive reproduction of the adult world (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008).



Figure 4.2: writing in the 'Book like Matilda's'

4.5 Ethical concerns

Working with young children presents the researcher with significant ethical challenges, in terms of access, the nature of consent and, in the later stages, representation of participants. I will now address these varied challenges and the steps which were taken to approach them. From the outset of the research, ethical guidelines provided by BERA (2011) were adhered to; ensuring high ethical research standards.

Maintaining a relationship with the school was an important foundation for the ethical standards of the study. One of the two Reception classes in the school was my focus during my Masters research project, allowing me to become a familiar face in the school, known amongst both children and staff. Though there was the need to guard against over-familiarity where there was the potential to be 'blinded to the strangeness' of the social context I was studying, I felt such a period of familiarisation was essential (Barley and Bath, 2013). Firstly, it allowed me to become familiar with the routine of the school day, and to gain insight into the relationship between members of staff and, most importantly, between children. Secondly, as Barley and Bath explain, young children often need a period of observation of an adult to become comfortable enough to interact with them and include them in their play. This is especially the case in a culture where children are taught about 'stranger-

danger' and an adult entering a space without a period of familiarity may provoke feelings of uncertainty or discomfort (*ibid*).

I did face a challenge at the start of the fieldwork which confirmed to me Hammersley's assertion that 'being an ethnographer today is neither an unproblematic nor a very comfortable role' (2006). Having worked alongside a Reception teacher with a class, I had planned to follow a group of children from the Foundation Stage into Year 1 to note the changes, both explicit and subtle, between their play experiences in each stage. In discussion with the class teacher for the Year 1 group, she explained that gaining consent from parents would be difficult to do. Further to this, and probably more significantly, she explained that the children had very little 'choosing time' – the time during which socio-dramatic play may take place, and therefore, she felt I would not find what I was 'looking for'. The term 'play' within this class seemed to have less significance, with 'doing skills' becoming the focus for activities offered to children. Alongside this, the teacher had several children in the class whose behaviour had to be closely managed, which was obviously causing stress amongst staff. Seeking a collaborative environment and feeling that my presence would have been considered a hindrance rather than a benefit to the community of this specific classroom, I reconsidered my focus and moved back to the Reception class, the teacher of which I had worked with previously. This made me come to realise in practice, what Mills and Morton (2013) describe as the importance of developing an 'ethnographic empathy'; the need to empathise as far as is possible, with the social, personal, and professional situation of all the participants in my research.

Parents were provided with a letter explaining the aims, methods, and proposed timings of the study as well as how and where data would be used. A consent form explained that parents had the right to withdraw their child from the research at any point and provided contact details for all key persons involved. I had failed to consider the low literacy levels of some parents, so face-to-face conversations at the start and end of the school day were essential for gaining consent. To reinforce the child-centred nature of my research, I aimed to gain informed consent from participating children. I did this by presenting the participating class with my equipment – in a 'show and tell' format which was familiar to them - allowing them

to interact with it and to ask questions concerning my work (see Figure 4.3). I ensured that the language used to present my research intentions addressed children in a way that they could relate to and I placed an emphasis on doing the research together so 'we' can discover and learn collaboratively (Harcourt & Conroy, 2011). I also ensured them that their ideas were important to me. Consent from the children, then, was gained not through written form but through general class agreement, though I questioned whether this was borne out of an autonomous decision to participate or instead due to the 'compulsion' that is the starting point of much of their formal schooling participation (David *et al*, 2001: 351). To try to tackle this possibility, I attempted to always work on the basis on ongoing consent. Throughout previous fieldwork it was important to gain ongoing consent from children: asking to participate in play or to watch them during play in order not to assume that 'initial consent has been intended as a permanent proclamation' (*ibid*: 47). I explained that though I would be watching, writing about, and participating in their play, the children did not have to join in and could ask me to stop writing notes at any point. I found this to be a valuable means of respecting the preferences of participants. My equipment was always available for them to use, and the 'book like Matilda's' was a central aspect of this.

When using the camera to record play episodes, I turned it on in full view of the children and placed it where they could see and access it, to avoid any sense that I was a covert researcher. The camera was always turned off immediately upon a child's request. I hoped the power to affect my actions attributed status to children in the research process and was a means by which to 'treat their consent as a process rather than a single event' (*ibid*). Video data was securely stored in a protected drive and was viewed only by myself and at times, small sections by my supervisors. All names of places and people have been changed to ensure anonymity.



Figure 4.3: slides from consent presentation

4.6 Reflexivity

DeWalt and DeWalt describe participant observation as being an 'oxymoron in action': participating implies a personal, emotional attachment yet observation implies detachment from the subject being observed (2011: 33). In consideration of this I attempted to be aware of my emotional attachment and my positioning within the data, within the classroom and the community in general. This begins with understanding my own role, as well as how others understood or may have perceived me.

Being brought up in a neighbourhood in the locality of the school, I was already aware of the socio-economic status of the area. This familiarity had advantages, particularly when conversing with parents: I knew some of the families from the local community and after talking with parents I became aware that I had inadvertently used a local East Midlands accent in conversation. I hoped that this had aided me in becoming a recognised member of this small community. Of course, there are disadvantages of being 'too close' to the data – was I unable to step away from idea that the children might be like myself and become somewhat blind to their individual differences? My reflexive notes display that at times I purposefully reminded myself to step away from such familiarity and tried to see routines and processes from an outsider's perspective.

No matter in what context I participated in play or other routines, I always held a position of power when in the classroom, due to my age and adult status. Therefore, it was important to consider that children may often have responded to me as a symbol of authority and as a figure to whom they might have had to give 'correct' answers. It was useful to consider that responses may already have been governed by the requirements of children in school, that is, they may be 'created by the experiences of being educated within particular pedagogic, curriculum and assessment regimes' (Arnot and Reay in Thomson, 2008). In such regimes, I may have a very different function to that of my intended function of researcher. Although Arnot and Reay's suggestion relates to the extent to which we see young people's voices as 'authentic' I believe it equally applies to young children at an early stage of schooling, and how they may negotiate relating to an adult in a classroom setting. However, I would reflect that engaging in and observing socio-dramatic play amongst children brings a unique advantage to a researcher: the act of pretending something is or isn't taking place is a comfortable and natural part of a child's routine. A small section of fieldnotes highlights this point:

> *In the home corner, I ask Issabelle and Olivia to pretend I am not there, just to carry on playing. Chloe enters*.
> Chloe: I see you!
> Issabelle: Just pretend Matilda's not here.
> *They continue to play, without engaging me*
> (from fieldnotes)

Arguably, as well as a seeming proficiency in pretence, the children in the class had been observed by adults as part of their Baseline Assessment, therefore it was likely a relatively normal situation.

My participation in classroom life also meant I had a somewhat ambiguous status at times. I found it a continued struggle to find the balance between being an authoritative figure (as I was often asked to be by staff members) and a detached observer of play. Who I had to be 'ally' to would often shift. At times, I would support adult initiated activity, or pragmatic tasks in the daily routine, rendering me a helper. When making notes after events such as helping with literacy tasks, I would consider whether I had 'slipped' into a teacher mode in which I was considering the attainment and progress of a child's academic work and re-consider my own role,

even how I spoke to children. I have tried to use this reflexive awareness to, in turn, guide my understanding of the participants as individuals, as well myself. By this I mean that not only was I 'playing with' different identities in sometimes situations which brought discomfort, but also the children were 'playing with' identities as learners, as school children, as friends and as members of families in their play. In theory, this also helped me to recall that identity is not a fixed notion. It is shifting and being continually played through and played with. Taking on multiple roles at once, negotiating a classroom-assistant role with participant observation whilst supporting staff members ideologically and pragmatically reinforced to me the idea that: 'researchers can feel almost schizophrenic about who they are, and feel like very different people depending on whether they are at work or engaged in study' (Thomson & Hall in Thomson, 2008: 149).

A self-consciousness about my research is present not just in the roles that I take on in the classroom but in the way that I write. As Pillow (2010) points out, certain aspects of the researcher's identity are not likely to change during research: 'entrenched, hegemonic social categories, such as gender and race, may remain untransformed by reflexivity' (p279). However, the 'researcher's role and job continues to be to represent' (*ibid*). Thus, whilst writing I have continuously considered such questions: How am I representing this child? Would another researcher see the data in this light? These have not always been simple questions to answer and to convey in writing, though they have ensured that my analyses are not representations which claim ultimate truth, but are pictures of children which prompt interest and discussion of salient issues in contemporary classrooms.

4.7 The roots of the ethnographic method

The ethnographic method has its roots in the social anthropology movement. This can be traced back to anthropologists such as Malinowski, whose studies of societies which were described as 'primitive' and 'savage', though ethically crude by today's standards, were innovative during the 1920s. This was largely since they offered the first 'account of the new anthropologist as a participant observer - squatting beside the camp fire looking, listening, and questioning in the indigenous language […] recording and translating Trobriand life' (Goin, 1997: 67). Whilst stranded in Papua

New Guinea after the First World War, Malinowski attempted to integrate himself in the local's way of life, the struggles of which he details in his diaries. In the same decade, Mead, the 'grande dame of American cultural anthropology' (Mills & Morton, 2013: 26) began using participant observation to study childhood, adolescence, and sexuality amongst groups in the pacific islands. Ethnographic studies around this period had a focus on adult practices of child-rearing, rather than children's culture itself. James argues that this then paved the way for a 'new paradigm for childhood studies' which offered a 'serious challenge to universalistic accounts of childhood' (James in Atkinson et al, 2001: 248). From developmental psychology stemmed traditional views of childhood as a period in which the child is incomplete and 'in the process of movement from immaturity to adult competence' (Corsaro & Molinari, 2008: 240). Though the 'new paradigm' which James suggests meant that more emphasis was put upon childhood itself, not simply as a preparatory stage. Indeed, adult cultures have a formative effect on children as well other influences around them. Corsaro and Molinari describe the process that children go through: 'the whole-time children are developing individually, the collective processes that they are part of are also changing. These processes are collectively produced by children and adults in the many interwoven local cultures making up children's lives' (*ibid*). Thus, there is an 'inextricable connection between theory and method in ethnographic research (p241): ethnographic studies recognise the child as a social being in a series of interweaving networks.

More attention began to be placed upon young children's peer culture, seen for example in the works of Corsaro, who produced microethnographic analyses of nursery school peer cultures. In Corsaro's theory, he begins by extending a constructivist view of childhood with a further interpretive perspective. He claims that a focus on the child's activity is a good starting point, but further to this: 'the child [should be] viewed as a discoverer of a world endowed with meaning' (Corsaro, 1985: 72). He describes Vygotsky's dialectic view of human development as an 'important starting point' for his view of development as reproductive rather than linear. This reproductive model emphasises children's interpretive processes, including 'the microprocesses through which interaction takes place and is stored for future use' (*ibid*: 74). In this work, published in the eighties, he claimed at that point,

little was known about ‘the role of language and the types of social learning […] in the peer cultures of young children’ (p75) and that when studying social learning, it was important to reject pre-held notions of children’s play as purely ‘anticipatory socialisation’ (Corsaro, 1985: 3) and look further at the smaller processes in action.

In his writings, Corsaro speaks at length of the conversations and processes involved in becoming accepted into the peer culture, alongside other methodological procedures to outline the ‘natural history of the research process’ (p49). Corsaro and Molinari (2008) identify the ‘transitory rituals’ that adults must go through to be accepted to participate in children’s peer cultures. He explains this as similar to the ways in which children have priming events: ‘events which attend to anticipated changes in their lives’ (p253). Such events are iterative (embedded in routines) and projective (‘glimpses into the future’), for example visits to a classroom which the child will move into in the next academic year (p257). Corsaro and Molinari identify that researchers require these priming events as well; to be inducted into the traditions, disciplinary strategies, and spaces of the research field. I experienced these ‘primer events’ in my period of pilot study, spent familiarising myself with a Reception class and writing reflectively on critical events.

a. Ethnographies of young children’s literacies and play

Here I discuss ethnographies of children’s literacy practices and play cultures which have influenced me, regarding their remarks on the theoretically appropriate and challenging nature of the ethnographic methodology.

Influential in this area is anthropologist Brice Heath's ethnography of two culturally different working-class communities in eastern USA. In a study of children's language learning over a decade, she focuses on 'the face-to-face network in which each child learns the ways of acting, believing, and valuing of those about him' (Brice Heath, 1983: 6). Brice Heath is explicit about the nature of the work, as not 'a model piece of educational or child language research' from which multiple data from 'similar conditions' can be extracted, but rather a record of the 'natural flow of a community' with details of what 'actually happens to children as they learn to use language’ (*ibid*: 7-8).

US-based Gussin-Paley and later Haas-Dyson present ethnographies of children's play, storytelling and literacy experiences. Their narratives are often highly personalised, with reflections on their own practice and the emotional effects of the children upon them. Haas-Dyson evokes the vivid imagination of the children, homing in upon children's superhero related compositions to uncover 'their common desires for adventure and action, security and place, power and love' (Haas-Dyson, 1997: 5). Whilst Paley expresses conceptualisations of her own actions compared with that of the children, articulating a continual sense of amazement at their play worlds: 'I call my analytical exercises *teaching*: Jason calls his *play*. As my imagination leads me from one rationalisation to another, the children follow their instincts into dramatic interpretations […] their group fantasy is a round table discussion in story form' (Paley, 1990: 140). Both researchers have used Author's Theatre to relate literacy practices with imaginative worlds, noting the way that performance of child-authored stories enriches children's writing and 'unofficial' social worlds.

Haas-Dyson's 2016 work explores children's literacy lives across different cultures. The style by which she presents children's experience is undeniably thickly descriptive, bringing to life the classroom for the reader. For example, she writes of one focus child, Ta'Von:

> Ta'Von was on his tippy toes, thrusting one foot ahead of the other, like a stealth detective; his fingers formed binoculars over his eyes. He could not suppress his delighted grin, as he looked this way and that, hunting for the escaped gingerbread man and deep in the play scenario Ms Norton had set (Haas-Dyson, 2016: 32)

This text mingles Haas-Dyson's own subjective interpretation of an event from her viewing of it: her description of the child as 'a stealth detective' with fingers which 'form binoculars' is descriptively metaphoric to the extent of being poetic. This would be an unacceptable level of interpretation from a positivist stance, but here it has a function: the rich text evokes and supports a rhetoric, a message, that children's creativity is linked to deep emotion.

Through their ethnographic writing both Haas-Dyson and Paley, represent children's identity as closely interlinked with their literary creations: how they 'live out' these identities through writing or oral storytelling. This in-depth style of writing means the

multifarious modes of symbolic communication can be considered. Haas-Dyson says in her description of Ta'Von: 'he used every possible symbolic resource – talk, drawing, names and numbers, and his beginning understanding of sounds, along with a reading voice to elaborate on written symbols' (2016: 36). Where official discourse may render this individual child as 'underachieving', the nature of the ethnographic style allows for a deeper, more personal narrative and therefore analysis of what achievement might mean for individual learners.

In the UK, Chris Richards has written extensively on playground cultures. He offers commentary on his methodological processes and the challenges faced. In his 2011 study, he comments upon what happened when asking a child about her play in retrospect:

> …here it is as if the voice of an adult […] is being incorporated into the girls' response, constructing, momentarily, an adult standpoint on play ('just a silly game', appropriately discarded with the rubbish). Though this implicitly subordinates and dismisses her own fantasy and pleasure as a child, it is also effective in denying me access to the domain of play (Richards, 2011: 316)

In his child participant methodology, when seeking a child's opinion on their play he uncovers ideological tension between his understanding of play, his need to be directly informed by children, and the child's priorities. His writings communicate the brevity of play experience for children.

I now consider several ethnographies which specifically aimed to discover the contexts and functions of socio-dramatic play in schools. Madrid and Kantor (2009) present parts of an 8-month ethnographic study in a US Preschool. They note the need to spend time participating in children's daily lives to be accepted into the peer culture. The success of their role as participant observer is demonstrated through the words of the one child, who said of the researcher: 'She is *ours*. She listens to *our* stories'; in this study, the researcher became a 'well defined person there to play and listen to the children' (p232-233). Similarly, to my study, Madrid and Kantor make a purposeful selection of specific children to focus on due to the play they engaged in and use video data to capture episodes of play, recognising these extracts of play as being embedded within the wider context of the classroom community. They identify

a group of girls playing 'kitties': a 'rich play theme' which is deemed in their analysis to be a social mechanism to conduct border work (drawing on Thorne, 1993) between males and females. Madrid and Kantor also note within this play several gendered access strategies: ways which a group of girls gained access into boys' play. Their decision to focus upon one participant in this small troupe whom they identify as the 'moral regulator' is similar to my methodological choice to focus on particular children for aspects of their play interactions.

In her exploration of primary school fantasy play, Willett (Willet *et al,* 2013) identifies troupes of children and explores their repeated play narratives. She notes that groups invert power relationships and remix and negotiate roles within friendship groups to create 'seemingly chaotic' narratives (p168). Her discussion of these narratives shows that in the seeming chaos created there emerges an ordered, repeated, and valued means of strengthening friendships. Her analogy of the troupe of players (from Sutton-Smith) has inspired my analysis. In a study identifying the carnival-like humour which creates a subversive sub-culture during improvised drama sessions, Simmons (2014) notes how her ethnographic methodology led her to create thick descriptions which incorporated the 'unspoken and taken-for-granted assumptions about cultural life' (p273).

I could weave my knowledge of the children's daily routines and the culture of the school into my analysis. For example, for a child to be 'Star of the Day' was a pertinent experience within the children's peer culture and seeing this in practice in the classroom allowed me to understand more fully what was significant when children created a Star of the Day role in their socio-dramatic play. Such a detail may seem insignificant to a researcher who was only observing the class during the delivery of taught content. But as I was participating in the daily life of the class, I realised the importance of a child being given this status as an essential factor of the classroom's democratic community.

4.8 Writing and analysis

The process of writing this ethnographic study is not simply a case of presenting findings, but the writing itself a central aspect of the analysis. As educational

ethnographer Willis comments, 'ethnography is not just a methodology but a format of presentation' (1981: 3) – hence as I write I am aiming to emulate a specific descriptive ethnographic style. The style is intended to unravel the details of interaction and individuals. As Mills and Morton comment, 'rather than being the final act of the qualitative research drama, writing is the stage on which the ethnographic encounter unfolds' (2013: 23). This dramaturgical metaphor is especially apt as my writing explores dramatic interactions. Furthermore, in my analytical writing I aim to practise the art and science of qualitative analysis described by Corbin and Strauss (2008): 'to be able to spin "straw" into "gold" turning raw data into something that promotes understanding', whilst also grounding concepts in the data. In this section I will explain how I have developed a descriptive ethnographic style, which unfolds interactions and encounters from the data, to promote understanding of the Early Years classroom.

The process of taking wide-ranging fieldnotes allowed theoretical themes to emerge and gave me the flexibility to alter and refine my focus. These fieldnotes were especially beneficial in the ethnographic writing which introduces the places and people of the study. I was motivated by Stake's writing on how to present a case study:

> To assist the reader in making naturalistic generalizations… our accounts need to be personal, describing the things of our sensory experiences, not failing to attend to the matters that personal curiosity dictates […] emphasising time, place, and person (Stake, 1995: 86)

In the contextual introduction to the classroom, I have attempted to draw on sense impressions of the space. This includes the sounds, colours, smells, even textures of the setting – indeed, the Reception classroom is a malleable, constantly changing colour-filled space and I hoped to capture this to give the reader a greater vicarious experience of the children's space. I recognise that the ethnographic method demands personal accounts, as well as that we cannot 'write ourselves out' of our own narrative creations. My own emotions sometimes speak through my prose, indeed, hoping to reflect some of the emotion that the children were experiencing, as well as that which adult practitioners may face in their professional roles. To develop my writing style, I used what Coles and Thomson (2015) term 'in-between

writing': creative writing methods such as poetry and vignettes used to explore data. This was a means of developing meaning through writing, and though it is not included in this thesis, it nevertheless shaped my analysis.

After the production of fieldnotes, an inductive process of analysis was used to refine the data and draw categories out for analysis.

a. Stages of the analytical process

The inductive process of analysis which I employed is expounded below:

1. Fieldnotes written up and chronologically grouped
2. Grouped fieldnotes in to individual key player
3. Read fieldnotes for key player to find overarching themes (plus reflections from fieldwork)
4. Re-viewed videos of key player. Separated videos into type: daily routine/conversation, interviews, maps and tours, dramatic play episodes
5. Chose dramatic play episode video which reflected overarching themes as in stage 3
6. Used analysis table to draw out areas of thematic content for discussion: *content, artefacts, stimulus, spatial, temporal*
7. Transcribed section of chosen video featuring key player
8. Reviewed transcript for thematic content making use of analysis table and other re-viewings of video (making notes on transcript)
9. Grouped key categories arising from transcript, parallel to several re-views of video (and audio)
10. Discussion of key categories written up with focus on key player

Let me identify the relevance of each stage listed in my process of analysis. Typing and grouping fieldnotes meant I could keep accurate, logically ordered records for later reference.

At stage 2, the focus children were chosen using the criteria described in the methods section of this chapter. The small sample meant I was able to refine what I observed.

Each child is presented in the data analysis using ethnographic vignettes to give a sense of the child's situated practice. Vignettes have been used as they give an adequate means of putting the individual character (in both senses of the word character: their personality and their dramatic performance) of each focus child, at the centre of the data. Vignettes offer 'a way to distil observed practices into the portrayal of a scene that captures something of the rich sights, sounds and senses of the ethnographic research experience' (Flewitt, 2011: 302). They also allow me to incorporate details of the child's social relationships and patterns of play habits before an analysis of their socio-dramatic play.

At times, I have moved from a standard analytical presentation of data to instead use sections of creative writing, for example, in the vignette introducing Caden. There is reasoning for this style of presentation: an ethnography, as well as a methodological choice, is a style of writing which tells the story of a group of people, aiming to detail their cultural experiences for the reader. The stories that the participating children play out are real to them though they are often obscured from adult attention by the routines and structures within which they are situated. My aim in using creative writing is to breathe energy into the stories that the children already own themselves, to present them as legitimate parts of their creative learning experience. In the case of Caden, his involvement in superhero play appeared to me to be so penetrating in his daily life, that the reader must have a sense of the immersive nature of his play to make efforts to empathise with his experience. The superhero-themed vignette I have provided also incorporates some of the narrative traits that Caden might be exposed to through media platforms. The vignette is given as rich text, which seeks first to describe and which then leads to explanation. As Mills and Morton (2013) comment in their exploration of educational ethnographies, such an ethnographic vignette is not aspiring to be a 'true' representation or complete 'life history' but gives a partial account or encounter through imaginative writing (p88).

At stage 3, the initial research questions were combined with categories which emerged from patterns arising in the focus child's play. For example, emerging from fieldnotes for Kylie was the parental character in play, which falls under the initial research question concerning gender performativity. These emerging categories were then used in defining the data in Stage 4. Stages 1-3 occurred both during the

fieldwork period, and after the fieldwork was completed, so that reflections on a specific focus child could inform my next observations, or direct me to focus my attention on a certain aspect of their social interaction.

Stage 4 involved refining the data. I separated out data which helped me to understand the culture of the classroom, the child's personality, and the actual phenomenon which can be labelled 'socio-dramatic' play. This condensing and cutting stage was largely pragmatic due to the volume of data collected. At stage 5 a specific episode of socio-dramatic play was selected which involved the focus child, and reflected the categories as in stage 3.

To further explore the experience of socio-dramatic play in each chosen episode, stage 6 involved the use of an analytical table to inductively draw out areas for discussion: the content of the play episode, artefacts used, the stimulus of play, spatial and temporal aspects of the play. This stage meant that whilst I was bringing the concerns of the research questions to bear on the data, the content of the play episodes were explored in detail, allowing me to consider for example how the places, artefacts, and themes of play contributed towards the overarching experience of play. The process of analysis was therefore inductive; the research questions were not the sole direction of the investigation.

Stage 7 involved the transcription of each episode of socio-dramatic play. I used the programme oTranscribe to transcribe dialogue and action, followed by several reviews of the video to capture utterances, expressions, artefact use, and movements. I have used a style of transcription which draws on multi-modal transcription from Flewitt's (2005) study about the expression of meaning by a child considered to be 'silent'. An extract is shown below.

Extract 5

(Sarah and Tallulah have been sorting through the shape box, selecting cut-out shapes, return to sit at table)

1 Tallulah: *(glance to Sarah)* Gary likes twains *(gaze to Sarah)* Gary likes lots of trains *(gaze to train shape)* Thomases
2 Sarah: he does doesn' he?
3 Tallulah: *(gaze to doh, nods, shaping doh)* yeh he likes twains as well Gary likes twains an balls
4 Sarah: *(gaze to Tallulah's doh)* does he like balls as well?
5 Tallulah: *(emphatic nod, still shaping doh)* yep
6 Sarah: do you play ball with Gary?
7 Tallulah: sometimes
8 Sarah: sometimes *(points to cutter Tallulah trying to extract from the doh)* push it out from this side Tallulah
9 Tallulah: *(pushes doh as shown)*
10 Sarah: that's it *(watching Tallulah's hands struggling to get shape out of the cutter)* d'you want me to get it out for you?
11 Tallulah: *(succeeds in pushing train from mould)*
12 Sarah: there it is there's your train *(takes small container from table and offers to Tallulah)* shall we put it in here?

Figure 4.4: extract of multi-modal transcription (Flewitt, 2005: 7)

I used this style of transcription for several reasons. The start of the extract gives a brief indication of the context: who is involved, what they were doing previously and where the immediate action takes place. The dialogue of the children is presented verbatim. Flewitt does not use a system as complex as that employed in conversation analysis which records lengths of pauses and overlaps of speech. Similarly, in my transcription, whilst the utterances and dialogue are of importance, the presence of the body in space is also of great importance. Interactions between bodies were noted, with suggestions of meanings as expressed physically, alongside emotion as shown through facial expression, how the space was used, and how objects were used. Combining the physical action with the dialogue, alludes to performance scripts, which I believe simplifies the reading of transcripts. Finally, the numbering of turns allows the referencing of specific lines. To attempt to capture the moments of play, still images taken from video data were included in the transcripts. The transcript for an episode of socio-dramatic play with Isaac can be found in Appendix 1.

At Stage 10, where the key categories are discussed, I have employed a system described by Emerson *et al* (2011) as excerpt-commentary units. This is a means of using fieldnotes to create ethnographic writing: 'to maximise the interplay between

analytic idea and excerpt' so that the two work together to 'move the story along' (p214, p218). I have given an analytical point with orienting information, followed by an excerpt from the transcript of the play episode (or from fieldnotes) before presenting an analytical commentary. In this way, discussion points are grounded in the data and are then combined and further drawn on in the discussion chapter.

The categories which emerged from following this process of analysis were as follows. The physical experiences of play which emerged from the data were spatial and temporal aspects: the places and the times children had to play in, as well as the material artefacts of play. Whilst the research questions signalled an investigation of gender performativity, this emerged from the data as themes of parental characterisations, girls and monster play, and masculinity and superhero play. The social relationships which were highlighted in the research questions emerged as a discussion of how children framed play and negotiated their social relationships through play. Whilst the *themes* of play were not explicitly highlighted in the research questions, these emerged as the fieldwork progressed, and included themes such as power and punishment; phantasmagoria; and enacting routines. These categories are drawn out for analysis in the data analysis chapter and then combined into overarching sections in the discussion chapter.

My analysis of Caden's play differs slightly to other sections, though it forms an important part of my thinking. Therefore, I felt it important to include Caden as one of the focus children. If I were to rigorously adhere to the categorical description of the *socio-dramatic* play which I outlined in my original research question, Caden's experience may have been overlooked. Other video data which I have analysed has shown episodes of socio-dramatic play, adhering to the definition set out by Smilansky (1968), namely that which involves imitative role play, is longer than ten minutes and takes place between two or more players. When observing Caden, I felt that this set of descriptive statements could not adhere to all that I considered to be his play experience. Particularly, it was often hard to capture ten minutes of continuous play with the same peers. Due to the often solitary, shifting, and sporadic nature of Caden's play, I found it difficult to participate in. I also had to be aware of his disciplinary issues: he was facing challenges controlling his physical interactions with other children and would often receive warnings. This attributed a new

dimension to the kind of highly physical play that I saw him involved in. In pragmatic terms, Caden's use of the classroom spaces was fast and sporadic. When using a camera with a tri-pod, or handheld, it was almost impossible to follow and capture his actions. Caden enjoyed the challenge of being asked to use the camera himself, and on several occasions filmed where his play took place and at one point filmed a tour of the playground – though he often forgot about the camera and muffled images of the floor were taken. This was an instance of my adult research agenda being imposed onto a child for whom it was not their priority: I wanted to capture something of Caden's play on video, he wanted to play and the responsibility of filming was not in line with this play. This caused me to rethink how I observed Caden and instead of interacting much, took a less participatory stance, watching from a distance. This section is based on fieldnotes laid out in largely chronological order interspersed with analytical description and comment, along with stills taken from video data, and the accompanying speech/action description. The fieldnotes presented were mostly gathered over two days of observations, with video from the first day. These could be considered as 'ethnographic fragments' (Thomson *et al*, 2010) from two school days, which aim to represent aspects of Caden's play experience.

Chapter 5
Context of the study

Before introducing the children on whom my analysis focuses, I will offer a description of the classroom: the people, spaces, routine, and values of the research setting. I have attempted to bring to life the classroom through this description, to present as vividly as possible the feelings of the space and the joys, challenges and injustices faced by the children.

5.1 The school

The school is in a Nottinghamshire town, with a population of around 15,000 (Office for National Statistics). Though the MP for the area was Conservative during the time of the field work, the area has a strong Labour heritage. Next to the school is the partnering junior school, divided from the infants by a high metal fence. This is where my focus children would be looking to as their future – the big school over the grass. Unbeknownst to them, the junior school was struggling in the local Ofsted ratings, causing some tension between and amongst Infant and Junior staff. At the other side of the Infant school car park was a building which used to be the nursery unit and is now a SureStart centre, one of the few left after the purge of centres since 2010. On the other side of the Infant school playground was a factory, divided from the school by a fence and a line of tall evergreens. Beyond this lay the residential areas of the town; largely terraced houses, with allotments, small churches, and recreation grounds dotting the landscape between houses and the nearby canal.

The school is a one-storey 1970s building with a semi-open plan formation of classrooms around a courtyard. A permanent extension classroom was added when the nursery unit and Infant unit moved into the same building. In a tour of this classroom given to me by a child who had just entered Year 1, he stated that he liked the classroom, but when looking out and seeing the small outdoor area for the other Year 1 class, he lamented that ‘we’re not allowed to have that outside’. Each time I walked into the school I was struck by its warmth: the temperature was nearly always

almost balmy and indeed, the children would greet me with warmth and joyfulness. The colourful walls of word displays, photos and art work were brightly lit, and the smells of pine disinfectant pumped through the heating system, permeating each room. There were communal areas for cooking on the Foundation Stage side and a reading room on the KS1 side. Just past the Head's office was a small library normally used for remedial reading.

The school itself was a smaller than average community infant school, with a third of the children receiving free school meals. Both the number of children with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English, was below average. In a 2016 OFSTED report, the school was deemed 'Good' in all categories, including Early Years provision (OFSTED, 2016[3]). The report commented upon several areas within the Early Years, though didn't discern between the Nursery unit and the Reception class. It is regarded that most children start in the Early Years with 'knowledge, skills and understanding' which is below that expected of children of their age, notably in writing. But, they report, children settled in quickly and leave their parents confidently. They are seen as enjoying what the school offered and become happy 'well-motivated learners'. Ofsted praised the Early Years leaders for curriculum planning which meets individual children's needs, and detailed assessment of learning. They noted the effectiveness of the school's work to support transition into Key Stage 1, with successful communication concerning children between staff. The one suggestion for improvement was that staff could engage in more 'purposeful conversations' and questioning whilst children are 'learning outdoors', though this did not make explicit whether this meant during playtimes or moments of adult-led learning.

What structures and systems are adhered to in this setting? The school has publically available policy documentation based on their Foundation Stage. This outlines that their Early Years provision is based on structures which support 'learning through play as well as directed learning' as outlined in the EYFS. They describe that they provide 'planned continuous provision' accompanied with the statement that 'play based learning is paramount'. A characteristic of effective learning is 'Playing and

[3] Link to report not supplied to ensure school's anonymity

Exploring' which is ensured through an environment which allows children 'the opportunity to express fears or re-live experiences in controlled and safe situations'. This points to a focus on positive well-being and, as it is linked to play, is an awareness that children need to recreate experiences which may be emotionally challenging, through play. Role-play is also identified as one of around 22 'opportunities' for effective learning in the school's Teaching and Learning policy.

Most weekdays, Reception aged children completed formal tasks with a member of staff, or completed a challenge, and had 'choosing time' in the afternoons. If teacher-led or challenge tasks were not completed then children might be asked to do these during choosing time. The two Reception classes in the school also had a weekly afternoon period of 'mix up' in which they could mingle and use outdoor equipment. The free-flow characteristic of the space was visible in the routine of many children, though there were points during the fieldwork where the confines of both spaces and curriculum framing upon children's play became obvious.

5.2 The people

The class I have focused upon is one half of the Reception age intake of the Infant school. The class itself was made up of 30 children, 16 girls and 14 boys. There was one teacher, one teaching assistant and a staff member who worked one-to-one with a child with disabilities in the class. On occasional Wednesdays parents stayed in the classroom to read with individual children. The class teacher, Mrs M, was a British woman in her late 20s. With a Steiner school upbringing, she made it clear to me when I first met her that she saw the invaluable quality of play in the Early Years. She had completed her qualified teacher status year at this school and then stayed working in the Foundation Stage. She was due to move in the new academic year 2016 to teach Year 1. The teaching assistant, Ms W, was a British female in her mid-30s. Though she loved the interaction with children at the school, she found the pressure asserted from 'above' combined with a constant uncertainty about wages, difficult to reconcile with her experience, and moved at the end of my research year to be a nanny in London. I did not have a lot of research contact with other teaching assistants in the class, though they were always welcoming.

All the children in the class started the school year at the same entry point: September 2015. The youngest child in the class, Nathaniel, has a birthday falling in the last few days of August, with Charlie, the oldest in the class, with a birthday at the start of September. This meant that they were 5 days short of a one-year age difference. Charlie had 20% more life experience than Nathaniel at the point of entering school together. Of course, this summer-born issue was salient for staff members to consider, though in discussion with staff we did note our tendency to forget about children's ages. Issabelle's June birthday set her as one of the youngest in the class, but we discussed that her stoic demeanour often meant we mistook her as one of the oldest. 'She seems like an October child' commented a teaching assistant. Nathaniel, on the other hand, often displayed high levels of emotional tumult especially at the start of the year. Mrs M would remind other members of staff that: 'He's still four, life's hard at four'. Of course, there was a recognition and empathy for children at this transition stage. Though dressed smartly in the same school uniform as children in Year 1 and 2 - assigning them a sense of maturity and adherence to the schools' social order - these children were still dealing with more pressing issues: recognising and remembering their own full names, learning that they can't go to the toilet whenever they may want to, and dealing with days away from parents.

The children were reminded of their age daily and where they had progressed from temporally: the nursery classroom from which most of them graduated was visible from the front of the classroom. At the start of the year, smaller new additions to the nursery would occasionally wander, confused or curious, into the Reception class and, if they were not a recognised sibling, would sometimes stand and stare in awe at their unusual surroundings. On one such occasion, the children in Rowan class stared back at the child, as if an alien had entered their presence. At other times, the nursery children would be paraded or presented to others classes in the school, such as during the traditional Easter bonnet parade in which around 30 slightly bemused 3 and 4 year olds filed past the older classes, copious amounts of bright yellow feathers and foam eggs dangling over their faces as they crossed the playground.

The concept of being 'sent back to nursery' was sometimes used as a threat for perceived misbehaviour of Reception children, and this threat was carried through

with action several times when children who'd committed offences in the classroom would be sent to sit in the nursery. This put the specific child under the gaze of staff who had dealt with them at a younger age and, presumably, led to the child's understanding that their behaviour was more in line with that of the child they *were* previously, when they dwelt in the nursery.

The relationship between the spaces of the Reception classroom and the nursery interested me particularly due to the status of the Reception year as a period of liminality. This status is, I believe also related to the work vs play dualism, and this will be discussed further in the discussion chapter. James and Prout (2015) comment upon this concept, stating that this period of liminality is stretched over a considerable time rather than one specific moment of 'ritual drama' (p217). Similar to the threat of being sent to the nursery was the continued need to remind children that they'd be moving up into a higher year group and that their behaviour needed to change accordingly. This inevitable transition would often be used as a tool by which staff could stress the inappropriateness of 'undesirable behaviour' in the future context of the children's school lives (James & Prout, 2015: 216). The concept of liminality and play is explored in the discussion chapter.

5.3 The spaces

Rowan classroom was a welcoming open plan room. With a green carpet and yellow tables, washing lines hanging with children's art works and green curtains with bold bird prints separating storage areas, the room was full of colour. Every wall was adorned with visual information. One wall hosted children's self-portraits – the splodgy teeth and wild hair of these artistic creations smiled down on visitors. The children loved to point out their own portrait to me, in case I wasn't sure who was who. Displays on the opposite wall, asked in comic sans type: 'How am I feeling today?' The children could choose one of the emotion related photos to clip a peg with their name on – helping them to label their own moods in the ongoing journey of emotional self-regulation. I never saw these pegs being moved, but on particularly bad days, one child's peg might hang on 'angry' for the afternoon. Next to this display were the wipe clean sheets - treated with almost a holy reverence – the happy side and the sad side, awaiting the names of those who deserved mention for behaviour,

either positive or negative. A photo showing the day that all the class names were written on the happy side was pinned next to this, the image enshrined in a laminated sheet to remind the class that it was possible for everyone to achieve equally 'happy' things in one day. On the wall bordering the playground, was a wide window to the outside, with white vertical blinds which flapped in the wind when the sliding windows were open. This was where parents lined up at home time, sometimes peeking through the blinds to see what was happening inside the classroom. Next to this was the door, the entrance and exit for playtime and home time.



Figure 5.1: the home corner and costume trolley

Just next to the door for home time, bordered by a trolley of books and a stand of costumes was the home corner. The costume trolley was usually a mess, with dresses, gowns, hats, shoes, glasses, and handbags jostling for space. The home corner had a wooden kitchen unit and washing machine. There were boxes and shelves containing dolls, doll clothes, a pushchair and baby carrier; a toy dog and dog dish; plastic medals, trophies, flowers, and coloured beads; telephones, and all the mini kitchen utensils needed to support the vast amount of 'cooking' which took place. There was a small, white table with colourful plastic chairs where play families sat down to dine and to debate who's who in the family. As a writing trolley was pressed up against the costume trolley, an alcove was created which acted as a small

hiding space for children who sometimes crawled into it during socio-dramatic play. This was a secret, private space which no adult would have had access to. It seemed this general home corner space belonged exclusively to the children (rather than any adults) more than any other space in the classroom.

Two yellow tables in the classroom were usually assigned to the two teaching staff, so that two groups of children could complete adult-led and guided activities. This seemed to render the tables as somewhat symbolic of the 'sitting and working state': where children were working towards a specific learning target. Two yellow tables were used for the challenge: a worksheet which children were asked to complete over a day or two days, that allowed them to practise defined skills, most often fine motor control through colouring and drawing. This challenge, which the teacher described to parents as 'hidden extra work' was compulsory and children had to mark their face off a chart once they had finished. It was the activity they were most likely asked to leave their play for. The challenge meant accountability and self-motivation; children should do it without being instructed to, though often needed reminding. Sometimes the task required cutting and sticking, and putting objects in size or number order. Each challenge presented a different cognitive or control-related hurdle and were also challenges in self-regulation and in producing something deemed good quality: it was a pre-cursor to Year 1, where they would be expected to continuously produce work of a high standard. The pressure to be continually productive affected some children more than others:

> *We're not rushing, we're doing a good job' is a message heard [by children] at the challenge table time and again. Emily's challenge today was scribbly and she was asked to do it again. Tears began.*
>
> *Later, Emily repeats Kumbayah my Lord on the same tone, over and over whilst lining up pencils at the challenge table (she is on her second challenge attempt*). (from fieldnotes, 17th May)

The carpet space in front of the interactive whiteboard was the site for whole class activities, and children sat in assigned spaces for morning and afternoon registration. Such allocation allowed pairings or groups perceived as troublesome to be split up, and for the teacher to place in her direct eye line any children who needed more monitoring. It was on this carpet space that children's morning routine became cemented as habit. Their routine was clearly displayed for them at the front of the room.



Figure 5.2: the daily routine display

The register was taken and then followed the selection of *Star of the Day:* the child chosen to carry out important duties that day, such as standing at the front during lining up. These duties were taken very seriously and being given the position was a privilege, the chosen one was met with eager calls of 'I love you!' from friends. Then the children 'sign in': writing their first and surname on a whiteboard, the neatest product of which was picked by the Star of the Day for its writer to accompany them to take the register. After this, the class would split into ability-related groups for Letters and Sounds. With each group led by a different member of staff into almost any area of the school they could find, children then practised identifying sounds and writing words using their growing awareness of phonemes, digraphs and trigraphs. The foundation of this phonics instruction is the learning of sounds accompanied by actions, allowing children to link what they hear with movements. They also learn to identify and write 'tricky words': those which don't fit the rules of normal phonetic deconstructions, such as *the*, *she* and *was.* This was compulsory work for the school, as discussed in the policy chapter. Once children had been to these groups, they returned to the communal space ready to wake themselves up with *Wakey Shakey*, in which two children chose songs which they all danced to. Trainee teachers and

visitors were not exempt from joining in with the dances, as we all became scarecrows, Peter Rabbits or flitting butterflies in attempts to shake weariness off. The more exuberant song choices could be mildly hazardous as children kicked their legs 'like a dancer would do' in the less than 50cm^2 space allocation on the carpet. A child requesting 'the beanbag one' prompted 30 colourful beanbags to be handed out to children, who practice their improving catching skills before balancing beanbags on any part of the body that the friendly voice of the song advised. *Wakey Shakey* was always a moment of communal joy and excitement after the sometimes-stressful Letters and Sounds.

The carpet was also the space for milk and snack time. Transparent straw wrappers left on the floor, and the pith of satsumas bring to mind these quiet moments, where the children chewed, and slurped attentively, listening to a story read from the front. This was the time when the teachers and assistants seemed to get most playful – bringing the story to life: squeaky and deep voices alternated with gurning facial expressions amid discussions of rhymes and foreshadowing plots. The audience giggled and commented upon the story. The carpet area was the space where the class lined up for lunchtime or assembly, very often asked to order themselves boy-girl, a task which involved a huge amount of social politics, when one person moved in ahead of another who was 'definitely there first'. After lunch, the class would gather again to reflect on their lunchtime behaviour. They lined up by the teacher's chair and show the yellow face tokens they are awarded for good behaviour ("I ate all my lunch and pudding", "I helped someone in the playground"), and the blue face token for disappointing behaviour ("I kicked Nathaniel when I was in the line"). The recipients of such tokens from lunchtime supervisors were praised or shamed at the front of the classroom and names were added to the happy or sad side, the shamed individuals retaking their place with their punishment etched onto their faces. Finally, this communal space was where everyone gathered to prepare for home time. The book bags, letters, models they'd made and any other stray papers seemed to float around the room, in a sometimes-hectic rush to ensure that parents were fully informed.

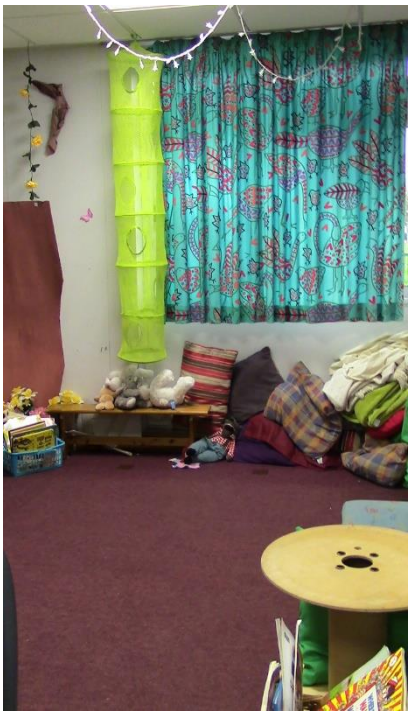


Figure 5.3: the quiet room

The quiet room (Figure 5.3) was next to the whiteboard at the front of the classroom, a curtain over the doorway. It was used for one Letters and Sounds group, for the storage of boxes of books, and was a comfy space with blankets and cushions for the moments when children needed quiet. Benches around the sides of the room were often occupied by soft toy bears, wolves, and rabbits, whilst plastic flowers hung from the ceiling. The walls had displays of digraphs, tri-graphs and 'tricky words' with, on the opposite wall, photos of the class and comments about what activities each of them loved to do. The 'quiet' of the room's title did not often eventuate as it was regularly a space for playing and whilst not always filled with *noisy* play, it was usually a space away from the surveillance of the teacher where combative play could take place with less threat of reprimand. As the research progressed, the quiet room became a significant space for the children's play and therefore significant within my analysis. The symbolic significance of spaces are further explored in the discussion.

The craft area at one side of the classroom was where glue sticks (and their tops if the glue stick was particularly lucky) and scissors were stored, next to boxes of pom-poms and lolly sticks. There was a crate containing empty boxes – boxes of jam tarts long eaten, Special K containers, and sometimes boxes which once contained medicine, the names of which, in moments of distraction, made me ponder which parent suffered from what. This area was essential for the development of the play

amongst the focus children – allowing them to personalise and improve the props they used.



Figure 5.4: Emily puts on the police helmet and returns to the craft table to add sticks to her cardboard gun (from fieldnotes, 26th May)

Areas for sensory play were used during choosing time: a water trough, a playdough table and sand pit with the accompanying tools. The sand container almost acted as a pre-cursor to the huge pit which waited outside in the courtyard under sheets of MDF. Behind a dividing wall of the classroom were the long ceramic sinks, seemingly there from when the school was built, where children would spend prolonged periods of time with their hands under the taps as the water gathered and rose higher, massaging the blocks of flowery smelling white (and grey) soap between their hands.

Beyond the sinks was the courtyard: a half-covered area for outdoor play, enclosed by the windows of classrooms and offices. I was always aware, on behalf of the players, that the head teacher's office looked directly onto the courtyard. In this space was a Wendy house, buckets, and wooden blocks. A climbing unit and slide was in the centre, with a pile of tyres for climbing in and a race track painted onto the concrete. There was also a chest of dressing up clothes and wigs; the children could take on roles here too. One side of the courtyard perimeter comprised windows to the school hall. This was used for twice weekly assemblies, indoor PE, dance workshops and singing sessions. On special occasions the children could be found maypole dancing here, watching shows by visitors, or standing nervously in sparkling tunics rehearsing the Christmas nativity.

The playground which bordered much of the school was divided into a nursery section and an Infant section though the space was sometimes shared (especially if

the nursery guinea pigs were out on display). The playground had faded painted markings on the ground, sheds with play equipment, and a grassy area with a wooden train and climbing frame. Classes were allocated specific days on the climbing equipment which created huge excitement when classes realised it was their day. At the other end of the playground, in a large coop, lived four chickens which had grown up under an incubator in the nursery. The death (or was it murder?) of one of the chickens was big school news in April, as the children told me with a strange mix of solemnity and delight.

5.4 Values and culture

The school followed the traditionally Christian philosophy expected of English state schools, providing acts of collective worship (DfE, 1994). This was most overt in communication during weekly assemblies, sometimes led by a local vicar or pastor of a nearby church. There was an emphasis on individual values or virtues: children were rewarded weekly in a celebration assembly for qualities such as helpfulness, sharing, kindness, and (the slightly ambiguous) excellence, as well as rewards for academic achievements such as solving a maths problem or reading 100 books. In one Friday's assembly, the line of children waiting - chest puffed out and facing the throng of peers - could hardly fit across the hall. The head teacher had to work at speed to ensure each got the coveted golden Head Teacher's Award before the bell rang. There was an explicit identification of attendance as achievement, with the attendance percentage of each class calculated weekly and announced in Friday's assembly. A large golden trophy was given to the winning class and their class name was published on the school website for the previous week. This trophy was coveted amongst the children, they were certainly aware that any days off school were deemed to be time badly spent.

The year prior to the fieldwork, the Department for Education had published requirements for schools to be accountable for promoting 'British values'. This standard was put in place to 'strengthen the barriers to extremism' in light of the perceived growth of religious fundamentalism. According to the DfE these British values entail: 'democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs' (DfE, 2014: 5). The Infant school

made changes to implement these standards. These changes related to play as a central part of the school's provision, implicating the resources provided and the themes encouraged. As stated in the schools publicly available documentation this included: the British value of 'the rule of law' promoted through encouraging 'role play: People who help us – police'. In promoting 'individual liberty' they note that they provide 'Gender free resources, toys and colours, and encouraging non-gender specific play'. As part of promoting 'mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' they note provision of 'ethnic dolls for free play and storytelling'. Finally, in promoting 'equality for all' they note their 'gender free resources: encouraging non-gender specific play, non-gender specific dressing up clothes in foundation unit'. The resources for play are understood as providing powerful symbolic representations of particular ways of life, and are therefore deemed important in cultural and value-laden activities.

Chapter 6
Data analysis

6.1 Our troupe

Let me first explain the means by which the children of the study will be introduced. With a background in theatre, and a keen love of the result when a team works together to produce a show, I have always noticed the theatricality of children's play. This characteristic marks out children's dramatic play as unique and a delight to observe. And a complex and often ambiguous activity to understand, record, and participate in. In Sutton-Smith's discussion of play's ambiguity, he employs an analogy which resounded for me:

> To understand a group of well-acquainted children at play, it is often useful to think of them like a travelling troupe of medieval players… it is a world run more like a theatre is run than like an everyday world. Children play the parts of stage managers, directors, and actors all at the same time, moving freely about the parts as they get ready to put together their own shows for themselves… (Sutton-Smith, 1997: 159)

The beauty of this metaphor lies in its identification of children's agency. The play world is often a private and personal world in which they are negotiating their own way through social relationships, away from the gaze of adult authority. The 'troupe' is involved in planning and devising, as they pick up and take their stories between settings, from classroom to dinner hall to playground. It also spoke to me of 'different worlds' – indeed, when an adult is engaged in a theatrical production with a group, they often find themselves in a kind of bubble where the world of the play is all engrossing. Similarly, the children become a part of a world that is not every day: that has its own internal dramas.

There are other complexities to the analogy which captured my attention. Sutton-Smith talks of 'well-acquainted players'. Upon first entering the classroom and observing the children of this study, we were not well-acquainted. Over time and through play (repeated episodes, returning to old jokes) we became well acquainted. At times, the 'show for themselves' which they created did stray into becoming a show

for me, but this brings us back to the idea of play as an intrinsically enjoyable activity: they do not put on this show in order to prove anything or to receive praise, it is purely for its own sake. The enjoyment is inherently social: as Willet describes, the performances of the play 'troupes' she studied were 'as much about their social relations and their peer culture as it was about the content of the performance' (Willet, 2013: 151). 'Moving freely about the parts' speaks of children's ability to change roles in a second, to narrate and then to perform and then to direct. This is a highly complex cognitive task for players. But the idea of 'moving freely' between these roles brings to mind the moments when such play isn't so free. The children I watched play were free in the sense that they could choose who to *be* when they were permitted choosing time, but it is often a bounded freedom. The particular peer culture of a group may foster a need to maintain certain narratives which bond children in a shared story, the continuation of which has particular importance.

Returning to the theatrical analogy then. The children I have focused on demonstrated to me various production roles which arose from their play personalities. So, in the forthcoming introductions you will meet a director, a writer, a stage manager, a leading man and woman, a comedic side-kick actor, and a maternal figure. Just as Sutton-Smith describes these roles as switching and changing within play episodes, so my defining of children with these labels is for ease of introductory analysis but is by no means denying their ability to change roles. And some may be introduced in a slightly different style than others – for, indeed, these children are not a homogenous group because they happen to be the same age, are in the same class and live in the same town, they are each different players in their own right. These individual roles shone through in their play throughout the year and arose in retrospect once delving into my fieldnotes and videos of play. These categories will go on to aid me in considering the themes and functions of play.

6.2 Isaac

Isaac is our director. Other players look to him to ensure they are doing the right thing in their play, saying their lines correctly. And even if they don't, Isaac is already there asserting his authority. But he has not reached this director role through authoritarian means or managed to get here through a dictatorship of play, he has

worked his way up as a performer, and his natural state of being in the classroom is expressive. If you were to find a child wearing an eye mask, an Arabian hat, a gold tutu and green slippers whilst cutting out a set of cardboard numbers and occasionally wielding his scissors as a sword, you are likely looking at Isaac. His desire to converse with people around him, both bigger people and smaller people, means his arsenal of vocabulary is put to good use. His continuous use of rhymes, jokes, and hyperbole makes him quite the adept conversationalist and his excitable tone of voice always draws you in to carry on chatting. Though he might not always grasp immediately the complex topics of conversation, he'll make a very good go of listening, head tilted to the side. Once he's grasped something he is likely to look straight at you and stick is finger in the air, as the 'eureka' moment hits. He understands! And what should he do about this new found understanding? Most likely use it in his play. Whether it comes into the adventure of pirates in a metal tub, the terror of a piglet in a straw house, or the wonder of an archaeologist discovering dinosaur eggs in the sandpit, Isaac will integrate his knowledge into his imaginary world. The way he moves around reveals these worlds to anyone who keenly observes. The gestures of the phonics instruction that the class undertakes everyday must be central for his understanding of the alphabet and though he may not always immediately recall each letter sound when asked, once he does, the related gesture is performed with great aplomb and fervour. When he is asked to run across a hall to find which digraph can be found in the word 'chin', he scratches his own chin before jumping in an invisible car. Carefully he steers the vehicle across the room and jolts a little as he breaks just beneath the letters 'ch', stuck to the wall next to the display of paintings by Year 2. Hands on hips, he looks to the teacher with a gentle smile, sure he must have figured this out.

As director, Isaac needs a faithful producer to ensure his imaginative visions come to fruition. Here steps in the ever-devoted Charlie, completing the pair to make the most binding friendship in the classroom. They are never far from each other, and dress up in costumes at the same moment, comparing and critiquing their friend's outfits with a fair amount of teasing. At times Charlie will be particularly subservient to Isaac's needs, going to fetch his coat or hat if Isaac commands it. If Isaac says that playing at the diggers and pasta tray has become boring, Charlie will reiterate 'yes,

boring!' before they scuttle off together to the quiet room. This pairing runs deep and both boys seek reassurance and permissions from each other. This was particularly noted on the afternoon when the boys were playing with a Mr Potato Head village.

Isaac: The potatoes are grrrreat!

Charlie: The potatoes are great!

Isaac: Is it okay if I go and have a poo, Charlie?

Charlie: Yes. Yes.

Isaac runs off as Charlie places Mrs Potato Head in the living room

Isaac's leadership qualities and verbal self-confidence grow as the year progresses. On one of the days I spend with Isaac, he is the fruit monitor. Before picking up the plastic tub of bananas at the front the carpet space, he announces with authority to the front line of the class: "I am the fruit monitor. Go to get your water please. (He picks up the tub) Big muscles from exercising! (He begins handing the bananas out) I can't hear any thank yous!" The rest of the class ensure an emphatic 'thank you' as they begin poking thumbs and teeth into bananas.

Isaac and Charlie's friendship thrives on stories and fictions, and I wonder how their attachment to each other will differ as they go into Year 1, where, as Charlie knows, and Isaac concurs, their play life might be rather different:

I ask some children how they feel about Year 1

Emily: I'm not, I'm not excited.

M: Why do you need to go to Year 1?

Emily: We need to get big and strong and healthy.

Charlie: I think it might be hard

M: Why do you think it might be hard?

Charlie: Because we have to write hard words

M: Is that all you do? Anything else?

Charlie: …and homework. Hmmm, not sure.

M: Will it be different?

Isaac: I don't know what I'm going to say – maybe the same as Charlie. We just do work.

Aspect	*Notes*
Content	Playing an adult preparing a meal, preparation and identification of particular items of food and utensils. Narrative of what they doing. Turn-taking and repeating. Identifying problems with the utensils and cups, solving the problems. Locating a whale (potato), attacking the whale, calling the police regarding the whale. Discussing entry of other players to the area and thereby game. Isaac and Charlie Issabelle and Kylie and researcher the table Ryan and Claire attempt entry
Artefacts	Red velvet cloak, black cloak Kitchen cooker and sink, jug, tea pot, gravy boat, tea pot plastic cups, plastic wine glasses, plastic egg cups, plastic knives, plastic food (potatoes, chicken, bread, sweetcorn) Clock Phone Medals Glasses Crown
Stimulus	Adult's cooking Cooking processes Rules of kitchen Identifying foods and tools Jokes prompted by researcher (adult) interaction and concepts introduced by key players
Spatial	Home corner Close proximity between Isaac and Charlie, from parallel to co-operative play Kylie and Issabelle with researcher at the table (to right of camera frame) Kylie moves away from here, others do not Number of players in space features, the costume box and kitchen provide resources which are then bought to the playing space and table where players are seated Teacher is diagonally opposite the playing space therefore has an angle of view and can be referred to for advice or praise
Temporal	10 minutes between start of filming and exit of the game by Isaac and Charlie to sit for work. 'Look how fast the clock is going!' <- there's a sense of urgency and this is really not prompted by anything else but a need to rush. Trying to achieve something in a given time. The battle against the whale seems urgent – police needed quickly.

Figure 6.1: content analysis table for Isaac's socio-dramatic play episode

Isaac - social dynamics and humour within co-operative dramatic play

[Or: The whale, the potato and the King]

Transcript – Appendix 2

This ten minute dramatic play episode takes place in the home corner of the Reception classroom, on a March morning. The framing of the episode means we watch two key players: Isaac alongside Charlie, with three peripheral players: Kylie, Issabelle and the researcher who sit nearby at the home corner table. The two boys base themselves around a kitchen unit and the close by shelves and costume trolley. Their interactions are based largely on objects which are to hand on the shelves and kitchen unit around them and they integrate the peripheral players particularly by serving food and drink to them. The play interactions between Isaac and Charlie move from parallel, where they are concerned with the objects they hold individually whilst narrating their own intentions for these objects, to co-operative, where they listen to the partner player and adopt their ideas as the episode unfolds.

Isaac has put on a red cape, which he became interested in around Christmas when enacting being one of the three kings from the nativity story. Charlie has put on a black cape. Their discussion when dressing in these costumes was around the pragmatics of putting on the costumes themselves and not related to characterisation. The narrative of the play episode is as follows: preparation of drinks, preparation of food and dining utensils, discovering a problem with a cup, discovering a whale, reacting to the whale, negotiation of other players who wish to join, equipping other players and the end of the play episode when Isaac and Charlie go to complete work with the teacher.

Thematic content

The first part of the play episode is prompted by the cooking processes and habits of adults in a kitchen environment. Their repeated discussion of wine and beer – very much drinks which children are not allowed – are exploration of an adult status obtained through their pretence. There is a sense of urgency in the preparations of Isaac and Charlie, who use different utensils quickly and repetitively express a ‘need’

for certain items – drinks, knives, plates and bowls. The point at which Charlie picks up a clock and manually moves the hands, saying to Isaac 'look how fast the clock's going – so fast' (lines 22, 23 and 26) is conceptually challenging within their narrative. Charlie may be recognising the temporality of their cooking and the need for speed in the processes they are representing. It could be suggested that this sense of time passing is particularly pertinent for freely-chosen play; the players are in an environment where they might be interrupted or asked to leave the space at any point and therefore their social, imaginative interactions have to be fully participated in and valued at that moment, within the time frame of choosing that they are given. Artefacts which are to hand largely guide the play: with different cooking artefacts prompting the continued narration of the food preparation, the presence of the phone prompting a phone call to absent characters and the sunglasses giving cause to Charlie to twice suggest a tangent narrative which the players could pursue.

At line 121, Charlie introduces the concept/object of the whale, which he finds in a cup, represented by a plastic potato. This is a moment of great humour – the nonsensical notion that such a huge creature could exist in a small plastic cup is met with fear and shock by Charlie. Charlie's advances the pretence at this moment, in which he severs the object of the plastic potato from its initial meaning, then prompts Isaac and Kylie as co-operative players to react to the whale. He develops the narrative as Kylie exclaims fear of a whale underneath her feet and Isaac reacts by attacking the whale and phoning the police. Enforcing the rules by involving police is a common theme in the home corner, helped by the police-related props which have been provided e.g. a police helmet. Isaac defers to a higher order than the players themselves – speaking into the phone as if someone responds by asking him questions (line 168). His reference to the creature as a 'baddie whale' and 'bad guy ones' demonstrates the prevalence of the good/bad binary which governs his thinking. This shapes the tension of the play and the need for a response from an 'Other' with a higher authority than even the players can offer in pretence.

Social relationships and dynamics: language

The closeness of Isaac and Charlie's friendship is enacted and reflected in their turn-taking dialogue and ability to pick up (or indeed reject) play cues from each other. They echo phrases used by each other to describe what they are doing, before Isaac seeks further affirmation and co-operation from Charlie through repeating three times an instruction regarding a big bowl (lines 21, 24 and 27). In line 24-25: 'Charlie we need this big bowl to cook in don't we?', Isaac is demonstrating narration of make-believe action, which, as Trawick-Smith (1998) describes employs two powerful language structures – a statement of joint action ('we need – to cook') and a requestive tag ('don't we?'). Trawick-Smith notes that these language strategies 'soften [his] demand and more effectively influence peers' (1998: 443). Such language use can be identified several times throughout the play episode (lines 31, 55). The act and narration of chopping actions which they repeat once Charlie introduces the knives as props - 'I'm chopping up my bread' (lines 36-40), appears to cement their role as co-operative players as they engage in the same activity. Trawick-Smith notes that these initiations of narrating make believe actions markedly increase in usage in five-year olds compared to 3-to-4 year olds (*ibid*: p440). Not only then does this type of repetition give an indication of increased cognitive functioning as displayed through meta-play language but it also appears to provide a pleasurable experience for both players whose action are reflected back towards them.

Social relationships and dynamics: control of artefacts

What is clear upon viewing the play episode is that the artefacts which are to hand in the home corner have a huge significance upon the children's play. Alongside prompting an initial and overarching theme (food preparation), conversations regarding artefacts and negotiations over artefacts form a large part of the play narrative. Isaac's apparent need for a particular knife at the kitchen unit uncovers Charlie's co-operative nature and willingness to share:

```
Isaac: WHAT! I need one of those!
Charlie: You can have it then – I'll have this (lines 43 & 44)
```

The ability to correctly name an artefact and to use it properly, also appears to give social status Charlie whilst playing co-operatively with Isaac. At line 47 Isaac asks a

peripheral player if they would like a donut, Charlie's response in line 48 is: 'That's not a donut, that's my bread for my burger'. Being able to correct a peer's incorrect definition gives Charlie the right of possession of the artefact, as he prioritises his own play agenda over Isaac's. However, the sense of co-operation is maintained as Isaac exclaims: 'Oh, some plates. We need those' to which Charlie exclaims joyfully: 'Yes!' Through quick exchange of artefacts between the two players as well as announcements of their names and narration of their uses, a fast-paced narrative is developed, the momentum of which leads to further humour and expression-filled interactions which draw children in from other parts of the classroom.

At line 80, Issabelle, who has been a peripheral player and observer of the play episode, reports to Isaac that Kylie is 'drinking Matilda's'. Upon viewing the 'wrong' means of treating an artefact in the play narrative, Issabelle notes a convention of social drinking patterns which has been breached by another player. Issabelle's strategy of negotiating the play narrative is akin to stage management: she is aware of who should be doing what, and maintains a sense of order by taking contraventions of cultural norms within the play-frame into her own control, breaking the play-frame while she does it. For her, the correct use of an artefact is an implicit part of the engaging in fantasy.

The costumes (and the characterisations which they imply) do not appear to be referred to throughout the play episode until Isaac uses his own costume as a strategy to maintain and justify his authority in the space.

```
Claire: You lot are not letting me play
Isaac: Well, I am the king, you see (he opens his arms to draw attention to
his costume) (lines 199 & 201)
```

The costume which Isaac wears then, acts not only as a means by which to enter the play frame and as a cue to others, but also a device which he can employ to decide who to have around him and who is granted status as a co-player.

Social dynamics: entering the play mode

When Ryan enters the home corner in an attempt to participate in the play episode, he stands and speaks to Isaac, as if his lips are glued shut. After an initial rejection from Isaac ('you're not having it') Ryan explains to Isaac: 'I said it in bumble bee

mode, look…'. Ryan refers here to the Bumblebee character from the Transformers series, a franchise which he often alludes to and which enriches much of his dramatic play. His use of 'mode' here is somewhat conceptually ironic – yes, he is referring to a fictional 'mode' of a transforming machine that he has learnt about through a film/television series (and accompanying merchandise) but here he is also engaged in a specific mode of play: one which makes use of references to this battle-machine action genre. Though he asserts this mode of play assuredly and with confidence, it is not the mode of play in which the other players are involved. At this moment, Ryan is ignored verbally and physically by Isaac who turns away from him and shakes his head in response. Ryan now needs to negotiate a new way to be accepted into this peer group's play episode. Later he makes a second attempt to enter the narrative calling to 'King Isaac': he has adapted his strategy and realised who he needs to appeal to, through giving deference to the fantasy role of Isaac who largely holds the social authority (line 225).

Isaac also maintains his authority in the play episode by explicitly controlling the number of people in the home corner space. When Claire requests entry to the play, Isaac explains: 'there's one two three four five in already' (line 185), implying to Claire that this is enough and no-one else is permitted. The teacher had not made any explicit rules regarding an enforced maximum number of people for this space, but Isaac uses this supposed adult control to his own ends, ensuring the peers/players around him are the players that 'he wanted' (line 192).

Humour and creative language

A huge amount of pleasure during this play episode springs from the comical behaviour and language demonstrated by players. At the start of the play episode, Isaac's word play gives a humorous opener to the process of cooking, as he refers to a plastic egg as 'Egbert' and explains that he is making 'juicy poocy'. His later explanation to the police that there are 'a trillion of them' when referring to the whales which the players have discovered, gives an example of the centrality of hyperbole in play narratives. In using the phrase 'a trillion' he is pushing the possibilities of reality towards the absurd, and may also be putting to use new technical vocabulary for counting. Charlie, elaborating on my complaint that there is

a hole in the cup I have been given, demonstrates a slapstick style of humour in the misfortune of water pouring in his eye (line 103). Later his introduction of the whale immediately adds a sense of absurd tension to the play episode and allows his peers to use this concept of the whale to draw attention to their own actions and problems within the play-frame. Charlie introduces the whale within the play-frame: he never elaborates or gives instructions to other players regarding it, but instead announces the symbolic transformation (Trawick-Smith, 1998: 436) through his own exaggerated reactions. When Charlie attempts to subdue the whale with a kick, his declaration 'that always works' followed by a failed kick, an exclamation of pain and then the word 'usually…' (lines 135-138) creates in him a fool character involved in slapstick, and then provoking comic pathos when his plan fails. Here, all players appear to be performing for an audience, which would incorporate their peers as well as me as an adult player. The ability to keep each other amused by their reactions and suggestions gives the play episode a dynamism which keeps it moving and keeps participants and spectators captivated.

Adult in play

What appear to be the effects then of having an adult in the play episode, close by and interacting with both key and peripheral players? In the flow of the play episode, Isaac has a high level of autonomy, rejecting ideas he doesn't wish to adopt and steering the narrative – for example, calling the police. The presence of an adult does not appear to significantly alter his interactions, apart from one moment when he serves drinks and says 'it's only Matilda having some at the moment'. Here he privileges the adult authority in the situation, and it seems the function of this could be to determine who he wants to assign more authority to.

Upon watching the play episode again, I can note the function that I took as an adult player with a want to drive the narrative forward. I introduce a tense situation to be solved as I complain about a fault with an artefact (the cup has a hole in) and introduce the pretence situation of finding a frog in a cup. This was not based on any particular material prompt but was a means by which to introduce an unexpected object of humour into the narrative. Whilst this could have steered the narrative the way I wished it to go, I allowed the children to deal with this problem and continue

their own narrative which then may have prompted the discovery of a whale in a cup by Charlie which, in turn, drove the continuation of the narrative. A particularly adult agenda could be identified as I ask: 'we don't want to hurt the whale do we?' – trying to avoid a violent narrative, and later expressing: 'it could be a good whale'. The other players reject this latter suggestion and in retrospect it seems I could have been spoiling the tension of the whale being bad by suggesting a largely peace-filled storyline which would possibly offer less excitement and fewer heightened reactions. Also, as a player, I aim to control the volume of the child players when I explain: 'we need to make sure we're not shouting' (line 175-6). Though this was asserting my authority in a way which stepped out of the frame of play, I was aware of the possibility of the narrative being stopped by another adult due to high noise levels, and therefore I am seeking to protect the child players' right to continue in the narrative.

The interruption by the class teacher, who asks whether Ryan has finished his 'challenge' and then to mark his face off to signify this, is indicative of the constraints faced by players. The 'challenge', though named as if voluntary, is an activity which all children in the class must finish in a day. Though Ryan is trying to gain entry into play at this point, his more formal duties in the classroom have to necessarily be completed.

6.3 Kylie

It's a cold Tuesday morning in November and eighteen children are nestled on the carpet. The smell of pine disinfectant lingers in the air from the nearby nursery sinks, whilst Minion hats and Frozen scarves lie on the floor of the class cloakroom, having not quite hit the mark of their assigned peg. I sit at the back of the carpet, crossed legged like the rest of them, though jutting out slightly more from the group, having had 23 years more growth. The smaller members of the group each have a whiteboard in front of them, and a few lids of marker pens are being nibbled by curious mouths. They are practising writing 'sh' - a digraph ('two letters one sound' they say in unison when prompted) on their boards. Some of the S letters around the room look like overly excited coiling snakes, whilst some letter h's have their 'sticks' trailing all the way to the top of the board. As I peer over the boards to catch a

glimpse of the forest of sh, I feel a cold hand on my leg. I turn to look at the owner of the hand, who peers up at me: “I’m scared of letters and sounds” Kylie says, looking back up at me. The curly black hair pulled back into a ponytail, the perfectly white blouse and the shiny almost-new shoes; Kylie nearly always looks neat and ready to face a day of school. Slightly smaller in stature than some other classmates, though growing in confidence every day, Kylie’s daily journey is one through a maze of intensely felt emotions. With each new task in Letters and Sounds this morning, she adopts a new look of worry and when the group are told that they can wipe off the whiteboards and hand them in, I hear her whisper ‘no more’. I spend a lot of time with Kylie throughout the year, particularly as she appears to enjoy being in my presence and especially engages when I discuss things she says with her. As the school year progresses I notice how in touch with her own emotions she is, and how she can be self-referential when she wants or needs to be, saying ‘I can’t stop crying now’ in a particularly distressed moment and ‘I’m far too tired to carry on tidying’ when the class ‘tidy-team’ moments arrive before each home time. At the start of the year children are assessed at the point when they have achieved a high level of well-being according to the judgement of the teacher. Kylie was deemed one of the last to reach this level and therefore her assessment was completed later than the majority of the class.

As the year progressed through Kylie’s social life with her peers and through her play, her imagination, courage and tenacity could be seen shining through. As well as the baseline assessment, the notes made by the teacher at the start of the year give us clues about the spaces where Kylie can flourish: ‘I love playing in the home corner’ the notes state of Kylie. She can very often be found there, dressed in a spotty dog costume or carrying a doll in a baby carrier. She seems to harness her emotional awareness in this space and intense feelings are channelled into her many characterisations. One March morning she invites me into this imaginative world grasping my hand and with sparkling eyes, asking: ‘D’you wanna go to space with my machine? D’you wanna go to space with my machine? Let’s go then! D’you wanna hold my hand so we can go into space? There’s a big toy in planet earth.’

This imaginative world is not just for others to share in though, it is a personal world for her to delve into. On one occasion, when the children are told they can leave the

carpet space to go for choosing time, Kylie stays sitting down, unusually for her. She is staring off into the mid-distance, drifting. I approach tentatively:

M: Are you okay?

Kylie: I was going my imagination

M: What was happening?

Kylie: A wedding. I was going a wedding

M: What happened there?

Kylie: I was marrying a boy.

Kylie often talks about relationships, weddings and babies. Hers is a world of romance and care, as well as spaceships and rocket-cars. In our troupe, then, our group of wandering players, she is our leading lady. Full of emotion and passion, dramas and joys.

Aspect	*Notes*
Content	Kylie feeds baby with the plastic food and spoon Cole and Hayden play with a baby pram and cushions in the corner. Kylie scolds boys Researcher asks questions of her character Kylie discusses her job. Kylie inspects items in the handbag Boys use Kylie's play as a prompt for their play 'I'm a baby' Cole and Hayden explain their characters to me Kylie - whilst putting on shoes - describing how she arranges work and baby, refers to toys she wishes to bring to school She leaves for work (in the classroom) Protecting the baby from the boys, calming and burping baby 'Finally it's time for bed' – sleeping and waking in the morning Sam and Cole demonstrating naughtiness and discussion of punishment
Artefacts	Doll and baby carrier Handbag Plastic carrot Spoon Plastic shoes Pushchair Eye mask Picnic basket of plastic crockery and food Sticks
Stimulus	Mothering and caring for a baby For the boys it appears to be Kylie's play theme – wanting entry The role of a mother, work roles, childcare, money and what to use it Patterns of daily routine Punishment and discipline of others by a mother figure
Spatial	Quiet room and Kylie moves out to classroom – where her work space is Kylie mostly alone, boys in the room, reacting to each other, Kylie observes Corner of the room with cushion features as place to interact regularly Discussion of where different people can sit – the difference between the chair and the floor Arrangement of space: Where is the 'naughty corner' – where people have to sit? There is a group understanding of the relevance of types of space. 'Matilda you have to get out' – knowing the spaces they should be in when instructed, instructing or demanding from others about rules of relevant spaces
Temporal	Morning choosing session, 11am 2 minutes first section, 14:07 second section of filming (until choosing session asked to stop) '100 years of work' 'It's only going to take zero minutes' 'The moon always goes really slow and then it's morning' – the speed of daily routine

Figure 6.2: content analysis table for Kylie's socio-dramatic play episode

Kylie – the power of the parental character, discipline, and conceptions of working

[Or: Kylie's working day - zero minutes for one hundred years]

Transcript – Appendix 3

The studied 16 minute 22 second socio-dramatic play episode takes place in the quiet room of the Reception classroom, on a Monday morning in early July. During the day that the video was filmed, Kylie was the key player who was being focused upon, in multiple ways. Firstly, this focus was theoretical – as a researcher I wanted to follow the socio-dramatic play she was involved in. Secondly, this focus was pragmatic in terms of filming; instead of capturing the whole of the room within the frame, I chose to focus the camera upon Kylie herself, to get a closer capturing of her gestures, facial expressions, utterances, exchanges and movements.

There are other players within the episode: Cole and Sam take a role in associative play with Kylie throughout, and Hayden, Gabi and Libbie also interact briefly with Kylie. The episode takes place in the quiet room, with a window at one end and a curtain dividing the room from the classroom. The room contains several wooden block seats, a large wooden spool which acts as a table, low wooden benches along the sides of the room, a variety of soft toys and a pile of cushions and blankets beneath the window.

Prior to the video, Kylie has put on a pair of plastic shoes and picks up a small white handbag. She has picked up a blue plastic baby carrier with a soft pink doll laying in it. The overarching narrative of the play episode is as follows: Kylie protects her doll from new players who enter, she discusses her job to me as questioner, she leaves to give her shoes to someone else, and the boys discuss their roles. Kylie returns and continues discussing her job and the boys' roles, Kylie leaves briefly for 'work', she feeds the doll, protects it from another player pretending to sleep briefly then after giving her doll breakfast, a lengthy negotiation of which of the players must go into 'the naughty corner' ensues, including Kylie sending one player to be 'caged'. Finally, a call from the class teacher is heard from the classroom and the play episode ends as the players leave the space.

Thematic content: the parental character

The primary role adopted by Kylie in the play episode is that of a parent with a baby. Throughout the episode, Kylie takes the baby carrier and doll with her and when leaving the area briefly, ensures I, as a co-player, will look after the doll. The act of caring for the baby and carrying it with her structures how she interacts with others and how she moves around the space. At the start of the episode, Kylie appears already to be protective of the doll when Sam enters the space announcing to him: 'you're gonna scare my baby, she's sleeping'. By announcing this, she is immediately informing Sam as to her intentions in the space: her focus is this doll and therefore according to her, his actions in her vicinity must fit in with her play narrative. She appears to be reacting to Sam running across the room and his shouts; she wants to maintain a calmness around the doll. When I begin asking questions about a previous comment which Kylie had made ('I went to work today') her focus is on the doll, rocking the baby carrier and declaring her baby's name to myself and her co-players. We see Kylie's determination to keep her personal narrative of parenting going, in the face of perceived threats from other players and her attention continually reverts back to the doll after each interaction with co-players (though she does, to her own horror, drop the doll on the floor in transit). Here Kylie is exploring the closeness of having a child in her care and keeps the baby carrier physically close or in contact with her. Her narrative within the play frame centres on her routine with the doll. At lines 207-208, Kylie explains that: 'finally it's time for bed'. She similarly announces putting the baby to bed, eating breakfast and leaving for work. In announcing the narrative of her routine she moves the play episode on, signalling to fellow players what events are taking place, whilst perhaps also narrating for the sake of me as audience: she explains what she is doing, in order that her character is understood. Kylie's means of framing the play episode is fluid throughout. She does not noticeably step 'in and out' of a particular character (explaining that she is a parent in one moment and herself in another) but seems to retain the parent character as her own. Kylie does not refer to herself as mother, father or parent of the baby, as her focus appears to be on the basic daily routines of care (sleeping, waking, and going to work) rather than her own identity. She speaks directly to the doll only once during the entire video, and also makes crying sounds for the doll in one instance. The fact that

she does not feel the need to announce her character displays her confidence that the players around her will participate in the same pretence that she is engaged in. This play episode, then, seems to give an example of Kylie's move from a private play domain (herself and her interactions with the doll), to a highly social or co-operative play domain, where shared ideas extend the activity and altercations are resolved between players - such as disciplining perceived negative behaviour (Broadhead, 2001: 28-29).

Upon reviewing the video it is clear that I, as a participant observer within the play, am continuing a conversation with Kylie through her play by asking questions, where her actions and speech suggests that she is privileging her interactions with the doll over answering the questions which I pose to her (lines 1-36). In such cases, I reflect that I have an adult agenda in mind here; hoping to continue a conversation where it doesn't seem desired by the participant, purely to explore what I as a researcher find interesting (a child discussing the concept of having a job). In this case then, I did not appear to be following my ontological premise that the 'child is expert' by allowing them to follow their own play agenda. This is one of many dilemmas faced by an adult in child-led play which will be explored further in the discussion chapter.

Content: Power and discipline

As the play progresses it is clear that Kylie has a role of authority over Cole and Sam as the two other key players in the space. This may indeed stem from the parental persona that she has created in her interactions and announcements with the doll, and also her continued protection of the doll from her co-players. As this episode takes place in the later part of the school year, Kylie's relationships with the other players have been established and they, as a group, are more confident in taking on roles of authority over each other and feel comfortable in extending play narratives to include themes such as punishment, which may have been a problematic theme to incorporate earlier in the year.

As one of Kylie's key co-players in this episode, Cole spends a significant amount of time negotiating terms and strategies of control and punishment with Kylie. In the class, Cole, though not outspoken, has an intelligent and often comical means of dealing with his peers, and is a firm member of a small group of boys who often

choose to spend time together. He is astute at involving himself in play episodes and by this point in the year, has become a regular voice heard in groups at play. At the start of the play episode Cole appears to be introducing a theme of power. Cole explains and repeats to co-player Hayden that he has 'loads of guns' (line 30). Though this is a stand-alone comment which does not seem to continue through the dialogue, Cole may be asserting his authority within the play frame: the person who has weapons must indeed be seen as powerful. Cole then starts to declare the in-frame character which he adopts: a puppy (a declaration which he repeats ten times throughout the play episode). His repetitions supply prompts for Kylie to include him in the play:

Cole: You can fit me in a cage, I'm a baby doggy
Kylie: No, only if I had a cage I could put my doggy in it […](lines 103 & 104)

This moves along the dialogue, allowing Kylie to incorporate Cole, but it also seems a method by which Cole submits his character to Kylie's authority: the concept of a cage means he is contained and under her control. Later, the three key players discuss which of them is 'being naughty' which seems to be the ultimate negative attribute. Throughout the rest of the play episode, pleasure is derived from discussion of the punishment of the characters, mostly through the threat of being sent away from the key area of action to the 'naughty corner'. Cole instructs Kylie to tell Sam off and then later asks to be disciplined himself: 'You can put me in the naughty corner (shouts) naughty corner, doggy corner' (line 335). As well as creating tension in the play scenario by trying to build a negative image of another character, Cole seems to have a desire himself to be punished; to see Kylie exercising power over his character within the frame of play.

The means by which Kylie disciplines her co-players certainly emulates phrases heard from adults, particularly when Kylie says: 'Don't do that again please, I'm bored out this' and points to her head, which suggests the phrase: 'bored out of my head'. The means by which she speaks to the two boys is direct and without much varied intonation, suggesting her seriousness in wanted to control them. An adult phrase of threat can be heard when she insists she will punish Sam if he repeats his perceived actions of violence towards the doll 'one more time' (lines 240 and 252). The

relationship of her power over Sam seems to gain more currency with the new knowledge of his middle name, as told to her by another peripheral player. Perhaps her threats can have more effect on him out of the frame of play, now she possesses knowledge of his entire identity (lines 192 to 204). At line 239, Kylie introduces the concept and the threat of the 'naughty corner' into the game. This concept of a disciplinary area is not a concept which she has adopted from classroom daily routine. After introducing the 'naughty corner', it becomes influential both as a trope in the dialogue and a means of controlling the space around her: she decides it is the corner of the room near to where I am sitting. With 24 mentions of this particular space within 6 minutes and 40 seconds of video, it is clear that control of the space around the players is a central aspect of their socio-dramatic play. In introducing it, Kylie can have authority over the physical placement of her co-players by regularly sending them to this space. The concept of the 'naughty corner' evolves later in the episode to the more stringent 'cage', which Cole and Kylie negotiate locking and having the ability to unlock with a 'locky key' (sticks). At line 336-7 she demonstrates tenderness in her leadership as she gently instructs Cole to collaborate with her by taking Sam by the hand to lead him to the naughty corner. Kylie does seem to struggle momentarily when explaining that I (as researcher) am sitting in this proclaimed naughty corner. There appears to be a moment of worry as she realises she is effectively scolding an adult, and though this is within the play frame, may be a difficult situation for her to reconcile with the out of frame adult-child power dynamic. She quickly rectifies this statement by explaining that I am 'in the happy side of the naughty corner': the 'happy side' being a recognised means of rewarding behaviour as it is the board on which children's names are written following positive behaviour. In this experience of acting as the adult within the frame of play, Kylie is exploring to what extent she can control her co-players within the space surrounding her, through the pretence in which her parental character has dominating power.

Content: Schooling and working

In discussing the act of going to work, Kylie is exploring the role of adults of whom she has knowledge. The conversation about her job, prompted by Kylie herself before the start of filming of the play episode, allows her to explore the basic tenets of working life. This is also mostly prompted by my questions. Kylie's answers to these

questions seem to be closely related to phrases often heard in the school day. Of course, this is expected and understandable considering her main sphere of experience of what 'work' entails is largely the school classroom and the daily routine which she experiences. Exploring her discussion of work can offer an insight into what are relevant discourses in her understanding of her school life. At line 32, I ask Kylie: 'Do they pay you quite well at the car station?' Her response is: '(looking at the doll) Yeah – (looking at me) I always do a good job. I always do a-'. The phrase 'doing a good job' bears similarities with that used by members of staff when describing what is required of children who are working. In Kylie's description of her work, she may also be reassuring me as an adult about her own conduct – justifying herself and seeking affirmation. It could be the case that she wishes to appear to 'work' well because an adult has asked her to describe her work. The terms she talks in mostly concern quality of own behaviour and work and less pragmatic facts about what this in-role job could be.

Noteworthy here is Kylie's response to the question: 'Or sometimes do you get a bit tired of work?' (line 78). She replies: 'No… there's no – there's no waters there - and I never need a drink' (lines 82 & 84). This may seem an unusual response to such a question until it is set in the context of the Reception classroom: individually named bottles of water are kept on a shelf near the front of the classroom and children are given specific times daily when they can all drink e.g. milk time, after a P.E. lesson or outdoor break. Children are permitted to have a drink when they want one, though this is sometimes monitored or controlled by members of staff such as when a child is seen to be drinking too much or too little. Kylie's apparent association of being tired during work tasks with the act of having drink could possibly reflect her understanding of strength and tenacity: when one is tired, one drinks. When one is working hard, one does not need to drink.

At line 128, Kylie's explanation of the length of time spent at work ('it's only going to take zero minutes') could have several connotations. Is her concept of an adult's work day 'zero minutes' because she is not there to witness the work? Is it that her experience of 'work' (challenges, writing tasks) are undesirable and she wishes to work for very short periods? Does leaving for 'work' – an adult job - within the frame of play, take her away from co-players and therefore she wants to avoid this absence?

Perhaps she changes the frame of reference to time as she steps outside of the curtain of the quiet room into the sphere of work. Or does she insist 'zero minutes' at work purely for the comical value of this declaration for an adult audience? Her explanation that she tidies up 'some cars' and then she has finished (line 133), reflects the task Kylie is asked to do daily without fail: tidy up the classroom. This is a work task for her; necessary, happening at specific and designated times, and not optional.

We hear further echoes of the voice of adults in the classroom through Kylie's speech in this play episode. I ask Kylie 'Do you play when you're at work?' This question, though very much seeming to be part of my adult research agenda (wanting to prompt a discussion of what 'work' means in comparison to 'play') does receive a response from Kylie which is insightful for her understanding of reward. At line 135 she responds: 'No, baby doesn't mess about or nothing and I give her a sticker when she's good'. In her answer, she implies that 'to play' is related closely to 'messing about' and this is not behaviour which is rewarded. In the answer to this question she places herself as adult over the doll, re-asserting her authority within the frame of the play and allowing her to suggest the rewards that only an adult can bestow. This reward, as is her experience of the token economy which operates within the classroom, is the receiving of a sticker. Much as she may receive a sticker for a completed piece of work, finishing her lunch or being listed as behaving well during a session – so she reflects this reward system upon the doll. And it is not play which earns this reward, in fact it is the opposite: 'being good', she implies, means not 'messing about' at play. This interpretation does discount the fact that my own question as a researcher could be potentially confusing as the term 'play' may not reconcile with Kylie's in role character of a parent. She therefore has to respond to the question in a way which refers to the child character rather than herself. Though there are several ambiguities in the analysis here, it is nevertheless insightful that Kylie explores the boundaries of behaviour, actions and concepts of timing through a discussion of work whilst within the play frame as a character who is older and who bears more responsibility than her out-of-frame self.

6.4 Ryan

On March 29th, I sit down at the back of the carpet area and begin writing the date at the top of the page in my notebook. Someone on the back row of the carpet space turns to me. 'Would you like to join us?' he says, eyes wide, eyebrows raised and smiling widely – I cannot decline such a welcome. I sit down on the carpet next to Ryan. With hair often slicked back with gel and being physically bigger than other children, though not one of the oldest in the class, I tended to think of Ryan as being older than he is and perhaps with a wider knowledge base and a better ability to deal with emotional situations than some of his peers. Ryan is polite and welcoming, enthusiastic to new experiences and loves to hold long conversations with adults – if they have the time! His play personality is defined by his two main passions which change as the year progresses: first Minecraft and then Transformers. He can become so absorbed in the story that he's telling you, or the model that's he's building that he doesn't realise the product of his dribbling nose has now exceeded the stopping point of his top lip and is pursuing the daring onward journey to his chin. In the winter, he comes into the classroom bedecked with media characters: red Spiderman gloves, a yellow Minions bag, shoes with a Star Wars logo and motif. These characters permeate Ryan's imagination.

One Friday in March, Ryan is part of a group sitting ready to listen and talk about several pieces of music. Ms W puts on Mars by Holst from the Planet Suites, and an image of the solar system is shown at the front. The group are asked to simply listen to the music. As the melody becomes intense, Ryan uses his hands to cover his mouth and cheeks as his eyes widen. He grasps his folded legs and lifts them in the air as the music builds. After about a minute, the music is paused and they are asked what the music makes them think of, what they see in their heads when listening.

'It sounds like space rattles' Ryan says, 'when stuff goes together and blows up'. He demonstrates objects crashing together with his hands: 'all the parts shoot out!' His hands float around by his head. Ms W presses play again. Ryan now listens open mouthed.

'What does it sound like now?' says Ms W from the chair at the front.

'I think a dark side's going to strike the earth' says Ryan, a hint of awe in his voice.

Dark side - indeed, John Williams certainly borrows many musical motifs from Holst's Mars in the Star Wars soundtracks. And with the release of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* three months previously, Ryan's conceptual recognition of 'a dark side' is unsurprising. As the music crescendos, Ryan bangs his fists together with the beat.

'It sounds like an asteroid' he announces.

'What is an asteroid?' responds Ms W.

'Well it might go all the way down to earth and smashed us and gone straight through' he explains enthusiastically, demonstrating the movements with his hands several times, with careful accuracy as he moves. Finally, as the music reaches a climax, Ryan moves his fists in slow motion circles before hammering the floor with them slowly and furrows his brow as the mood of the music becomes tenser. Once the track finishes and he is expected to move on to a Spanish session, Ryan continues to tell me, in great detail, about what in space this music could have been portraying, using continual gestures to show me how these space objects would move, land, and smash into each other. Ryan's imaginative life centres on action and narration, in the filmic sense. Whether it is spinning his water bottle in slow motion through the air or walking with jerky robot-like movements across the classroom. Within my fieldnotes, it is quite common to see 'Ryan is transforming in the background', which became a somewhat mundane occurrence in the daily routine.

Once when narrating his transformation from boy to Transformer vehicle he gives instructions for each distinct stage with 'Step 1, Step 2…'. After this Emily, who had been watching Ryan, describes each phase of her tidying up using Ryan's style of instruction. His means of playful articulation is often seductive to other players and his acceptance of adopting a fantasy character often draws other children to watch him where they find accepting the character themselves slightly too difficult. Ryan is always polite and overt about including people in his play, but he is sometimes outright rejected by them, perhaps for his tenacity in following one theme and not allowing other types of characters into this.

Due to what the staff describe as 'quite a bit of time off' due to illness, there are concerns over how fast Ryan is progressing academically. In particular, his levels of literacy development are perhaps slower compared to the class's higher achievers.

But though his reading and writing may not be 'exceeding' the goals required, those who spend time listening to his explanations and stories, can see a creative brain at work. In November, whilst building a complex construction out of Lego, Ryan, unprompted, explains his creation to me:

> It looks like this. They're all the same, they're called para-cubes, para-chargers and they power up the gun. And the laser builder 3000 is the thing that helps build the stuff for people who don't have houses or they're getting bullied or they have zombies in their town and they don't have guns. And I can help them with my laser gun 3000. And a powerful thing about that I love. The power it does that power it ups, is that that I love. I just need to make more for everybody to say 'hooray!' This is one little cube stacked together, the whole of the gun is made out of colours. If I draw it on [your] book that would be great!

Ryan's imaginative world is full of robots, monsters and weapons. It's also full of twisting narratives combining explanation and description of action. In our troupe of players then, Ryan is surely our inspired writer.

Aspect	*Notes*
Content	Ryan, researcher – awareness of the camera and filming Ryan as shopkeeper, selling small sticks, negotiations of price and object use Slapstick by adult player and adopted by child players Eve and Bella enter scene, Issabelle as observer, Kayla as incorporated character Shopkeeper selling items to customer(s) Shopkeeper showing his cats/house to the customer Walking cats/making dinner Introduction, preparation and hunt for a monster-type beast
Artefacts	Large foam and plastic covered sterling coins Coloured matchsticks and coloured bowls Laminated number cards Feather duster Home corner as house of shopkeeper Clock Drawing by Molly Sticks
Stimulus	Identifying the name of coins and colours of matchsticks Counting money Shopping and running a shop Siblings and family members Aspects of language from Minecraft/other games? 'Chairman Meow', use of sticks to make weapons, 'he only had one health' Molly's drawing of the monster and ensuing hunt (bear hunt inspiration which Molly often draws on?)
Spatial	Table with items on next to the home corner Home corner (acts as home of shop keeper) Carpet area – for walking cats Quiet room – appears to be where the 'monster' is Face-to-face interaction of myself and Ryan, co-players approach from the side
Temporal	Twenty minute play episode Ryan insisting it is time for the shop to close Eve tells us the time, Ryan says it's for me to go now Ryan leaves earlier, Molly asked to go and work

Figure 6.3: content analysis table for Ryan's socio-dramatic play episode

Ryan: slapstick, family life and phantasmagoria

[Or: Ten pees, Chairman Meow and the gloopy beast]

Transcript – Appendix 4

This twenty-minute play episode takes place on a table next to the home corner and in the home corner of the Reception classroom, on a March afternoon. Ryan interacts with the researcher and gradually other players join, interacting to different extents from not talking but sharing in the items being played with, to becoming a significant co-player with Ryan during the episode. Earlier in the day, Ryan has been taking part in a maths task, sitting at the teacher's table. This entailed using small plastic coins to pay the teacher for plastic fruits which she had labelled with prices. During this activity, Ryan, to a further extent than other children around the table, had narrated what he was doing, and expressed his intentions of what to buy whilst announcing prices. At one point, he had wanted to show the teacher that his fruits were dancing together: he sung and made the plastic objects dance, though the teacher continued the task, focusing on the money and the questions that Ryan needed to answer. Further play items in the classroom had been chosen to accompany and extend this maths task, with the teacher explaining how the items could be used at the start of the day. These items include large plastic covered foam discs depicting the British sterling coins. In the afternoon, Ryan, who is wandering around the classroom on his own, picks up the large £2 coin and asks generally to the children near the table: "Who wants to come to my shop and buy some stuff? Okay, you can buy some, you can buy some, you can buy some, you can buy some, you can buy some." This is Ryan's initiation of the episode of socio-dramatic play and the cue at which I, as co-player and researcher, turn on the camera to record.

The structure of the episode of play appears quite fragmented and Ryan must react to the entry of other players at various moments. The basic structure is as follows: Ryan and I are at his 'shop' together discussing coin values and names, there is a discussion of exchanging sticks, use of sticks (to build houses) and why they don't work, Chloe enters (Ryan defends the play objects from others), Ryan becomes 'Steve' and there is a discussion of his character. Buying and testing of the sticks takes place followed by a discussion of pets, introduction of Steve's sister 'Alex' (Kayla), an

attack of Ryan by Sophia(!), closing of the shop, a movement of players to the home corner to meet two cats, walking the cats in the classroom and returning home. Molly, who has not been involved thus far, then presents a drawing of a monster, Ryan and Kayla leave to fight the monster, Molly and Issabelle join Ryan and Ryan finally explains his defeat of the monster[4]. Though this episode of play is fragmented (in terms of players entering and leaving, and development of new themes), as the play progresses Ryan and Kayla become more inducted into the pretence of the characters they've adopted and become absorbed into the socio-dramatic play situation.

Slapstick

The majority of the interaction in this episode of play takes the form of myself as various customers and Ryan as shopkeeper, with domain over the objects on the table in front of him. As Ryan offers items, as the co-player I find ways to use these items which might be unexpected. The resulting slapstick behaviour employs physical comedy within the play interaction. Ryan's response is one of pleasure. The second time I do this, he responds:

> *Ryan places the ten pence coin on his head, smiling broadly. I hit my own face with the £2 coin. Ryan laughs and hits his face with the ten pence coin three times before releasing his arms to flop by his side and tilting his head backwards in laughter.*
> (lines 40-42)

Ryan's body language of seeming to lose control of his own muscles, reflects the joy he finds in this slapstick. The fact that he mirrors the action himself maintains a sense of reciprocity in our playful behaviour. This then appears to give Ryan impetus to use jokes within our interaction: he passes me tweezers when I ask for sticks, laughing as he explains that it is, in fact, a stick. The reciprocated jokes begin to develop the pace of the play, and appear to build a safe space of pretence in which Ryan can behave with this particular adult in ways that he may not with other adults in the classroom. He demands that I take things from him, raises his voice, critiques and corrects my behaviour. The humour within this interaction is an essential element of the play

[4] Themes explored through their chosen play: shop (fairness, exchange of items, buying and selling) family roles (naming, siblings, parents and pets), fantasy battling (defeat, warfare, discovery, injury and death).

relationship, and draws the frame around our physical and verbal interaction clearly: 'this is play'. This appears to foster a sense of trust within the relationship between us as players, where Ryan can test physical interaction and conversational boundaries. Due to constraints of both time and curriculum, it may be unusual for Ryan to have an adult co-player in school and especially in the classroom. The set-up of the pretence involving the coins and coloured sticks endures longer than I'd have expected Ryan's play episode to; it is 13 minutes and 30 seconds until these objects are left behind for the story to expand.

Family life: character development

As an adult co-player, I take a part in directing Ryan's play, when I present the name for my character and ask his name. Ryan chooses the name 'Steve', and I continue to use this name as I address him throughout the play episode. Choosing a name seems to allow him to transform into an adult character with authority (he says to me 'You're not even the boss here' line 23, and scolds other players 'give that coin back – to my customer – *now*' line 218-9) and enrich his play narrative to the point where he assigns other people with names and roles as well ('L: (reaches out to touch Kayla on the arm) This is my sister Alex'). Once Ryan takes up the name 'Steve' he then makes suggestions for moving the narrative on:

M: No – oh! D'you have any pets Steve?
Ryan: Oh I do have a cat upstairs if you want to go inside -
M: Oh a cat!
Ryan: - and meet him? (lines 128-131)

In proposing this to my character, Ryan is moving the space of play – he signals to the home corner - and extending the narrative. From his description of 'upstairs' and 'inside' – he is clearly entering the pretence of himself as shopkeeper, who has power to imaginatively transform the spaces around him to suit the needs of his character. Later he uses family relationships to further add to our play interaction:

M: What's your name?
Ryan: My name's – ur – Steve
M: Steve? Is that a good Scottish name
Ryan: Ur – I, I, I knew, I – your sister told me about you, as her brother, her brother
M: My sister? Oh yes – Evangelina – she told about me. And what did she say about me?
Ryan: She said you're normally kindness and shareable with fruit, and stuff
M: I have kindness and shareable, well that's -

Ryan: D'you have any animals? Cause I have some in the (signals behind him) (lines 177-184)

Ryan's explanation that my fictional sister told him about me, and that he has prior knowledge of me, seemed quite mature pretence at the time that we were engaged in play. He seems to struggle slightly as he formulates his thoughts regarding the pretence. But then his improvisational skills give the play dialogue an unanticipated turn; they allow him both to complement my character and to create a back-story, a fiction, which accompanies our current characters in the frame of play. His final question to me: 'D'you have any animals?' and his signalling, brings back the conversation to the theme which had been touched on before, as Ryan seems to want to move the play into a new space. Eventually, both he and Kayla, as brother and sister characters, excitedly guide me into their 'house' in the home corner, and there is much excited concurrent talking as they explain their pet cats to me as a visitor. This develops to the point where Kayla's character advises us to eat dinner, before Ryan's character asks me to accompany him to walk his pet cats, describing their walking habits. The pretence develops as they enter into the roles of each character in a home setting. The assigning of, and fulfilling the duties of, family roles amongst a group of players was a recurring characteristic of the socio-dramatic play which I observed.

Phantasmagoria

Near the end of the video extract, Molly enters the home corner with a drawing she has made of a monster or mythical beast. An extract from the transcript is presented below.

From transcript:

Ryan and Kayla look at the drawing
M: This is why I feel sick Steve, because I've heard that there's this thing – going around the streets. Have you heard about it?
Ryan: Ah yeah! I need – I need my sword out (pretends to pull a sword and begins swinging it around the space)
M: I don't know about that –
Kayla: And I need –
R: My diamond sword
K: (pretends to draw out a sword) And I need get my sword out. My diamond, very big sword
Molly: (to me) We have to find it. And get my invisible friend back –
R: (to Kayla, pushing down her arm to talk to her) Alex, Alex – get your [unheard] armour on and let's go
Molly: We need get my invisible friend back don't we? And that's the monster who eated it

K: (defiantly) come on
Ryan and Kayla pull clothes on as if dressing in armour. Kayla gallops towards the classroom, whilst Ryan swipes his sword into the space (lines 384-400)

The mood of the play episode changes when Molly brings her drawing into play. From themes of family life which spring from the establishment of the shopkeeper's shop near the home corner, the introduction of a mysterious beast switches the theme to one which is phantasmagorical. Though Molly is the individual who has introduced this new subject, they don't appear to include Molly in their planning for adventure. This does not appear to be a conscious, purposeful exclusion of her as a peer, but Ryan and Kayla seem to already have built up a relationship throughout the start of the episode and the momentum of the rest of their play comes from this bond which has formed through shared pretence. The mention of the creature in Molly's drawing adds a sense of excitement and foreboding to the already established narrative. Ryan's immediate response is acceptance of this new storyline into the play episode - he gleefully exclaims 'Ah yeah!' and then gives the reaction of a powerful hero: 'I need my sword out'. Adopting the trope of the knight/warrior/soldier seems to be a comfortable role for Ryan and he immediately begins dominating the play space by pretending to swing this sword around. Kayla is thereby inducted into this new storyline and mirrors Ryan's phrasing, resulting in her brandishing her own weapon. Ryan then addresses her by her character name, and prompts her to continue their newly found mission: 'let's go!' There is a sense of camaraderie here, which has developed from the sharing of a narrative, suggested by the fact that Ryan maintains reference to a fictional character rather than using Kayla's real name. Their pretence becomes highly physical as they appear to pull on armour and Kayla starts galloping around the space as if on a horse. With the prompt of the drawing, they need nothing more to divert the play episode to this hunt for the beast: they are already inducted into this cultural script, already equipped with what to do to enter this adventure narrative and the language and attitude it entails. Their collaborative actions signal the move into the next part of the play and the shared ability to judge the modality (Richards, 2014) of the section of play that they had moved into. Unfortunately, the camera does not follow the actions of the two key players, whose journey takes them into the rest of the classroom and eventually to the space of the quiet room.

Kayla is an individual who had vastly grown in confidence from the start of the year. As noted in fieldnotes from the end of November, at one point she dragged another child, almost aggressively, across the classroom, to join her in play. Her expression and manner here was combative, and she seemed to need possession over her peer. The teacher noted that Kayla found it hard to socialise with other children in play, though she would join in when the teacher sat down to play. In comparison to the subdued personality that Kayla showed at the start of the year, this video data demonstrates her confidently speaking in a group setting and engaging in a socio-dramatic narrative with her peers. Due to her tendency to join the teacher in play, it may be that she feels more comfortable when an adult promotes and encourages play amongst her peer group. It also may be from the adrenaline-inducing adventure play entered here, that she finds the ability to express herself. She has moved from using force to attempt some ownership of others, to being able to negotiate and join in as a character. Alongside Ryan, she appears to thrive in the establishment of an exciting adventure narrative, and her voice is clearly heard throughout.

The ending dialogue of the episode demonstrates a central aspect of Ryan's play personality and what he has a desire to discuss when given the opportunity by an adult. Approaching the quiet room with Molly, Ryan begins to speak:

Ryan: (holds up his empty hand to show us) It's got blood an' flesh. I've got the flesh of him
M: What did you find?
R: (holding out his hand to Molly and wiggling his fingers) Do you want the blood an' flesh?
Molly: No I want to -
M: What did you find?
Ryan: (looking at his hand, then up at me) Um – he – he had minions, we had to kill all of them and he only had one health and he died quickly
M: Oh did he?
Ryan: And I've got his flesh (holds out hand), his blood an' flesh
M: What did he look like?
Molly: (points into quiet room) He's in there! I see him!
M: Where?
Ryan: He's a big – he's a big gloopy monster
Molly: It's a bit dark in there, I'll get my light out -
M: He's what colour?
Ryan: Gloopy
Molly: I've got my light
Molly walks as if holding a torch by her shoulder, Kayla runs in to the quiet room and appears to be casting spellings with a stick, her teeth clenched. Kayla starts hitting her sticks towards another child in the quiet room who also brandishes a stick
M: Gloopy?
Ryan: Yeah
M: What do you mean?
Ryan: He's all gloopy and slimy (he waves his arms around and writhes as if made of liquid) and he did hit me with his slime, himself
M: What did it feel like?

The teacher approaches to tell Ryan that he must be collected to go home early from school. Molly is asked to leave to work with a teacher. Kayla stands in the background, holding a stick in both hands and watching as the two children leave. (lines 421-449)

In this extract, once I ask Ryan what he has found, he seems to struggle for words briefly but then is confident in his response. This response clearly reflects the narratives which run through his own personal media experiences: films and computer game narratives. The mention of minions is likely influenced by the Despicable Me (2010, 2013) films and their accompanying franchise – which feature daily in the lives of the class. That morning, the class had been instructed to play a game in which they dribbled a ball within a coned area of the playground. The PE instructor (from an external organisation) set this challenge in the context that the ball was 'a minion' with three lives and every time they dribbled outside the area, the minion would lose a life. Although this technically does not align fully with the context of the minion characters from the films, it was an imposed narrative to the game which gave motivation, particularly it seemed, to Ryan. Fieldnotes from the session suggest that though Ryan did not display a great level of physical skill when dribbling, he is captivated by the story offered in the game: whilst everyone else in the class is quiet, he attempts to explain to me, at great lengths, the journey of his minion and how it lost lives. This concept of losing lives or health, as used by the PE instructor, also draws on the cultural vocabulary which Ryan uses daily. In the extract above, his description of the defeat of the 'baddie' character with 'one health' is reflective of shooting or fight based computer games with a health counter signalling the weakness of the main character or fight opponent (for example represented by a line of ten small red hearts at the bottom of the screen in the original Minecraft game). These discourses are familiar to Ryan; he is comfortable with alluding to them and can confidently base his explanations to adults upon such concepts. Imaginative references also enrich his vocabulary in a way that he may not realise appeals to a more mature audience: it is unlikely that he formulated the cat's name 'Chairman Meow' himself! This socio-dramatic play narrative allows him to make use of these terms in both a collaborative setting and within a story of his own structuring, drawing on one very strong strand within his own web of significance (Geertz, 1973).

Molly, who enters the play episode at a late stage, seems to be a seasoned imaginative adventurer. She explains to fellow players: 'It's a bit dark in there, I'll get my light out', when entering a well-lit area – pulling out an imaginary torch which she holds near her face as she walks into the quiet room, at the back of the classroom. At the end of the day, a staff member commented: 'It's good that the girls got involved with it too, with monsters' (from fieldnotes). It appears that a group of girls joining in with a narrative which could be somehow 'masculine' is an event worthy of note for this member of staff. Upon observation of the children during the latter part of this socio-dramatic play episode, the players here (of any gender) create their own opportunities for fights and challenges – with whoever is in the space at the time.

There is a sense here that though the play episode has spanned almost 20 minutes, with the inclusion of new players and the extension of the storyline to include the popular narrative of a hunt for a monster, there was potential for the extension of the play which was cut short. For the children, it was the action which was truncated, for an observer/adult participant it is the tension of the play, the complexities it offers and opportunities for interesting dialogue, that have been cut short. As two children are asked to leave, Kayla displays a detectable expression of disappointment as the episode of play ends.

6.5 Emily

She has perfected the grimace. The bottom lip slowly slips out and the eyebrows are drawn down. You copy her, stare back at her and your eyes latch each other's. You hold the gaze still for a moment. Then you slowly begin to smile. She stays resolute for a moment, expressing the injustice done to her. Then as you continue to smile, you see a little falter in that grumpy expression. She can't hold it for long. Suddenly her eyes gain a new sparkle and the bottom lip is pulled in as her mouth stretches to a laugh. You can see her teeth, as she presses her tongue to fill in the gaps where some of them have fallen out. This is our comedic side-kick. Expressive, helpful, versatile in whatever character she plays, and always willing to take on a new kind of role even if it means getting messy. And very often it does. Emily, small with a bright blonde head of hair and fringe the length that it teases her eyes, can often be found

modelling the latest of play fashions: black smudges of felt-tip pen on her nose, a cardboard and sellotape bracelet on her wrist and her signature look, grey tights adorned with damp sand and the heel section half way up the front of her leg. She even changes this look with the season. One December morning during an impassioned class rendition of *Wiggly Woo*, Emily comes to me, sparkly Santa hat on, to point proudly to her knickers, revealed as her tights had fallen down around her knees. Emily prefers to wear her shoes on the wrong feet, it's her look. The toes pointing out the wrong way just reminds anyone conversing with her that this girl is anything but ordinary. Her determination to play a role extend into her search for props: she will find what she needs to throw this party for her baby, or extract someone's teeth or to make a plate of pancakes for breakfast. Her play in the home corner is full of gestures, precise and specific, even though her fine motor skills at that start of Reception year were not very refined. She is happy fulfilling the needs of the day on her own, with the confidence to set out on her own mission without a whole troupe around her. On the morning of the 3rd May, when a proportion of the class are given choosing time, Emily heads resolutely to the modelling table.

"Today I'm a bit busy" she declares to me, "I'm making a castle. I'm busy today. You know, I'm busy. Busy, busy. Busy... you can do some writing."
Obediently, I sit slightly away and begin some writing. Emily, here the master crafter at work, pulls out cereal boxes, lolly sticks and sequins from beneath the table.

"It's really tricky making a castle, you have to get so many boxes" she explains earnestly, flicking away her fringe. Nearby, Claire begins singing to me to get my attention as I write.

"I want some peace and quiet so, be quiet – I need to concentrate."
Her work is done in all seriously but once she begins attaching Smarties tubes to the roof of the castle and demonstrates the working parts, her expressive storytelling comes to life.

"I'm gonna put these for the canons, they'll go boom for the bad guys. Boom boom boom and DEAD. Crashing booming crash crash crash. If you're a good guy, you have

to come to my team. We won't shoot if you're a good guy. Matilda – good – on my team."

I am privileged to be on her team. This means I have been trusted. Trusted to be her patient when she wants to pull out my teeth with a plastic spatula, trusted to be by her side when she explains the process of labour to a co-player ("Squidge, squeeze, pull – it's out now"), trusted to be the customer when she wants to be the helpful plumber. Emily doesn't do things by halves, she's a passionate and insatiable player. When it's time for assembly or lunch and the class is asked to stop and empty their hands, Emily can usually be found subtly still unreeling the sellotape to add one more dinosaur sequin to her model. Or still mixing the cake mixture for my Transformer cake in the home corner. When asked again to stop, Emily will freeze. Like a dog who thinks you can't see it because it's still, Emily hopes she can carry on with her game because it's important that it is finished *in her way*. When clowns are in training, they are often told 'you should be the last one to know you are funny'. Emily certainly doesn't know that her grimaces and serious determination paired with her sandy wrong-footed shoes make her a delight to watch.

At the start of the year, this comedic side-kick struggled to let other people take on roles and thereby integrate herself in group imaginative play. Allowing others to take turns in any narrative that she begun was particularly difficult. There are no pragmatic, set rules for everyone to abide by – these would have to develop as the year went on and the troupes of players worked out their performance dynamic.

Aspect	*Notes*
Content	Emily, Kylie, Issabelle, Sam, researcher A doctor scenario with patient, doctor and parent sitting by. Another child offering food as he is using the kitchen unit. The children swap roles – doctor becomes a dog and patient becomes a vet. Another swap later as Sam becomes patient for Kylie. Kylie also treats a doll. Action: performing medical tests of body, face and eyes
Artefacts	Nurse tunic, plastic crown Chairs pushed together to create a 'bed' Trolley of sticks, sticks Doll Plastic food and plates
Stimulus	Experiences of being at the doctors/vets is clearly the first stimulus Family dynamics: the children refer to each other as dad and child
Spatial	Classroom: between the home corner and a reading trolley Players close at times due to the nature of 'tests' – lots of physical interaction and touching – though not always necessarily direct body to body Arrangement of the chairs and *how* the patient sits is discussed and one gives instructions to the other
Temporal	January, Monday afternoon – during a choosing time (more often in the afternoon than morning) Episode obviously started before camera was turned on, video extract 21:21. Emily repeated the character of doctor/nurse throughout the year. Was often found wheeling around the trolley used here Timing only a feature in terms of swapping: turn-taking as a part of the narrative Sam insisting timing of eating for co-players despite being in a quite different narrative

Figure 6.4: content analysis table for Emily's socio-dramatic play episode

Emily: themes of doctor play, the intimacy of touch and turn-taking

Transcript – Appendix 5

This episode of socio-dramatic play takes place on a Monday afternoon in late January 2016. The section discussed is 13 minutes 48 seconds of a video lasting 21 minutes. The play episode took place during choosing time. Emily has set up two chairs facing each other in the home corner and just in front of a trolley of books. Emily is wearing a nurse's tunic over her school clothes. Kylie is sitting on one chair with her legs up on another, she is wearing a pink crown in her hair. Emily sits next to her. Emily has brought a small trolley into the home corner. It is full of sticks and is on the floor to her left. Emily holds a bundle of sticks in her hand. The camera is set up facing Emily's chair arrangement, facing away from the home corner kitchen unit. The intentional focus of the video data is therefore Emily and Kylie as co-players, who have set up and develop a shared play narrative together. Issabelle sits just out of the frame of the video image, Sam is in the home corner, arranging food and utensils on the kitchen unit. He is mostly also out of frame though enters the frame (both of the camera and of the girls' play) at various moments.

The basic structure of the episode is as follows: Emily acts as a doctor/nurse, using sticks for various means of 'testing' on Kylie who acts as patient. Issabelle is playing the parent who sits next to the 'bed'. Sam offers food to the patients, and is termed as 'dad' by Kylie. Emily stands up and exclaims that Kylie can now be the doctor, though Kylie exclaims she is the vet. Issabelle places a doll on the 'bed' and Kylie similarly uses sticks to 'test' the doll. Emily crouches by the chairs, animal like, and chases sticks which Kylie throws for her. Kylie converses with Issabelle about the doll. She then tells Emily it is her turn again to get on the bed. She performs various tests on Emily, before Sam exclaims that he can now 'be poorly' and Emily moves back into the role of dog, watching Kylie's actions. In accompanying fieldnotes I identify that Sam also offers me food and drinks from his play in the kitchen throughout the period of filming.

Thematic analysis

Emily initiates the overarching medical theme of the game, largely through putting on the nurse's tunic from the costume trolley before the start of the video. Emily has two older brothers who experienced health difficulties in their time during the first few years of school, so she may be more familiar with medical environments than some of her peers. Of course, it is an experience that nearly all children will be familiar with, and one that may provide worrying experiences which might be safely explored through the protected, bounded process of socio-dramatic play. What does this theme allow the players to explore? Emily and Kylie appear to be exploring the notion of testing each other's bodies, administering medicine and treatment, and dealing with blood as well as notions of illness and injury. It seems likely that performing the role of a doctor – an expert – is empowering for players whilst being a patient allows players to explore the sensations of vulnerability and weakness.

Intimacy of touch in play

What is clear from this socio-dramatic interaction is the centrality of physical contact between two persons as part of the play. In this case, Emily and Kylie both use sticks as transitional objects, meaning they do not use their own hands to physically test each other but have a tool by which to make an examination. Before this video, Emily had been using sticks and a small spatula to make an examination of Kylie's mouth. I stopped the play when Emily pushed the stick too far into her mouth, causing Kylie to gag. The risk of physical discomfort and harm, then, was clear to the two girls from the outset. Yet this did not distract them from the narrative – they simply moved to use different tools to explore different parts of the body. From the start of the video, we see Emily exerting some control as doctor through physical command of Kylie, often encountering problems in this: simultaneously trying to force Kylie to sit with her legs straight (pushing them down) whilst moving the chairs closer together to limit the space available between them. She uses a stick to physically move parts of Kylie – pushing her chest back whilst asking her to 'lay down, straight' (line 9). Kylie leans her head back over the chair, exposing her neck and leaving her entire body vulnerable for Emily. Emily is at first tentative about using the sticks to probe Kylie's

chest, but eventually adds more sticks to her hand, and presses into Kylie's arm, then using the sticks to pinch at her chest and arm before asking Kylie 'do they hurt?' (line 24). In a phrase that is simultaneously instructive and descriptive she then explains that 'there's a little blood' and that she will 'put a needle' before holding a stick as if holding a pencil, telling Kylie to close her eyes and administering four fast pokes into her arms and chest. During this, Kylie screws up her face while Emily smiles, looking back to Kylie's expression between each poke. There appears to be a joyfulness in administering something which has both the symbolic and real potential to create pain, and Emily seems to be maintaining an awareness of Kylie's reaction, with glances at her face each time she 'injects' her. Emily runs the stick down the zip of her tunic, and then explains that Kylie must put a stick down the front of her dress. Emily then uses the sticks to press and scrape Kylie's shoes, hit her legs as if playing the drums and then to stab Kylie's boot; Emily seems to be testing how much she can possibly do to the person under her care in this pretence, bordering on the edge of inflicting pain. When the roles change and Kylie administers the tests, she firstly uses a doll as a patient: on which she can apply more force (injecting medicine through the eyes of the doll by pressing hard with a stick into each eye).

Turn-taking and social negotiation

Within this episode of play, we see four players negotiating turn-taking and incorporating each other's narratives, often having the flexibility to adapt and accept interruptions and suggestions. In this sense, the social negotiations which are taking place are complex; each player is carrying out their own intentions whilst also not neglecting the intention of their peers. What turn-taking occurs then, and what strategies are used for incorporation? The four keys players involved in this episode of play mark out their differentiated roles through both action and explicit verbal reference to their own role to the other players. Certainly, in what is captured within the frame of the video, Emily and Kylie are the dominant co-operative players, with Sam the parallel player and creator of an overlapping narrative with the group of three girls. Emily, in her doctor role, insists that Kylie 'Get off the chair please' (line 1), her tone is direct and demonstrating authority. Issabelle ensures she is involved in the play by being clear about her part; her out-of-frame comment: 'Emily, Kylie's my little kid, that's why I want you to take a look at her' (line 12) functions to inform

how she wants other players to react to her, but also legitimises her place as a less-dominant, observer or supporter role. It also gives her a chance to sit and wait, as a character who can be attended to next by Kylie. Sam, in a parental character role, enters the play frame of the three girls. Echoing the sing-song voice of a parent calling children for dinner, his loud exclamation of: 'It's done everybody. Sit down everybody. It's done' (line 40), causes the girls (already sitting down) to look to pause their narrative and look to him. Though none of them move from where they are, they engage in his narrative, asking for specific items. They incorporate Sam's demands for participation in eating, though the kitchen based narrative doesn't appear (to an observer) to correlate to their narrative. They are, then, not only using what is 'to hand' in terms of the material objects around them, but also using a social strategy to include Sam (a player who is 'to hand') by allowing variations from the doctor narrative. They are both aware of other things happening with their peers both inside and outside of the play frame and often weave these things into their play.

Once Emily has completed her tests on Kylie, the pair swap roles, with Emily explaining: 'You're done – you're gonna be – the doctor' (line 99), as she takes off her tunic – the physical marker of her role. Kylie, who appears to have been told what to do, decides to alter the role and, after a pause, announces: 'Let's – (shouts) who wants to come to the vets?' (line 101). Once Emily has seen this transformation of the role to a vet (though this is mildly confusing as Kylie is immediately given a doll to treat), she takes up the role of dog, keeping herself involved in a vet narrative. She maintains this role until she is invited back onto the bed where she acts as a dog but is treated as a person; the hybrid genre of the setting seems not to matter to the players who carry on treating each other as before. At the point where Kylie throws a stick for Emily's dog character, the teacher interrupts their play as she is about to warn against this action. Kylie explains the situation and, as it is within the context of the play, the teacher takes no further action. When Kylie throws the stick again, she glances towards the teacher and throws it so it remains closer to the home corner area - she changes her behaviour to ensure she avoids any other warning. At this moment that Kylie throws the stick, the space and the rules which surround use of that space are wholly part of their play world until they are reminded of the external

rules which are imposed upon their play from without. When Emily is invited back to be the patient (whether within the play frame she is animal or human is unclear) Kylie mirrors the actions which Emily used early in the doctor role, repeating some of her movements. Kylie then adds to these actions using objects which are to hand, for example the box of pom-poms which are handed to her. When Emily continues to play a dog character, Kylie feels a need to direct Emily, so that the doctor/patient scenario can be continued:

Kylie: What's hurts?
Emily makes gentle high-pitched yapping noises
Kylie: You got talk to me in real life then you tell me
Emily points to her chest several times and makes noises which are almost speech but still animal-like
Kylie: Right (presses a stick into Emily's chest) does it hurt?(lines 186-191)

Kylie steps out of the play frame to change *how* she wants Emily to behave within the frame of play, possibly aiming for a pragmatic exchange to make the encounter similar to those she has had/seen in a medical setting. Though Emily does not alter the way she expresses herself as a character, she aids Kylie in essentially repeating the actions which she herself performed when in the dominant role – and so the recognisable procedure – testing with sticks - is performed again.

6.6 Caden

The three creatures leapt over obstacles in their pursuit of the fleeing museum curator. It was late at night and the shadows cast on the walls were wild. The curator looked over this shoulder in panic as they drew closer, their tentacle-like arms about to grasp him. His time was short. A siren was heard in the city. One man, a solitary, dark haired man with deep brown eyes looked up from his handiwork. He was building a turbo-blaster, but he had heard the siren and now he dropped the pieces in his hand and ran to action. With strides, he crossed the city, a sense of panic etching lines into his face. As he approached the huddle of limbs in an alleyway he saw the museum curator's face peering out and shouting in anguish. The tentacles were holding him tight. The man must act. He pulled at a tentacle, tearing it free. Eventually he grabbed the curator's arm and pulled him to safety and away from the creatures. The Guhls. The deadliest of beasts. The shadowy-man and the curator ran

together, as rain pelted down onto them, the Guhls not far behind. He reached for his weapon and held the gun between his fingers. He had to act now. Pausing, and throwing the curator into a side street, the man took his stance: legs wide, arms outstretched either way, eyebrows drawn down. He was facing the creatures now. They knew no way past him. He turned to the curator. “I’ll keep you safe.”

These were the only words the curator needed as he retreated into the night alone. The creatures, in terror of the man’s power, drew back and retreated. The shadowy-man, wiping the rain from his forehead, breathed deeply. It was over – for now. Walking back through the night he saw windows, lit up with yellow light. Peering into the glow he watched the men inside, together constructing mighty machines. He stepped into the doorway, appealing to the group of men, but the looks he received told him he couldn’t go in. He continued through the night and back to his turbo-blaster. There was much work yet to be done. He mustn’t abandon it now. But just as he started constructing the delicate trigger pieces, the sounds of the siren called out again…

“Right Rowan class, its lunchtime in two minutes, so time for tidying up”.

He carefully puts down his Lego on the carpet. Saving it for this afternoon.

Our travelling troupe of players surely needs a leading man. Though he may sometimes have a troubled time fitting in with the less-powerful of characters, Caden is our leading man. Often one of the fastest movers in the classroom, Caden loves superheroes. The way he moves around the classroom proves this. At moments he is Hulk pounding his fists into each other, the next moment Spiderman, shooting webs as he moves, the next shadowy Batman. He is the first to want to help save someone from a difficult play situation, and also the first to report to the authorities in order to keep the social order. If someone is not doing something right, he can be found explaining the situation to the nearest member of staff. When he wants to tell you something about himself or his play, his stories are fragmented and excitable, dashing between explanation and action. His narratives are embellished with sounds effects and movements – if Caden wants to explain a character’s strength, he will surely demonstrate with his own muscles and physical power. Once he starts telling you the story, he will not cease to back down from it. His love of physical action

sometimes gets him into trouble and throughout the year, Caden works on his own physical self-control. The playground is a place where he is free to be the superhero in a wide space, but the resulting punches and kicks aimed at unsuspecting co-players or bystanders are met with dismay and, once he is back in the classroom, disappointment. But his physical side is also tender and caring. With other children and with adults Caden loves to hug, hold hands and tickle. He is especially tender with his classmate who uses aids to walk, sit and interact: he holds and strokes her hand, and his carpet space close to her throughout the year allows him to display this physical tenderness. His love of movement does often mean that he finds it difficult to focus during tasks which require sitting for long periods of time. He can be found kneeling, standing or tilting on his chair and nearly always observing the rest of the classroom for moments where he can be the hero. If a play episode which he started seems to be struggling in its continuation, he won't hesitate to break free from where he's supposed to be to ensure it continues as he thinks it should.

On the same day that the shadowy-man rescues the museum curator, the same shadowy-man receives a smiley face award for playing, as the teacher explains, in an excellent manner: sensibly, carefully and kindly.

"I didn't beat anyone, I just played," he explains to me.

Caden looks very proud, he's red cheeked. He looks to the floor bashfully when everyone claps for his achievement. He puts a point in the class jar and then performs a leaping kick in celebration as he returns to his carpet place. Our leading man has a struggle on his hands: at the intersection of his superhero play world and the world of classroom rules, there lies danger. This year he must face that danger and learn what it means to be a school superhero.

Caden: superheroes, bodily engagement, and imaginative play as a state of being

[Or: Hulk bashing, Lego ships and when the Little Red Hen met Spiderman]

The fieldnotes cover an introduction to Caden's play and three distinct pedagogical moments of Caden's two days in Reception, that is, events in the day with differing aims and distinctive spaces and framing of activity. These are: a Letters and Sounds session, a maths activity, and a yoga session. The framing of each pedagogical moment will be outlined.

Construction play and choosing time

The most frequent conversations I had with Caden were about his Lego play; construction play absorbed him and he very often initiated conversations with adults about what he had created. When the class had choosing time and activities were child-led, Caden most often chose the construction play items. Lego particularly was an activity which spanned both classroom and home, as I understood from observations of parents' evening when he brought in a ship-like Lego construction.

From fieldnotes:

> 10th February, Parent's Evening*: Caden comes into the classroom with his mum. When he gets into the flow of telling a story his gaze is all around, he seems to be searching for words as he tells me stories of superheroes and says 'know what?' between each phrase of explanation about the superhero figures and Lego ship/superhero base he holds in his hands. Whilst his mum is looking through his books, he is almost fully absorbed in the two characters in his hands, explaining certain bits of the superhero base to me e.g. the gun blaster, the radio.*
>
> 30th November: *Caden – comes over to specifically show me a model he's made out of Lego. He explains that it's a police base and describes each part of it in great detail.*

7th December: *Caden showing his Lego model to Mrs M while she's doing literacy, she recognises the need to congratulate play achievements even when working with other children – she praises what he's made and comments on different parts of it.*

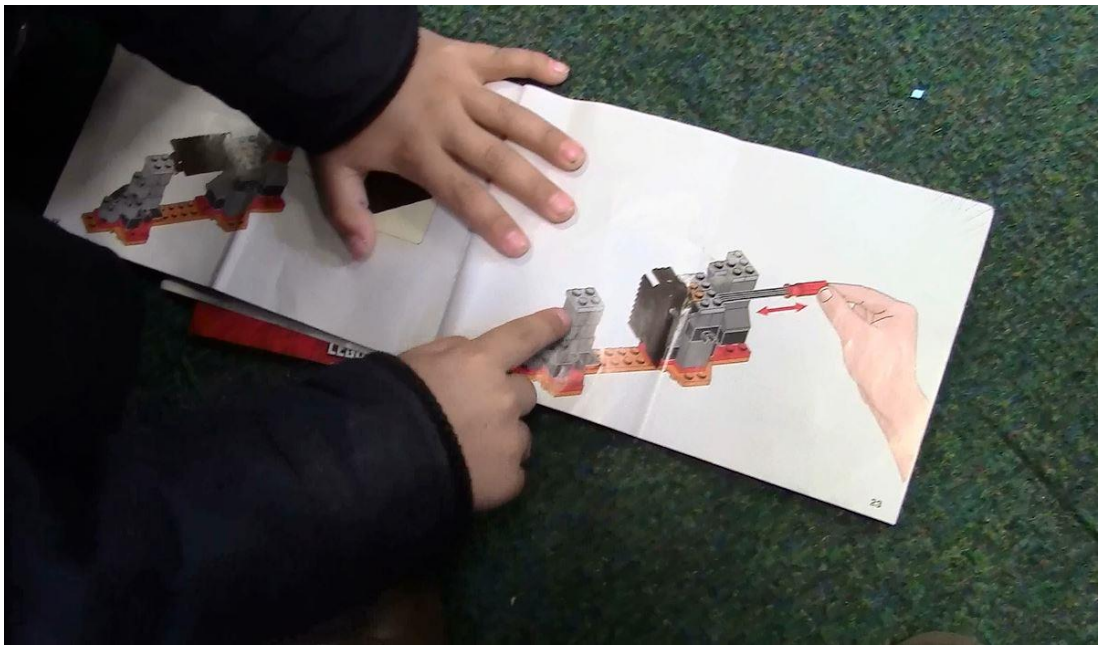


Figure 6.5: Caden pointing to part of a Lego instruction manual

Caden appears to be invested in his Lego play, and uses his narratives of play to converse with the adults around him. I describe this as 'flow' as during these conversations Caden's attention was focused on the things he described, and determination was focused on his attempts to explain clearly what each part was, in a joyful manner. Members of staff had often referred to him as 'flighty', though catching these moments of conversation displayed Caden's determination to communicate his findings from something which he had created, relating them back to understandings he has of popular culture tropes. Caden brought in the manual for the Lego set (Figure 6.5) from home (items more traditionally understood to be 'toys' were generally not allowed, though this item seemed to have either remained unseen by staff or been accepted as a paper object). The item represents a literacy object: a set of instructions to be understood and followed, which Caden found important to him, though it may not have been an object which would be included in the pedagogical domain of 'literacy' in the classroom. The fieldnotes from 7th December show the class teacher legitimising Caden's activity and respecting his choices during play. Giving feedback on children's activities no matter how they are

framed, is a concern of hers as a teacher, but also reflects the nature of her job as that which deals with multiple roles at once, in both participating in adult-led and supporting child-led activity. I do note my own framing here: using the phrase 'doing literacy' even in my fieldnotes, though practically this just means the teacher sitting at a table and helping children to write. I have obviously been inducted into the framing of an activity: it is at a table, led by a teacher, and involving writing – my use of 'doing literacy' then reflects a policy focus on literacy and a recognition that pedagogical spaces are assigned to boundaried activities.

During choosing time

Caden and Cole are moving between the quiet room and the classroom during choosing time. The magnetic construction blocks act as their props for play. Images are taken from a 3-minute video.

		
C: I'm making something for Cole. It's so, so cool. M: What is it? C: Is' a pair of batteries. Gonna do something. (He holds it towards me) Its handcuffs. It's gonna be something. It's (holds it up towards the door) a bow and arrow for him.	*Caden tries to replicate the pattern of the disc which Cole has made.* C: Oh red. Orange needs to go on there. Blue. Oh - I need a green. So you go at the bo-ttom. Uh. A red! That goes at the top of it. Blue (gasps, louder) it rhymes! I've got it right. Look. (Leaves the room) Cole!	C: (deep tone) come on Cole: Let's go *They enter the classroom, firing the guns which Caden made. Caden crouches to the ground and spins around, throwing the coloured disc.*

Figure 6.6: Caden and Cole's freely chosen play

Caden's self-assigned task here is to make a disc of magnetic blocks in the same structure as the one made by co-player Cole. He describes what he's making before expressing delight at completing the task. The objects act as props for a game, the frame of which they enter into when Caden's tone changes and they go to face the rest of the class in the larger room.

At one point within the fieldnotes during observations of Caden, I comment:

> In the quiet room – [he is] flighty and easily distracted definitely.

The voice of the teacher can be heard in my own here. Even in the time that is considered for the children's own use, I have judged Caden's actions as being 'flighty' – referring to his movements and focus. That I also describe him as being 'distracted', even though this time is his to use how he wishes, indicates that I have adopted some of the rhetoric which accompanies formal learning tasks. After all, his focus at this point in time is not really my concern, or the teachers', if the framing of this time as free choosing time is truly free.

Morning routine & Letters and Sounds

From fieldnotes:

> Monday 29th February AM
> Morning routine
> *Whilst Caden is putting his folder away in his tray first thing in the morning, I remind him that I'd like to spend a day with him and whether that's okay.*
> Caden: Yeah and you know what, I can be Hulk bashing and wear my suit and my dad... I can do my buttons on my own and look – (he does a kind of press-up on the floor) and be strong (he flexes his arm muscles).
> M: That's brilliant, go and get your... (He runs off)
> Caden: Yeah – (he walks to get his name card making smashing noises as he stamps)

From the very start of the day, with the suggestion of spending time with him, Caden refers to and adopts a character of Hulk; this is his reaction to me as an adult when conversing with him directly. His reference to 'Hulk bashing' – alluding to the Marvel Comics character – reflects a figure of power and control, a figure who physically, as a large fantasy being, towers above humans. Caden appears to want to convey competence in each comment, whether that is in being able to do up buttons or doing a push up. It could be said that his reaction to me, then, is to perform to display his strengths and that media figures function as personas through which he can do this. There are questions here then of how Caden uses his body within the classroom: even his walk across the room symbolises potential danger for those around him. The classroom itself is his imaginative world, and perhaps it is his living

within this world which not only brings him joy, but puts him in danger as he demonstrates his strength on other children.

The children's Letters and Sounds period takes place daily in a mixed-class group, sitting in separate spaces (divided per ability) and led by a teacher/TA.

From fieldnotes:

> Letters and Sounds
> *Running to the digraphs[5], Caden is often first in the group to run, sometimes pushing others so he can get there first. He stands close to the wall, straight, smiling and making direct eye contact with Ms W. Grins. He sometimes taps the SotD sticker on his chest. Another time he gets to the digraph first but then moves to the front of the group to be in the front of Ms W's field of vision. He stands with his hands in his pockets. Before he sits down, he stamps with one foot down in the place where he'll sit, dramatically, almost dominantly. He tried to hold Andrew's hand but A says* 'me don't want to'.
> *SotD must be the first person to line up. Caden marches to the door, arms straight, grin on his face, huge strides across the room.*
> *He sees laminated Spiderman and looks at it three times before sitting down. It's right next to his carpet space. He then leaps to the ground on one knee, one arm down, one arm behind him in a Spiderman pose. He calls to Hayden* "'Ayden! 'Ayden!" *Hayden doesn't respond*.
> Caden: Spiderman!
> *He faces nursery and 'shoots' a web with a shooting sound effect.*
> *When he celebrates, Caden dives onto the floor in an expressive position. This is a very fleeting moment but his expression of joy.*

During the Letters and Sounds group session, Caden uses dominant movements: pushing others, making eye contact with the member of staff, and trying to be the focus of their attention. His dominant movements may be to gain attention and praise of the adult. His tapping of his Star of the Day sticker may just be a physical quirk, but could convey his want to re-assert authority in a group, or merely to remind himself (a self-regulatory technique perhaps). His movements to head the line emphasise his

[5] The teacher had put cards with the digraphs 'th', 'sh' and 'ch' on different walls in the hall where the session was taking place. She would announce a word containing each digraph and ask the children to identify and run to the correct digraph.

unique authority that day and, communicated in his body language, is the physical embodiment of achievement: he is performing the role of the leader. His dominant, powerful movements are combined with moments of physical intimacy, such as holding a friend's hand. Caden seems to be continually learning what the containment of his body should be: both through the confines of the classroom and the ways in which he touches others.

The way he is drawn to superhero figures closely relates to Caden's physicality in the classroom and playground. The teacher's decision to weave popular culture artefacts into the life of the classroom has a direct effect on Caden's imaginative world. He, in turn, uses this interest to capture Hayden's attention: Caden has a desire for recognition from peers and his actions, which reflect popular culture, ('he leaps to the ground, with one arm behind him') act as currency in his friendships. His 'shooting' of 'webs' towards the nursery may even suggest a recognition of his previous stage of life in the nursery and the power and dominance he now feels over this. Even his fleeting expression of joy of group achievements reflects a superhero embodiment.

Maths task

The maths activity is completed by 'colour groups' (of which the class has 4) and is delivered seated around a table with a teacher/TA leading the task whilst making notes on children's progress and understanding.

From fieldnotes:

> Maths
> *Caden is doing maths with Mrs M. He picks up a wooden ruler on the table.*
> Caden (to me): It looks a bit like a ladder and it's like a firefighter look it's like a rocket and looks it's a man, watch (he walks his fingers up the ruler and leaps to the top). It's got swords (he spreads his fingers out).
> *Instruction: they need to make a tower with the number of cubes in the same colour as is indicated on a 'number sentence'. He doesn't make them in the same colour and is reminded and asked to sit down several times. He's asked to make a 6-cube long tower. He seems unsure how to do it. He uses his two cubes as a spy glass and looks around the classroom. It's a tricky activity. As he watches Mrs M move the number sentences, he sticks his tongue out. He's often off his chair or kneeling or standing on it.*

> *When Mrs M is giving attention to someone else, Caden leans in to be closer to what she's doing. The children around the table need to get the number sentence in the right order. Whilst Caden uses a number sentence as a blindfold, Cole asks Mrs M in all seriousness and sincerity*: 'why do we have to do this?'
> *Mrs M has to get directly into Caden's eye line as she explains before he is focused on her. He struggles with making his number sentence with cubes, saying* 'look I've done it' *without actually doing it.*
> *Mrs M prompts him four times before he gets it correct. There are a lot of distractions admittedly. Mrs M's notes on Caden after the task read: 'less confident, not really focused'.*

Caden immediately engages with the objects placed on the table for the maths task he is required to do. The wooden ruler gives him an opportunity to use abstract reasoning, as he identifies the lines on it as rungs of a ladder. His abstract reasoning moves speedily between different ideas. From describing using similes, to metaphors – 'it *is* this thing' – he encourages me to watch what he is doing – what he has discovered about these objects. Though this moment is only a few seconds long, Caden's transformations in play are many: a ladder, a firefighter, a rocket, a man and swords, displayed by his own fingers. These are described in quick succession and with certainty to me as an observer. In this moment, he seems excited, confident and filled with wonder about what is before him. The academic task which must then be completed appears difficult for Caden. This includes the required bodily expression of the task: he is asked to sit down several times and he kneels or stands on his chair. As he uses the cubes as a spy-glass we can note the essential materiality of play, which sees the imaginative potential of an object, and sees at once several uses it may have. The basis of Caden's imaginative play here is in aesthetic exploration. Here Caden's uncertainty about what he must do with these cubes gives way to finding what he *can* do with them – adapting their use to find what they can be to him. Indeed, the coloured cubes are very similar to Lego blocks, with which he becomes particularly absorbed. The need to construct them in certain ways (the task was to use the same colour order as shown in a diagram) reflects a similar practice to that which the Lego manual encourages, though Caden now has an obligation to do so. The affordances of the objects are similar, though the symbolic purpose of their use has changed considerably. My note that there are 'a lot of distractions' may be representative of

the tension between adult-led and child-led activities: Caden spied, around the room, things he wanted to do compared to the task which he found hard to complete. His ideas about the objects in front of him were vivid but had no place in the lesson. The teacher's description that he is 'less confident' refers to the maths task, and this is her concern that he develops the ability to complete this. Once again, my language reflects the pedagogical framing of the task: I do not describe first the activity as counting or using blocks, but 'doing maths'. I am subject to the same understandings of what is required of children in specific times and spaces in the classroom.

We could compare this maths task with Caden's play during choosing time, in which he uses magnetic construction blocks which act as props for combative play. The constructive process Caden goes through here is similar: he is arranging coloured blocks in the 'correct' formation and narrating his progress, though how the activity is framed differs. In his play, he maintains focus on the objects in hand, doing what he plans with them, has his own personal goal; the task is set within a context of a story of his choosing and he seeks peer approval once he has accomplished it. The intrinsic motivation of the task differs greatly from a formal, seated set task. Each task demonstrates Caden's different intentions and motivations to succeed. Once again, the affordances of the objects placed in front of him are largely similar. The setting in which he is asked to reach his goal is largely different: adult-initiated, to produce a specific pattern for the sake of fulfilling a demand laid out in the curriculum.

Yoga session

The yoga class is held weekly with a mixed class group in the open space of a vacated classroom. A visiting practitioner leads and it is largely attended by children who are deemed as needing extra support; the school's pupil premium funds it.

From fieldnotes:

> Tuesday 1st March 2016 AM
> *Caden is at yoga to start. He sits on a book trolley waiting for yoga to start.*
> Caden: 'Look I'm Spiderman. I'm Spiderman' *he says as he sits on the trolley. He is told to walk to the middle of the Yr2 classroom where yoga will take place, he crawls along the ground and when he is told once again to walk, he spins around and 'shoots a web'. Then told to sit nicely when hugging the boy next to him – the boy pulls away from*

Caden – the attention is not wanted.
After a fast arm-up song he jumps on the spot and shouts 'watch this' jumping into a Spiderman pose with one arm back.
Yoga poses in story of the little red hen. Caden tries to go under someone else in the dog pose and then turns the duck pose (hands at shoulders, arms making a beak to quack with) into an instrument to attack other children! Hen is planting the seed which is a yoga stretch, though Caden rushes around the space, squatting to his knees and throwing and pulling imaginary things from the ground with sound effects, finding spaces in the classroom away from the central carpet space where other children are not going. Caden wants to use a lot of space including where he shouldn't be. He intertwines 'Spiderman poses' with the story and looks for chances to touch and interact with others.
Hayley [yoga teacher]: Can you find a bigger, bigger space?
Caden: I have found a big, big space I have.
He uses moves from the story but makes them huge and dominating in the space.
Relaxation: lying on back, eyes closed, Hayley sounds the singing bowl and then reads to them from a book – imagine planting a seed and it grows into something – Olivia [Year 1] says 'YES! A flower!' *after being quiet for a long time. Some phrases which Hayley uses in the relaxation can be interpreted quite differently e.g. roots shooting out of your feet is something very different to Caden than a relaxation phrase.*

Caden sits on the book trolley before the session begins: he not only considers the spaces for their original functions but as scenery and setting for his imaginative world (the trolley offers convenient heights for him to view less-powerful humans below). Caden demonstrates a persistent want to be close to other children (which is sometimes rejected), seen in his hugging. This want to be close often moves into that which hurts other children, perhaps borne out of frustration of rejection. He is faced with the type of ambiguous phrase which by now he must have become accustomed to: 'sit nicely' - said when giving a hug. Surely, he might ask, a hug is nice? But the school rule of keeping one's hands and feet to oneself applies here. Given a larger space of the classroom, Caden wants to use it to display his Spiderman moves, and to allow others to see them: to display his physical prowess. The focus on body positions in yoga legitimises physical expression; this is somewhere he can share the joy of his

love of this particular position that he takes up. He is given the space and opportunity to share such movements here. The instructor uses a short story to link together yoga positions, a narrative form which would be familiar to Caden from the popular culture narratives he engages in. The dog pose, in which the body forms a pointed arch, provides an exciting moment for Caden to test physically risky interaction as he crawls under another child. The use of a vacant classroom gives Caden an opportunity to explore places he is not familiar with, to the point that he is disciplined for doing so ('including where he shouldn't be'). Caden stretches the expressions asked of him, so instead of the gentle movements which the instructor encourages, he adopts 'moves from the story but makes them huge'. This embodied hyperbole is obviously enjoyable to him, as he pushes the limits of his own body in the space around him.

The end of 2 days of observations

From fieldnotes:

> PM
> *After the children have gone home*
> *[I sat at the table where the threading figures were –*
> *including Batman, Spiderman and Hulk as well as Ana, Else,*
> *reindeer, Olaf and Kristoff from Frozen. After some time:]*
> Me: I'm just obsessing about superheroes after 2 days with Caden. It's everything to him.
> Ms W: Yes, it is. And I think that's why he plays rough sometimes. Because that's what you do. Superheroes are rough.

The mention of superheroes to staff, primarily brings about recognition of Caden's disciplinary struggles: he 'plays rough'. The member of staff makes a direct link between his interest in these characters and the ways in which he behaves towards other children, noting this as being normative: 'that's what you do'. An exploration of masculinity and empowerment can be found in the discussion chapter.

6.7 Claire

Claire watches, mouth hanging open, as Kylie walks into the home corner and sits on a chair, placing her hand on her stomach.

'I've got a baby in my tummy' Kylie says, in a matter-of-fact tone.

‘No, you haven’t because I can’t feel it so it’s not real’ Claire replies with authority, ‘now, close your eyes and go to sleep.’

Claire turns to Issabelle who is sitting nearby. She reaches and pulls a doll out from under Issabelle’s dress.

‘Wakey wakey, here’s your baby’ Claire announces, passing the doll to a slightly bemused Issabelle and looking around to see where she is required next. Kylie, Issabelle and Sophia begin a chorus of Claire’s words.

‘Wakey wakey, here’s your baby! Wakey wakey, here’s your baby! Wakey wakey, here’s your baby’ they sing moving around the space clutching dolls’ clothes and felt tip pens.

‘Who else has a baby?’ Claire enquires.

‘I’ve got something fat’ declares Kylie. This time, her pregnancy is taken seriously. ‘Come with me, sit on the chair and go to sleep’ Claire instructs, plonking Kylie down. She reaches to the bottom of Kylie’s grey tunic, and with one pull: ‘Wakey wakey, here’s your baby!

Claire is often to be found engaged in the serious business of play in the home corner, or may be sitting in the centre of the classroom carpet wearing a bridesmaid’s dress and purple heels, making tea with a teapot. Always gentle, tender in her friendships and slightly ditzy, Claire was experiencing what it meant to become part of a classroom community. On entering the classroom you would find her smiling at you with her purple rimmed glasses at a slight angle, her long plait with hairs poking out and (perhaps just to challenge your adult requirements about her apparel) shoes on the wrong feet. Upon conversing with her, you can hear a strong East Midlands accent, with many of her sentences finishing with a friendly ‘‘int it?’ Claire was always keen to see her younger brother who was in the nursery during the time of my research. They shared occasional stealthy hugs at the cloakrooms which formed the border of the Reception and nursery class. I would often be sitting writing notes, only to jump when I looked up at the quietly grinning face of Claire 10cm in front of mine. At this point she would induct me into her play, insisting I was ‘the big sister’ and

when I informed her that I was writing, she would explain that *she* can write and play at the same time. And therefore so could I. Indeed she could.



Figure 6.7: Claire writing during play

Claire was often solitary in her play, though she seemed to be able to integrate into groups of children who were already playing, usually by standing to the side and observing what was happening before stepping in to the frame of play. Nervous at speaking in front of an audience, but with a huge desire to have one-to-one conversations, her voice was heard ever more in socio-dramatic play as the year progressed. Towards the end of the year, staff were expressing concerned over Claire's lack of talking in group activities, as her responses were mainly gesture based. But her writing, a key element needed for 'getting by' in Reception class, evolved hugely. There were moments throughout the year where her exploration of writing in her freely chosen tasks reflected this evolution. During Chinese New Year, Claire spent a significant time alone with her head bent over a whiteboard and a laminated sheet of characters, before showing the adults in the room that she had chosen to write out 1-10 in Chinese. Later that day, she echoed the words of the teacher when she quietly and proudly told me: 'You know, I'm really concentrating on everything I'm doing in this class'. Claire and I spent the next two days trying to catch the head teacher between meetings, so that Claire's efforts could be written down in an achievement book and she could be awarded a sticker.

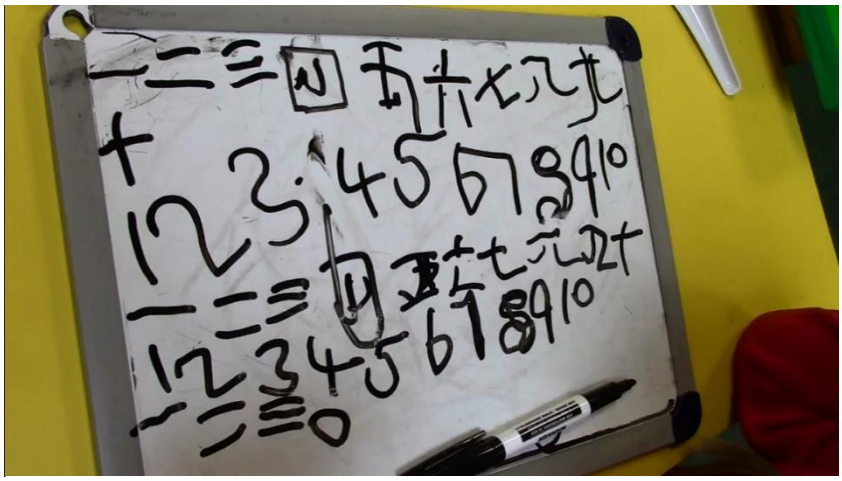


Figure 6.8: Claire writes Chinese characters

Towards the end of the year, Claire would often be found initiating or becoming involved in 'classroom' and 'school' games, that is: playing at being in school. Almost each day I was in the classroom, Claire would attempt to get me to play with her, it became almost her insatiable habit. When it was time for her play to finish, she would store a prop in a secretive place, so that she could return to it later and continue where she left off. Regularly carrying a doll or dressing a teddy in knitted clothes that did not quite fit its plump furry legs, Claire was often a mother figure with influence in the direction of play. In our troupe then, she is the player that takes a lead whilst caring for other players – the maternal figure.

Aspect	*Notes*
Content	Claire and Emily initial players, researcher Joined by Eve and Ryan A school set-up led by Claire, Emily as a father character (parent visitor to school) Emily leading a cooking session with researcher, Eve joins, Ryan asks to join Actions of cooking and adding/removing names from the happy and sad side whiteboards Claire takes me to the corner of the classroom to 'have a chat' which is advising on the rules of the classroom Eve tried to engage me with the doll several times Kylie and Issabelle (plus briefly later Andrew and Cole) come into the room and girls come into the frame of play partially
Artefacts	White boards, white board marker and rubber Clipboard, paper and pens Metal pots and plastic bowl Sticks Coconut shells Pestle and mortar Blankets and cushions Doll Picnic basket
Stimulus	Routine of the school day: taking register, choosing Star of the Day, parents' involvement in cooking, children in the class being chosen according to lists/boy and girl ratio The action of taking children aside to talk to them independently about discipline and 'knowing the rules' of the classroom The influence of the happy and sad boards as tools of discipline/warning/reward Eve brings a mothering theme to the game Ryan brings a cat character
Spatial	Takes place in the quiet room: an enclosed room Uses benches along the side as 'adult space' and floor for children Claire uses the corner of the room to withdraw for engaging in 'the chat' Claire stays separate from the cooking group Closeness between Ryan, Emily and Eve once Ryan takes on cat character Where different people sit as arranged by Claire appears important for her
Temporal	Tuesday afternoon, May – later in the academic year 24 minute video, the school section lasts before the video starts (2 minutes) until around 20:50 where Claire seems to lose the main components of the school narrative Repeated motif of children setting up school – Claire in field notes is identified as setting up 'schools' 4 other separate occasions Timing within the frame of play: Claire has disciplinary talks with me before and after 'dinner', refers to the end of the school day

Figure 6.9: content analysis table for Claire's socio-dramatic play episode

Claire – enacting routine and managing behaviour through emulating the adult

[Or: The sad side, the happy side and having a little chat]

Transcript – Appendix 6

This episode of socio-dramatic play took place in the quiet room of the Reception classroom, on a Tuesday afternoon in May. Claire and Emily are key players, with myself as researcher taking part in the episode as a character. As the episode develops, more players enter the room until there are around nine children in the small space, with interconnecting narratives taking place. Near the end of the video, Andrew enters the room and attempts to police the number of people in there, swiftly leaving afterwards.

The basic narrative of the play episode is as follows: Claire informs me that she is 'the teacher', and tells me where I must sit in the room (I am playing the child). Emily enters and sets up objects which she explains are for baking, and she declares herself the dad. Claire uses a clipboard to choose children who are sent to bake, before instructing me that I must wash my hands. When I refuse, Claire takes me aside to inform me about following the rules, before Emily instructs me on baking. Claire constructs a 'sad side' and 'happy side' on whiteboards for use in the game. Ryan enters, asks to join and takes part in the baking. Soon he is scolded by Claire for using objects in the incorrect way. Sophia enters with a doll and is incorporated into the baking. Ryan declares himself a cat character and insists the doll is being naughty and must be put on the 'sad side'. Claire continues to scold him, before Emily announces 'I'm an angry dad now' and rubs all names off the whiteboards. Claire takes me aside for another 'chat' before Issabelle and Kylie enter the room. Claire attempts to include Issabelle and Kylie in the school narrative but with little success. I withdraw from the play episode to write notes, at which point Cole and Andrew enter. The room has become busy with the voices of many children, when the teaching assistant calls for the class to form a circle on the carpet.

There are several aspects of interaction in this play episode which reveal insights about the function of play, particularly in Claire's chosen role. These aspects are

organised here into two categories: enacting routine and enforcing rules, and managing behaviour and achievement in the frame of play.

Enacting routines and enforcing rules

In taking up the role of the teacher in the play episode, Claire goes through the processes familiar to her from her own classroom culture. That is, throughout the video, she implicitly demonstrates which practices are central to the daily routine of her class. At the start of the episode, she enacts the process of choosing children for activities/tasks when she asks:

Claire: Can I choose? Star of the Day? (Line 28)

Claire assigns herself the authority to be able to delegate this title; an important title in the democratic classroom. Once she has chosen the child to fulfil this role, she moves on to consult the paper and clipboard which she holds on her lap, as if a list of children is there (just as her class teacher does each morning and afternoon).

Claire: And I need two boys and two girls
M: Okay
Claire: And I've done you so let me take you off - cross you off the list, cross you off the list, now you don't do no more baking (lines 50-53)

Claire is aware of, and re-enacts, one of the routines of her class: asking specifically for two boys and two girls is a common occurrence in the class used to separate them out for tasks. In 'crossing children off the list' she re-enacts the process which her teacher goes through in ensuring all children complete the same activities. As the play narrative continues and I, playing a character of a child, refuse to do what is asked of me, Claire takes control of this situation. She takes my hand and withdraws me from the space I am in, taking me to the corner of the room. She explains to co-player Emily: 'I'm just gonna have a little talk to 'er. Over 'ere. You have to wait til I just - sit 'ere.' Claire then proceeds to explain how to behave to me, in a calm and gentle tone, looking up into my face and nodding slowly.

Cl: What if, you wait, when it's time for you to - when you wanting to go, you just tell me, and put your hand up. Because you know our rules at our class. And then, and then if you don't do the rules, you'll going on the sad side. If you do know the rules – (*nods her head slowly*) you *will* go on the - 'appy side (lines 143-146)

Claire is here fully inside the frame of play, taking the role of teacher and accepting my character's role as a part of 'our class'. This is the first mention of the 'sad side' and 'happy side' in this narrative and Claire certainly appears to be using a voice which is not her own – emulating the teacher's phrases. The 'happy side' and 'sad side' as previously explicated, are boards on which the teacher writes children's names for perceived positive or negative behaviour, and were very often referred to by children in conversation and socio-dramatic play. Claire also emulates the teacher's body language, calm but direct, separating an individual from the rest of the class for discussion concerning discipline and standards of behaviour. Her warnings of future actions which may be taken reflect her realisation of the consequences of her own behaviour in the classroom (in reality, only their teacher can write on the sad or happy side). There is also an allusion here to the physical restraint needed to function as a class member that deserves to go 'on the happy side'. In Claire suggesting I raise my hand when I am 'wanting to go', it seems she may be reflecting her own search for physical self-regulation and reflecting her own awareness of how she uses her physicality in order to stay within the rules of the classroom. She goes on to take control of the routine as expressed within the frame of play, telling me: 'and we'll have another talk after dinner time' (line 151). Her disciplining of me is regulated by the routine of the school day! After she has outlined the threat of a name on the 'sad side', Claire sees the need to have these 'sides' physically present in the game: 'I need another board for the sad side' (line 163) she explains before setting up two whiteboards next to her seat. These boards, as items which she keeps close to her and has control over (i.e. she holds the whiteboard marker) become almost a sacred object in this episode of play. The relevance and gravity of these items which declare who is 'good' (happy) and who is 'bad' (sad) in the real classroom) seems to be being reflected. Though these items may seem like one minor aspect of classroom life, as a fully visible noticeboard only in the reach of adults, they act as a tool for the children's self-awareness and potentially, following from that, self-regulation. This tool is then imposed within this socio-dramatic play narrative, as a means of managing, identifying and acting upon the behaviour of others.

Claire continues controlling the routine of the play narrative -

Claire: It's dinner time everyone
Emily: No, we're still baking
Claire: Okay, when you've finished baking - it's dinner time. You have to tell us when it's not baking time 'cause I have to tell you when it's in the oven, 'cause you don't know it's on (lines 309-312)

Claire attempts to move the narrative on with her control of timings. She assumes an adult level of authority, emulating the adult voice, when she explains that she must be consulted about the oven, claiming only she knows when it is on. She appears to want the routine of the play to be under her control, as well as the consequences of the behaviour of her co-players within the play frame. She further reflects the routine of the school, when she refers to herself, and seems to direct herself as a character from within the frame of play:

Claire: (looking at the notebook) our chat is because the rules are up there (points to the wall) let me just tell Claire to go home because she's got - Miss McCray is here to take her. Come on Claire, go with Miss McCray. (lines 438-440)

This self-reference was unusual to hear, as Claire had not referred to herself as a separate character before. It is a creative use of her own characterisation which communicates the extent to which Claire represents the daily events and routines which affect her.

Managing behaviour and achievement within play

With Claire's introduction of the whiteboards representing the 'sad side' and 'happy side' she is introducing a means by which to comment upon, record and manage the behaviour of the people around her. Specifically, with these boards, behaviour and achievement are closely connected: in the classroom, children's names most often appear on the 'happy side' because of a completed piece of work which is deemed to be of a high standard. Names are put on the 'sad side' not usually as related to work but related to negative actions e.g. violence against another, rudeness to an adult. In consideration of this, it is insightful to see how Claire expresses notions of behaviour and achievement through this play episode. When Claire first chooses who is to be Star of the Day, I ask her whether I had done 'something really clever to be star of the day?' In her role as teacher, she responds to my question:

Claire: Yeah you just writed - loads of names (line 38)

This may be a recognition by Claire of the rewards given for achievement. Specifically, as children 'sign in' by writing their names each morning, Claire appears to consider this aspect of academic performance as being linked with being assigned privileged jobs. Once Claire has set up the whiteboards, Ryan enters the play and Claire threatens that she will write Ryan's name on the 'sad side'. She is intent upon this and repeats:

Claire: (to Ryan) you're a naughty one and you're going on the sad side
Claire: (to Ryan) 'cause that's naughty
Claire: I'm still putting you on the *sad* side
Claire: 'Cause he just scribbled (various lines 221 – 239)

Within the frame of play she seems to want to gain power over this person who has entered the play, despite him having not appeared to do anything 'naughty'. Shortly after, when Ryan uses a stick to hits the baking pots, the two girls collaborate in adding weight to his warnings:

Claire: D'you want me do a dot? Want me to do a dot near his name?
Emily: Put a dot near his – put a cross near his name (lines 264-265)

Ryan appears to realise the extent to which the whiteboards are key objects here and then attempts to take control of them himself, shifting the perceived bad behaviour from himself to the doll.

Ryan: That baby there is being naughty, (he points at the doll) she's eating my finger num num num. I'll put her on the sad side (he moves to write on the whiteboard)
Claire: (running over to Ryan) No! No!
Ryan: The baby's eating my finger
Claire folds her arms and watches Ryan
Claire: I'm gonna put you *another* mark
…
Claire: You get *another* mark. Three marks!(lines 349-359)

In taking control of the pen for the whiteboards, Ryan attempts to subvert the power that Claire has attributed to herself. Despite this, he continues to be scolded by Claire who adds further marks to his name, indicating continued bad behaviour. What occurs next changes the dynamic of the play, and brings to light the emotions felt by players. Having watched Claire's continued warnings to Ryan, Emily loudly announces 'I'm an angry dad now' (line 363) and paces heavily, swinging her arms emphatically, to Claire. She leans towards Claire's face and uses a loud voice to say:

Emily: Don't do that again or I'll tell you – I'll tell you to – I'm gonna rub that off
Emily paces across the room to get a whiteboard rubber and returns to the whiteboards, begins to rub the names off both boards
Claire: The sad side
Emily: No you can't
Claire: (trying to move her hands away) stop it!
Emily: And that (keep rubbing names off)
Claire: Stop it! (lines 366-374)

This was an aggressive moment of interaction between Claire and Emily, when who was physically in charge of the boards was in dispute. At this point, the emotions involved within the play seemed to cross the frame from play to reality (or so it seemed), which visibly caused the other players concern.

Finally, near the end of this episode of play, Claire engages me in another talk about behaviour and achievement, withdrawing me from others and speaking in a firm yet gentle tone.

Claire: Right. Let's sit down then. What about if you could do the thing what I have to do to show [the Head teacher], the thing what you made, because then you can get a sticker and – and – if you be good and I tell you the rules later, after dinner time yeah? You promise you'll be good?
M: Yeah, promise (lines 418-422)

Though Claire's instructions are somewhat verbally fragmented, it appears that she is projecting herself into my character. That is, Claire had received stickers from the head teacher previously, which act as recognition of effort put in to a task, later to be announced in the school assembly. She suggests this for my character, identifying what is needed ('the thing what you made') for me to gain recognition for my achievements. Within the play of Claire and Emily within this episode, we witness an exaggerated re-enactment and a re-presentation of the daily lives of Reception class children.

6.8 Andrew

Two strawberries, four slices of bread, a corn on the cob, three potatoes and a chicken leg are in the colander. He walks towards me, a smile stretching his lips.

"This is gonna be funny" he proclaims – and tips the contents of the colander over my legs and the notebook on my lap.

Kayla, who is sitting on the floor drawing on a notepad with a chunky red pen, sings “Andrew is funny, Andrew is funny” ten times. Andrew responds with a maniacal cackle as he places the colander back on the kitchen unit and begins filling it with more items of plastic food, which he scoops out the sink and inspects one by one.

At the start of the year, Andrew could nearly always be found in the home corner when it was choosing time. In his play he would most often be found as a dog character, on his hands and knees, panting enthusiastically and looking up expectantly at other children who acted as his owners. He tended to cause havoc in socio-dramatic play situations, but seemed to get away with it, due to his status as an animal. Once when a precarious tower was being built by Issabelle and Kayla, made up of any item they could find in the home corner kitchen, Andrew crawled towards them and shouted “My food!” before picking up items in his mouth and throwing them across the room.

“Doggie, no!” Issabelle shouts, and Andrew looks at her with wide eyes and his tongue sticking out before finding other objects, to experiment with their propulsive properties. In my observation notes it is common to find phrases which casually mention Andrew crawling over and trying to eat the paper on which someone else is writing. Andrew seems to like to push his luck and the boundaries in acceptable interaction with lots of touching, throwing and interrupting of already formulated play episodes. But, as the class teacher speculates, if you're a dog you can't be blamed as much for your actions, the dog is merely looked at affectionately, or told off, though never with much aggression. This means Andrew is never told off for his disruptive interruptions but his actions become a simple unfortunate event in the pretence.

On parents evening, Andrew sits with his Mum and Dad, as Mrs M praises his effort throughout the first half of the year.

“Andrew loves being a dog in the home corner” the teacher nods, affectionately.

“Oh yes” Mum says warmly, “he does that with his cousins too.”

The playful disruption in the socio-drama that takes place in the classroom is almost exactly opposite to Andrew’s nature in the rest of classroom proceedings. Always smartly dressed, Andrew’s appearance is just as compliant as his attitude to the work

that he is challenged with. Where other children find something a begrudging task, Andrew accepts and even relishes the challenge. Upon being given a worksheet showing patterns on half an egg which had to be reproduced as closely to a mirror-image as possible on the other half, Kylie expressed, rather loudly: “This is totally boring, it takes forever.” Andrew’s response: “*No*, it doesn’t”, encapsulates perfectly his attitude towards tasks.

The way in which he discusses issues makes Andrew seem more mature than many of the other children in the class, and his vocabulary reflects this. It is a delight to see him engaged in socio-dramatic play if not for his huge range of different facial expressions, then for his willingness to discuss the events taking place and to plunge into exaggeration and nonsense when the mood takes him down that winding path. Both the home corner, and the quiet room seem to allow him the space and the people who appreciate this zaniness. Andrew is confident in small groups, more so than in large. He is not an established part of the group of six boys who tend to play games involving battling and heroes – not having continual access to their play doesn’t concern him. He socialises frequently with a group of girls, two of three of whom are close friends, particularly during socio-dramatic play. The understood distinction between girls and boys is often negotiated by Andrew and his close fellow players.

Andrew: I definitely do wear mummy’s things, so I look like a girl.
Issabelle: So you want to be a girl?
Andrew: No! I want to be a mummy
Bella: So you want to get her bra on?
Issabelle: If you’re a mummy you have to wear a bra
Andrew: I do want a bra on
Laughter. Issabelle and Bella report what Andrew has said to me.

Andrew: A bra. I need to wear a bra. (He rummages in a box of doll clothes) Shall I wear it on my head? (He puts a glove on his head.) Is this a pants on my head? (It falls) Ah! A spider!
Kylie returns still dressed as a dog.

Andrew: You know what mummy lets me do? Mummy lets me put her clothes on, everything on me! To look like a girl! (from fieldnotes)

In Andrew's play he morphs from one creature to the next, from playing with one group of boys to a group of girls. He seems to have a high level of well-being and self-confidence, and it seems his eyes and twinkle and he comes alive when given the freedom to take on a role. As the year progresses, Andrew moves away from his dog persona, and his daily life in the classroom is taken over by a fervent interest in a set of objects, namely a wooden tray with wheels, a large red handheld magnet and a blue toy containing moving gel. He develops a curiosity for how these items work and they never seem to be far from him. By March, I begin referring to the objects in general as *his*: 'Andrew's wooden tray', I write without realising. This focus on a curious object is something which we later draw on in our imaginative play together – especially when Andrew makes a telescope one morning and together we seek to find out what it can do. He suggests that it allows him to see inside things and I hold objects for him to suggest what lays inside: he tells me a slice of bread is full of sand, a potato is full of crispy chips. It becomes an envied object by the end of the day and the teacher shows it to the rest of the class at home time, praising Andrew's model making skills.

In the Reception year, Andrew faces his own personal hurdles, involving drinking enough water and knowing when to use the toilet. Sometimes these functions take a back seat because he is so absorbed in his play. In our troupe, Andrew's expressive performances and his ability to switch between characters make him our ideal comic actor.

Aspect	*Notes*
Content	Andrew, Issabelle, researcher, Charlie, Hayden (peripheral) Andrew experiences attack of birds on him, and arrival of the boss (narrates the impending events and his own actions, with explanations) Issabelle warns him of impending attacks Discussion of where birds are from, how to defend yourselves against them and consequences of being attacked Charlie enters and joins quickly. Hayden enters as peripheral player, not joining the narrative
Artefacts	Window Binoculars Sticks Baby carrier Cushions Blanket
Stimulus	Bird theme - not clear where this is from Telescope concept was used in Andrew's previous play Aspects of computer games: boss and queen characters
Spatial	Quiet room with view of playground outside - window Mainly in one space – corner of room with cushions and benches around edge Closeness when protecting each other Very close physical proximity at times
Temporal	15 minutes lasting play episode Not a recurring episode (as far as my observations suggest) Repeated actions within episode

Figure 6.10: content analysis table for Andrew's socio-dramatic play episode

Andrew – physicality, direction and that which is 'to hand'

[Or: Bad guy birds, the big boss and baby poo]

Transcript – Appendix 7

This fifteen-minute dramatic play episode takes place in the quiet room during a morning in May. Andrew and Issabelle are the key players, with myself as the researcher who acts in the most part as a questioner, prompting discussion of the play. Charlie enters the episode around half way through the video. Later Hayden enters the space, playing the part of a dog and interacting mostly with the objects which have been used in the play. At the end of the video, Andrew studies the camera before he is asked to leave by the teaching assistant who leans into the entrance and says: "Can I borrow you darling? We need to do our writing".

The room has a window out onto the playground. Against the bottom of the window is a pile blankets and cushions, towards which the camera points. The play interactions are highly co-operative, with Issabelle and Andrew exchanging and accepting objects, and sharing ideas which extend the activity (Broadhead, 2001: 28). Other players enter the space and are accepted into the play episode, either by request or through their almost immediate interaction. Andrew has entered the quiet room prior to the video, bringing a pair of binoculars with him. Issabelle enters with me.

The basic narrative of the play episode is as follows: Andrew establishes that birds are attacking him from the window, Issabelle becomes co-player. We discuss the characteristics of the birds and means of defence, whilst the birds continue to attack. Andrew describes that we are being attacked from 'everywhere' before a warning us of a 'boss bird'. Andrew further explains the habits of the birds while Issabelle comments about her home life. Andrew warns of a queen bird approaching. Charlie enters and asks to participate. Andrew introduces a new artefact for use in defence, which he and Charlie use on each other while Issabelle watches. Andrew suggests a new transformation into water. He 'transforms' before a sequence in which I am attacked. Hayden enters the space and Charlie attempts to catch him. There is a discussion of what can be found under the sea, before Issabelle leaves, Hayden

becomes interested in the camera, and Andrew directs an obedient Charlie to sit in various places. The camera is switched off when Andrew leaves.

I will discuss firstly the themes which arise from the data, before analysing Andrew's direction of/storytelling within the play and his physicality. I will consider how artefacts which are to hand are employed within the frame of play, followed by a discussion of Issabelle as both audience and prompt.

Thematic analysis

What themes bubble to the surface in Andrew and Issabelle's play, and what underlying concepts and tensions might they be expressing? The overarching theme of the episode which Andrew has devised is the terrifying concept of man-eating birds, which appear from under the ground and can pierce through windows to attack their victims. His choice of theme is macabre to say the least and almost Hitchcockian in nature. He establishes the episode by talking about the 'bad guy birds', repeating this phrase and expression of his dislike of the creatures, to the point that it is song-like in its repetition. His description of 'bad guy' draws on the general binaries of good and bad and male and female, and is likely influenced by a range of popular culture tropes. When I ask Andrew, what the birds look like, he instead informs me that 'They eat – people' (line 22). It seems this is a defining factor of their evil quality; their physical appearance is a dull insignificance in comparison. Andrew establishes where they come from and their defining physical attribute:

```
Andrew: (runs to look out of window) they're big (line 24)
```

As Andrew looks out of the window into the space outside from the confines of the small quiet room, he can see the playground of the junior school in the mid-distance. He also sees the space where adults wait to pick up children from the school. Perhaps his concept of the creatures is intimately linked to the attribution of the spaces around him to different people of higher status. Not only is outside much bigger than the room he is in (both spatially and in terms of the bigger threats of the outside world), but this space is where both older children and adults are. Could the creatures he talks about be linked to his concept of the 'big people' who are outside of the classroom? Andrew's description of the creatures creatively incorporates the field he can see outside, as he explains: 'they're like - grass so you can't see them' (line 26),

then explaining that they are also in the trees. The creatures, then, inhabit almost the entire world that he can see outside of the window. Andrew's means of elevating the tension in the play narrative is by adding higher ranking characters. Much like a battle-based computer game where players are expected to fight ever more powerful figures, Andrew announces the arrival of 'the big boss'. He even explains the motivation that this character has in attacking us:

Andrew: Oh no (covers mouth with his hand), the big boss - because we splatted all his friends (line 124)

He realises the consequences of our previous actions and elaborates on the sequence of events which necessarily follow from this: if you cause trouble for a group of creatures, somebody with more authority will surely arrive soon to administer justice and a more severe threat. He then expresses:

Andrew: (screams and rolls across floor) I hate bosses, they - they eat big people (line 126)

Andrew's reference within the frame could have connotations about the out-of-frame world. This boss could represent a higher power in the school itself perhaps. Or this may be a reference to the adult world of work (Andrew often spoke about his mother's job). If so, a boss eating 'big people' could reflect his conceptualisation of what happens in the world of work. And, naturally, adults are not only older but they are bigger people than himself. Andrew extends the hierarchy of the creatures further by introducing another:

Andrew: (getting up and nodding) Yes, but there's more - there's a queen and she's very angry (line 194)

There appears to be a whole world of these creatures who have a hierarchy of status.

The narrative also allows the players to engage in discussions of horror-like gore, humour which brings pleasure to all the players. Andrew explains that the birds 'do not like bones… but they do like eating eyes' (lines 155-157), perhaps reflecting the disturbing image of crows pecking the eyes of corpses. His inclusion of 'they only don't like people spraying them with tomato juice' is a surprising tangent for a 5-year-old, though the blood like quality of tomato juice seems to contribute to the

pleasing aesthetic of gore being alluded to. Further to this, his means of defeating the creatures is by attacking them with a baby carrier – he explains:

Andrew: They do not like these because they do - if you just put them on their head they do not like it, and they - they - they make them stink (laughs emphatically) (lines 217-218)

Andrew laughs with joy at his suggestion of 'stink' further enjoying explained that this is because babies poo in baby carriers (a logical argument). The process of making a powerful creature become stinky, echoes Andrew's desire to subvert power whilst at the same time incorporating the joyful narrative of disgust and gore. Charlie later takes the opportunity to explore the almost poetic values of smell.

Charlie: No, it smells like - banana skins, rotten tomatoes and baby poo (line 270)

Having the freedom to move beyond logical conversation and give answers which would usually seem almost unsafe in conversation with adults, appears to draw the two boys further into the play conversation.

Several binary concepts then spring from the themes which are uncovered this episode. Firstly, is the binary of big and small: Andrew's emphasis on the large quality of the birds suggests the vulnerability of him as a small child. They are only just tall enough to see out of the window to where the perceived threat comes from. It seems that even the architecture of the room may remind them of their smallness, especially in comparison to larger beasts. And the beasts themselves seem to grow bigger as their rank is greater. From the big birds who are 'friends' of the boss, to 'a big one, it's the boss' (line 180). The second binary is that of safety and danger. The overall message which Andrew conveys is that he is in danger and there are several means by which this danger can be alleviated, fought and overcome – from tomato juice to baby poo. There is continued talk of states of change taking place, states of being become transformed: from person into bird, from bird into water, from man into water. This function of transformation is at the heart of dramatic pretence, but is also apt in its allusion to the process of transformation which the children are going through to become school pupils. They are experiencing a transformation within which there is emphasis upon what it means to be good or bad. This may be merely one of the deeper significances of Andrew's battle with 'bad guy birds'.

Direction and storytelling

It is clear that though this episode of play is a collaborative event, Andrew takes the lead as the storyteller and the director of the narrative. From prompting the narrative using binoculars at the window, Andrew introduces the birds and then elevates the visuals and description of the narrative. Through his narration, Andrew inducts me as a co-player into the story, whilst at same time establishing what the 'rules' are in this fantasy world:

Andrew: If you have sticks everywhere that means they won't come near you (line 76)

Through instructing me thus, Andrew gains power in the play frame. He can steer the narrative of the play in whatever direction he pleases. As his co-players participate and pick up cues from his narration, Andrew builds the pretence with clear explanations of what he is doing, as well as the outcome.

Andrew: (reaching out both arms towards us) No, I can splat him, but only if I have a big telescope. Ooh, this might work (*flails arms and runs to the bench at the side of the room. Picks up a stick and places it like a telescope in front of his eye. Makes a shooting noise, falls to the floor with a yelp*) (lines 128-131)

It seems he has great confidence in the narrative he is developing – enacting it and deciding on the outcomes of his own actions. Through this confidence he is also able to induct us as co-players to work collaboratively within the play frame:

Andrew: Spray it on me, spray it on me - it will make the bad guy get it Issabelle and I stretch our hands towards Andrew. Andrew jumps up (line 174-175)

Once Charlie enters and asks to join, Andrew does not explicitly give him instructions outside of the play frame, but immediately gives him instructions inside the play frame, his reference to the 'queen bad guy' instructing Charlie as to what they are dealing with:

Andrew: The queen! The queen bad guy's coming. Put this on his head. (Passes baby carrier to Charlie. Quieter) Put this on her head. *Charlie and Andrew walk towards the window and Charlie lowers the baby carrier through the air* (lines 233-236)

Charlie is immediately obedient to Andrew's commands – there needs to be no dispute because Charlie had entered the frame when asking to play and Andrew has

clear authority in this play space, both physically dominating with his actions and with his verbal dexterity. Throughout the play, Andrew is instrumental in describing and enacting the discernible tension which develops. The speed of his movements, the way he returns to the window repeatedly and his use of the phrase: 'Oh man!' warns his co-players of another wave of action which is about to follow.

Physicality

The affordances of the quiet room space allow for a huge amount of movement and dynamic, sometimes sporadic reactions. The placement of the cushions and blankets beneath the window, allows Andrew to leap and dive as part of the narrative, and also allow the players to 'hide' and capture each other. As the episode progresses, it seems that the repetition of movements which supply Andrew's obvious pleasure – repeatedly hitting his own face, diving and running around in circles - also appeal to his audience (myself and Issabelle), who laugh at his emphatic movements. He uses spoken explanation and movement simultaneously:

```
Andrew: They just go AH! (Lifts arms in air and falls onto cushions) Splat!
(He stands up, says emphatically) They splat on the floor (lines 45-46)
```

His movements are self-conscious and comical, and the heightened dives and falls are carefully performed. The movements constitute what Richards describes as 'gleeful hyperbole' (2013) – an exaggeration and an embellishment to the play narrative. But this embellishment is vital; without the energy and ability to demonstrate what he is describing, Andrew's play narrative would be lacking for both himself and his audience. As Andrew continues in his physical clowning, he seems to become more aware of the reaction of his audience, leaving pauses in his sequence of actions which accommodate our laughter:

```
Andrew: Okay, now I'll just climb on him (he leaps face first into the
pillows)
Issabelle and I laugh, he pauses
Andrew: Eurgh (he stands up)
Issabelle: You're crazy (lines 135-138)
```

It seems he gives his audience a moment to appreciate the comedy of his physical clowning, maximising our enjoyment.

The small space of the quiet room also brings about moments of quietness and intimacy, through the physical closeness of the players. At line 3, Issabelle and

Andrew stand together at the window, speaking quietly before Andrew breaks from the moment and runs across the room. Later, when Issabelle warns Andrew of 'the boss' arriving, Andrew lies on the cushions and Issabelle lies on top of him (lines 180-182). There is a moment of silence as they both lie still. This seems an unusual moment compared to the dynamic of the rest of the episode. But this chance for a physical closeness which is rare in other play activities, makes sense in the imaginary world where we may choose to protect each other. The drama has bred a moment of intimacy.

Near the end of the episode, we see Andrew using a very physical form of control to try to bring Charlie back to his intentions in the play: 'Charlie puts down the baby carrier and picks up the blanket. Andrew leaps towards him and grabs him from the back around the waist. Charlie escapes his grasp, so Andrew hold on to his leg' (lines 370-372). There does not seem to be negative intent in this, but his persistence in holding on to his co-player brings them closer and allows Andrew to take the blanket he is holding and control this artefact himself.

Artefacts to hand

As I observed Andrew's play throughout the year, it became clear that schemas within his play were changing. From a focus at the start of the year on being a dog character in socio-dramatic play, he gradually moved away from this toward developing a keen interest in a set of artefacts. These artefacts sparked his curiosity and often had the need to have them near him, or have them in his possession. When filming his play, Andrew and I spent around 12 minutes purely filming the progress of a gel timer in intense close-up.



Figure 6.11: stills from Andrew's filming of the gel timer



Figure 6.12: Andrew's drawing of the gel timer on his map of play

Similarly, he was intrigued by a large red horse-shoe shaped magnet in the classroom. In an interview, he gives further explanation:

```
M: Do you have any things you play with?
Andrew: Er - my favourite thing is the magnet
M: Why do you like the magnet?
Andrew: Huh?
M: Why do you like the magnet?
Andrew: Because it picks magnet things up (interview transcript, 19th April)
```

This episode of play demonstrates how Andrew incorporates artefacts around him: whatever is around him is re-imagined or employed within the frame of play. Firstly, he brings the binoculars into the room before the start of the video. These are the item that he uses to first look out of the window before the transcribed section. They may be an important artefact in development of the play narrative. (At line 8, Andrew uses the binoculars to look out again, and complains of the papers on the window: 'that's just paper! I do not like paper either, that gets in our way'. These papers are the notices for parents, directed to the outside so they cannot be read from where Andrew is standing. He has an interest in seeing further but is constrained by sheets of paper. Indeed, this may mirror the daily experience of children in the Reception class: the pieces of paper representing the many worksheets that children are required to complete which hinder the development of play narratives during 'choosing time'. Indeed, Andrew is asked to leave the space to do a writing task – a worksheet beckons.)

Returning then to the artefacts which progress rather than hinder the play. In explanation of how Andrew will defend himself from the birds, he reassures me, as audience:

```
Andrew: Wait, it's okay 'acause I have a telescope to shoot them. They do
not like telescopes (line 41)
```

His involvement of this object as something powerful and gives him a status above mythical beasts. Almost two months before this video was filmed, on March 31st, Andrew had spent some time building and decorating a cardboard tube to become a telescope, then using it in play for the rest of the day. It became a sought-after object amongst his peers, with Andrew controlling who could 'use it' by applying stickers with people's names on to give them permission. At the end of the day, the teacher asked Andrew to present the object to the rest of the class and praised his efforts in

its creation. The memories of this creation appear to stay with Andrew and return to him in this play narrative, where he could have easily chosen a gun as an item to defend himself. Other objects in the room are seen and adopted as part of Andrew's explanations and rules of the play. He points out a bundle of sticks which he explains can be used in defence (line 77), and later a baby carrier, which he re-imagines as a weapon (lines 217-218). What is to hand is adopted as part of the play itself, with Andrew reflexively developing the play narrative to accommodate items which he finds. The artefacts which spark his interest daily seem to all be related to science and technology: he found joy in attracting things with the magnet or watching the movement of the gel through the timer. This play episode then showed him exploring the possibilities and processes afforded by artefacts with specific technical uses: a telescope, binoculars, a protective device. Whether they were real or existing within the frame of play, the pretence allowed him to consider the power given by such items.

Issabelle: audience and prompt

Issabelle is both performer and audience. She allows Andrew to take the lead, and joins with his physical clowning, though she mostly takes the role of prompt. Akin to a pantomime audience's 'he's behind you', Issabelle quickly picks up on Andrew's reaction to the bird characters and prompts him within the play frame. She instigates moments of tension in the play, without reacting to them much herself. She allows Andrew to be the victim, to be both storyteller and clown. She points towards the window and warns of a bird approaching (lines 2, 50), at times physically moving Andrew herself to build tension: 'L: Oh quick Andrew (she pushes him to face her) there's two coming toward ya' (line 39). At moments when the tension seems to have dropped and the play slowed down, Issabelle prompts Andrew to repeat his actions from before:

```
Andrew: Da da - now he's gone (places on hand on his hip)
M: Oh fantastic
Issabelle: (pointing to window) Wait quick there's one behind you (lines
176 – 178)
```

She has a clear desire for repetition, and wants the viewing pleasure she feels from Andrew's actions to take place again and again, no matter its unchanging nature. Issabelle further acts to build the tension to a climactic moment when she declares:

‘A big one, it's the boss, it's the boss, it's the boss’. The way Issabelle reacts to interaction with myself as an adult player is distinct from Andrew. She is less accepting of questions within the play frame, perhaps less willing to be involved in pretence with an adult. When I attempt to prompt an answer from Issabelle, she rejects me very quickly, returning to her role encouraging Andrew:

```
M: Are you a bird expert Issabelle?
Issabelle: (abrupt) No. Andrew, Andrew quick quick quick (she bounces up
and down) (lines 53-54)
```

Such adult questioning may be detracting from the exuberance and urgency of the narrative which they are collaboratively creating. Times of interaction created by socio-dramatic or fantasy play were often used by Issabelle as opportunities to relate conversations back to her real-world experience. Very often she would break from the frame of play and inform me of a family story. Perhaps she found cues in the created narratives or these shared narratives gave her confidence to engage in conversation, or perhaps my presence as an adult giving my time to engage in the children’s interaction made her eager to share. Issabelle also often seemed to find solace in being an observer of play, not wanting to interact as much as be passive. During the latter part of this play episode, she sat and then lay on the cushions in the corner of the room, rejecting cues from other players to induct her back into the narrative. Even though the play had become physically exuberant, it seemed to create a safe space for her to be, solitary, though still around her peers.

Chapter 7
Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings from the data analysis chapter and use theoretical insights to address the research question. Let me return to the research question: how do children experience socio-dramatic play in the Reception classroom?

After reviewing the data, my initial answer to this question would be that children experience socio-dramatic play with significant joy, which springs largely from a sense of agency. However, socio-dramatic play is also experienced with some difficulty.

The joy of socio-dramatic play arises from the spontaneity of the moment in which the children interact or, as Eberle (2014) notes, the anticipation and surprise which gives rise to pleasure. Socio-dramatic play episodes appear as performances, producing jubilation in both the performers and the audience. This can be seen in the data transcripts, as children stand close to the frame of the video and observe before finding a way to enter the frame play that they are watching. The establishment of socio-dramatic play relationships are tantalising and almost seductively jubilant processes to observe. Not only do they involve the explicit expression of emotion, but socio-dramatic play often does so in a highly physical manner. The entire body is involved in the performance of a character, and there can often be physical threats against the body. One of the pleasures of this play is the movement it requires. Socio-dramatic play also offers the chance to re-present and react to social roles in a way that children may not be able to in other daily experiences, allowing them to reprimand, control, punish, embrace, and reward each other. Hence, it allows physical and linguistic manifestations of complex emotions and affective experiences. With the pressures of curriculum now reaching the Reception age group, it may be argued that such physical, affective pleasures are often pushed aside in favour of more pragmatic concerns.

Encouraging socio-dramatic play gives players the opportunity and agency to rehearse their own narratives and to direct each other to create roles which they

want to see performed. They have free choice in who they become, and how they enact characterisations. They also have agency in how to use the materials and spaces provided. Whilst directed play materials (for example involving sorting, ordering, or the development of fine motor skills) are often framed according to how the teacher explained the tasks at the start of the day and can be set in specific spaces (the numbered pegs remain on this table), socio-dramatic play springs up wherever space allows. Of course, provided material and objects for socio-dramatic play hold symbolic and affective meanings of their own, and these meanings may or may not be expressed by players. Though adults have influence on the materials and objects provided, children's use of these may be contrary to what adults had previously expected. And unexpected and often repeated use of objects and spaces by a player, can communicate to us an important aspect of children's embodied learning in the classroom. This agency to engage with materials and spaces, and what we can understand from this engagement, forms one section of this chapter. This agency, which is rehearsed in their socio-dramatic play, is agency which will eventually be subdued to the power of the teacher as the players move through the infant years.

There are difficulties – challenges - faced by players. These involve the negotiation of complex – and sometimes new - social relationships, the physical embodiment of being an ideal student in the classroom whilst also playing as directed by their own decision-making, and finding adequate time and space in which to engage in socio-dramatic play.

The categories drawn from the data analysis have been incorporated into six sections, which allow an in-depth discussion of what the studied children experienced in their socio-dramatic play. These will illustrate the experiences of pleasure, agency, and difficulties faced. The six sections are: physical spaces, times, and materiality of socio-dramatic play; themes of play; social relationships; gender; bodily engagement, and the role of the adult in play. In each section, I will refer to the analysed episodes of socio-dramatic play alongside further details of the focus child's learning or home situation, to fully embed the discussion in the child's own experience.

7.1 Physical spaces, times, and materiality of play

It is logical to begin a socio-cultural discussion of play by asking a top-level question: 'what's going on here?' In the analysis of each episode of play presented in the previous chapter, a description is given of the spaces, times, and artefacts used by the children. This has not been done merely to 'set the scene' for the reader, but to consider the material, tangible circumstances of socio-dramatic play. Here, I discuss the affordances of the spaces the children are given to play in, and how they understand these spaces, and mark the spaces with a sense of their own authority or agency. I go on to consider the temporal experience of socio-dramatic play, before discussing the materiality of play: the costumes and artefacts in use.

a. Space

When considering space which the players used, I take inspiration from geographer Massey's description. Though she refers largely to global spaces in terms of 'power geometry' (Massey, 1994: 149), her metaphor for how to understand social space is relevant to the classroom:

> Most obviously I would say that space is not a flat surface across which we walk; [instead] it's like a pincushion of a million stories: if you stop at any point in that walk there will be a house with a story. (Massey, 2013)

This consideration of the relationship between space and people's stories, leads Massey to state that considering space makes us ask fundamental questions about how we are going to live together. In a classroom, there are many stories inspired by different home lives and interests, being lived in shared spaces. Classroom spaces are therefore intensely social spaces and shape how children play, who they are, and who they become. I will therefore look at the space which the players inhabit with their own stories. The quiet room was used extensively for socio-dramatic play. In the video data we see the quiet room used as Kylie's home with her baby, a monster hideaway during Ryan's play, Caden's space for preparing for mission in the wider classroom, Claire's school, and Andrew's protected space which is under siege. The entrance to the room opened out onto the wide carpet space which was often used for stretching out, weaving narratives and setting out items on a journey or trail. The quiet room was not assigned to a section of the curriculum. In this Reception

classroom, the zones or tables are sectioned off: 'Mrs M's table', the craft area, the writing trolley, the playdough table. Activities are separated and distinct; playing with playdough on the teacher's table may not have been considered *right*. These discrete areas of activity could be considered parallel in their organisation to the discrete areas of curriculum as these children will discover as they move up the Key Stages and into secondary school. But, the quiet room – a room which was hardly ever quiet – was described by staff during interview as the 'room of requirement', that is, it afforded freedom and flexibility, becoming whatever space the player wanted it to become. This space allowed socio-dramas to evolve out of the sight of adults, curtained off, and giving players agency away from the adult gaze. It was not part of the Panopticon which the rest of open plan classroom often seemed to be; under the watch of the teacher who sat along one side of the room. The quiet room space also had cushions and blankets. These enabled both rest and safe ruckus. The soft textures of these objects communicated that this space could be for comforting respite from the noise of the classroom. But they simultaneously acted as safe landing pads for players (and objects) to be thrown against. They afforded safety at moments of intense physical activity. In the maps of play created by two of the focus children, there are depictions of the furnishings found in the quiet room: the cushions and the green blanket, in their photos and drawings. It seems, for them, these objects are an important aspect of the room.



Figure 7.1: from maps of play - depicting the quiet room furnishings

The number of people using the quiet room was policed, often by teaching staff and then consequently, by the children themselves. This control of the space was for several reasons: for physical safety and ensuring equity in who used the room, but may have also been for surveillance – especially as it could be used for battle games which may have gone unseen.

Teachers would regularly choose who could go into this space whilst other children were needed to work. The power over who was granted the space then, was often in the control of staff. But this control technique was then learnt by the children, who used it to allow certain peers into play and not others. In this sense, then, the play space afforded children a sense of control and agency whilst it was also not a space that allowed complete freedom in play. What is being communicated to children through the control of this play space may be: 'you have choice within the limits we set'.

The classroom space that was specifically designated for socio-dramatic play was the home corner. In Ryan's play episode, he sits just outside of it, then enters it to show me his house and pets. In Isaac's play, he and Charlie cook in the kitchen of the home corner. Emily and Kylie set up the doctor's practice here and Andrew often entered the home corner as a dog, the pet in another player's home enactment. The home corner was next to the door which represented both the exit to the playground but also the place where children arrived and left from their own home. This is symbolically apt: the home corner was a home away from home, a comforting space where the routines they were familiar with could be enacted. This would be especially comforting in moments when children were caught up in routines and actions which seemed new, alien, even overwhelming in their novelty. It therefore gains the status of a therapeutic space, and a place of safety to which children can return.

The home corner becomes therefore a 'liminal' space: it is between the home and the school, being at once part of the school and part of the home at the same time. It brings the habitus of the home into the classroom. Hence it has two statuses at once and provides for children a 'between' for their two sights of being and living. It aids their transformation from children who, for the majority of their day, reside at home, to children who reside at school. In the case study school, it was only the nursery and Reception classrooms which had a home corner. The higher year group classrooms did not have a home corner, or a space explicitly devoted to socio-dramatic play. Perhaps once children have entered Year 1, the home is no longer considered as somewhere that needs to be represented or offered as a therapeutic space as much as in the Early Years where children are less emotionally mature and

have only recently been separated from parents for significant periods. This choice of omission reflects the idea that children have become pupils within a year, and such a liminal space is not required.

What could we consider in future practice about play spaces then? Firstly, it was clear from the fieldwork that children will engage in socio-dramatic play in any space they are given. But the enclosed and non-assigned space of the quiet room yielded rich interaction perhaps as it produced feelings of privacy, and it was a tabula rasa for children to create their own play setting. Secondly, specific spaces set aside for socio-dramatic/role play will foster this type of play though practitioners may wish to vary props in these spaces and observe the narratives taking place here. Thirdly, practitioners might draw on theories around the power of social spaces. As Massey notes about social spaces: 'if we are really thinking socially, […] all those relations are going to be filled with power' (2013). This power permeates Reception classroom spaces in two ways: the adult power to control and communicate the value of play, and the player's power to control how and when the space is used and what narratives are played out in such spaces.

b. Time

In the focus classroom, play usually took place in 'choosing time', when the class were permitted to use the resources of the open plan room. This most often took place in the afternoon after formal tasks had been completed in the morning. The data shows that within the time frame of this free choosing though, they could be interrupted at any time if they were required by staff for adult-led activities. This meant play did not have a fixed temporal point, and opportunities to play shifted according to when and where staff required it to take place. Staff were facing demands to ensure all class members had finished particular activities in one week, which became more difficult if there were absences. This relates to Jenks' comment concerning children's freedom of time: 'for the child then even the most elementary bodily functions are scheduled and play, which we superficially regard as free and perhaps creative, occurs in designated spaces within the curriculum' (Jenks in Hultquist & Dahlberg, 2001: 73). What we might consider to be a 'free practice' was still set within controls. The

requirement to fulfil aims in tight time-frames was prominent for adults in the classroom which caused them to often interrupt play.

How did these temporal pressures manifest in socio-dramatic play? In observations I noted a sense of flow in many player's experiences: Caden's preparations of props for battle, Claire's role as a teacher addressing her pupils, Andrew repetitively facing killer birds. There seemed to be a 'distortion of temporal experience' (Csikszentmihályi, 2014: 240), where the use of time was not discussed by players and the dialogue continued as players focused on their characterisations. Rogers and Evans note this in their studies: 'children become absorbed in the imaginary world, forget the self and the passing of time' (Rogers & Evans, 2008: 96). However, a sense of time and its means of shaping experience did feature in a few observed episodes of socio-dramatic play. In Isaac's episode I note the point at which Charlie picks up a clock and manually moves the hands, saying to Isaac 'look how fast the clock's going – so fast' (lines 20 and 23). I suggest that this sense of time passing is pertinent within freely-chosen play; their time for it is limited. This action seems to also give a sense of frantic urgency to their actions, perhaps a joyful rush of adrenaline which bonds them in the excitement of play. In Kylie's play we see a concern with the framing of time: declaring how long she is at work ('zero hours') and the correct timings for different parts of her baby's day ('finally it's time for bed'). The declaration and through this the shaping of time is a central aspect of what makes the play pleasurable for her: through the doll, she has ontological control. Indeed, her own current ontology is highly affected by the shaping of time; she is learning to *do* the timings of school. This means not only becoming familiar with when to line up or when to sit down but also with how she uses her own 'free' time.

In her discussion on the 'ideal learner', Bradbury (2013) highlights that children in the Reception stage are already learning to be assessed and this impacts on their choice-making processes. In her observations she notes that children's use of time and objects - use that is visible to staff – become a central tenet of how staff understand the child's success as a learner. She suggests that within a context influenced by neoliberal choice-making expectations, children who do not engage for the 'right' amount of time in an activity are less likely to be rendered as the ideal type of learner. Bradbury notes this as she describes children who move about during free play:

'within this framework of the diligent, industrious, choosing learner, children who failed to engage in activities for appropriate lengths of time were constituted as failing as learners' (Bradbury, 2013: 10). We can see a similar critical rhetoric in comments in the focus classroom in that Caden is referred to by members of staff as 'flighty': he did not often stay in same play space for an extended period of time. Even in what is supposed 'free' time, then, he may be seen as not focused or not choosing in a way that fulfils what adults consider to be beneficial for learning. I, as an observer, adopted this rhetoric too, commenting that Caden had a different form of play where he was not often in the same space and used his time differently from the other focus children.

c. Materiality: costumes

The costume trolley divided the home corner from the teacher's table and partially obscured it. Costumes are means by which players could try on new identities and therefore costumes become significant cultural symbols, indicating the kind of people and types of activities players are expected to engage in. In the school, children were required to wear uniform from the Reception age. It would be the first instance where the children consider how their clothes bind them as a group and as part of a wider community. Costumes for play may have a potent significance then; they allow the covering of the schools own uniform and therefore symbolise an external world. A player in costume immediately becomes different from their peers; the red, white and grey colours of the school tunics, t-shirt and tights are replaced with hats, cloaks, working uniforms and colourful shoes. Costumes were, for some players, the uniform of play: the marker of a character and an indication to others that they were intending to enter the frame of play. Emily used the doctor and nurse costumes regularly when adopting a character. This may have been a strategy which helped her to integrate in co-operative or group play, especially as I noted in fieldnotes during November that Emily was 'struggling to integrate in group play. Particularly taking turns. This becomes even harder in imaginative play as there are no pragmatic, set rules for everyone to abide by' (fieldnotes, 30th November). The costume then, gave Emily the status that allowed her to adopt a diagnostic or caring role over fellow players. In her episode of play, she takes off her tunic when

suggesting she now swaps roles with Kylie – it is a marker of how they should relate to each other within the frame of play.

Isaac because interested in a shiny dress and cape at Christmas time when he wore this to play a wise man (king) in the school Nativity. In my fieldnotes dated 14th December, I describe: 'Isaac comes over to me and tells me he wants to write a story in my book about 'four kings' and 'one's powerfuller' than the others'. He continued returning to wear the costume of this character for the next four months. It is the same costume which gives him status to declare to Claire: 'well, I am the king, you see' (transcript, p6). Being given the status afforded by the costume has a lasting effect on Isaac, perhaps the 'powerfuller' king he spoke of was himself. After the observed episode of play, Isaac and Charlie continued wearing their capes when they moved across the room to complete work with a teacher. This may be a means of extending the play persona within more formal work situations, and a conceptual version of doing what Rogers and Evans describe in their study of role-play: 'repositioning the barriers around the role-play area' to achieve a compromise between the child's needs and those of the adult (Rogers & Evans, 2007: 160). In effect, Charlie and Isaac were extending the mood or embodiment of play whilst they were involved in formal tasks, extending the feelings of pleasure that play provides. It may also suggest that the status assigned by the wearing of the costume is something that brings pleasure to Isaac and Charlie and sets them apart from the other children around them, giving them a unique identity in the situation that they are asked to be in. Finally, costumes provided a link between the player's home lives and their classroom life. As noted in data from an interview with staff:

> Mrs M - S made a good point about a week ago. Issabelle's bought in some dresses, some bridesmaids dresses and some shoes and since then there's been a massive jump in her confidence because she has some control then, she has an element of - erm - they belong to her - and she's letting you borrow them so she's, you know, shot up here in terms of authority, almost, and control. That's made a difference. (from interview transcript, 3rd July 2016)

For Issabelle, who was recognised as having a low level of social confidence, the sharing of a costume had a positive emotional effect: the ownership of the costume

had a personal meaning to her, and it brought some of her home experience into her community of learners.

d. Materiality: artefacts

Throughout the data, objects which are to hand in the classroom space are adopted as part of the play. I draw on works by Pahl and Rowsell, Kress, and Wohlwend as I more closely scrutinise the artefacts involved in the observed play. Firstly, we see mundane objects being transformed through play. With a transformation having taken place, I would argue these 'objects' become 'artefacts'; they take on a cultural interest. Proving the longevity of Vygotsky's stick analogy (1976), wooden sticks were widely used by the players. The sticks, once making up a 50cm high fence around plastic flowers, became Emily's medical tools (syringes, rulers, hammers, a thermometer), Kylie's key for a cage's lock, and swords and wands for the defeating of a monster by Ryan's fellow players. It is the mundane nature of the sticks which allows flexibility in how they are transformed and used through play. Artefacts have a wide potential for connecting areas of learning and social negotiation, whilst also being a powerful prop in socio-dramatic play. Taking the example of the telescope used by Andrew, this was at first a mundane item: a cardboard tube. After decorating it, and declaring his intentions to me as observer, this mundane item was a pivot to his exploration of a scientific tool – a telescope. This prompted extended conversation with adults about the use of the telescope, before he employed it as a prop in socio-dramatic play: as a tool, weapon, and solution to the problem of threatening birds. During the episode the telescope was never far from him; he asked me to protect it when he left to work. Later, he found stickers of classmate's names to attach to it; it became a social object, as the physical names were applied it seemed fellow players were then invested in the artefact. Being asked to present the artefact to the class at the end of day obviously brought pleasure to Andrew and legitimised his creation and thereby his play. This artefact connected his artistic creativity, scientific hypothesising, a socio-dramatic play narrative and his process of social inclusion.

It is useful here to draw on Pahl and Rowsell's (2011) discussion of 'material culture (the things that lie around us in everyday life)' and the potential for these 'everyday

objects, which we call artefacts' in supporting literacy development and creating spaces for storytelling (p130). They describe how they wish to 'redress the balance' regarding objects which may seem to others 'inconsequential', to move towards the recognition of the inherent "thing-like" status of literacy' (p133). Following their argument, we can see socio-dramatic play as a social form of storytelling, which transforms mundane objects into significant artefacts. For Andrew, the mundane object of the cardboard tube transformed into a cultural artefact created spaces for storytelling between himself, staff and his peers. He then took this artefact home, potentially linking his experience with it at school to his play at home. Socio-dramatic play not only encourages players to practise abstract reasoning by symbolically transforming objects, but also imbues mundane objects with meaning, stories, and a sense of personal value.

We can consider this in another artefact used during the observed socio-dramatic play: Kylie and the pink sparkly shoes. During the observation, Kylie encountered the dilemma of being asked by a peer for the shoes she had just put on. The pink sparkly shoes as an object become artefactual if we consider that they symbolise glamour, the status of adulthood, and individuality (compared to her standard black school shoes). The concept of giving up these shoes to another was challenging Kylie's propensity to share, but may also have been challenging her in giving up a particular identity imbued by the shoes as a symbol. In two ways, Kylie was 'walking in another's shoes'; literally as the character who had the responsibility over a child, and also in the process of developing empathy – when another child wanted her shoes. I suggest that the shoes acted as a symbolic artefact both inside and outside the frame of play. Kylie was also focused on the doll in her play. If we incorporate Wohlwend's notion of toys as texts, we can understand further the relevance of the doll as artefact. Wohlwend (2009) proposes 'an expanded notion of toys as literacy objects: a toy is a text to be read, *performed*, and consumed with meanings suggested by its materials and its history of attached story lines and practices' (p60, my emphasis). Kylie performs the cultural narrative of parent that is attached to the doll artefact and the soft materials of the doll's body become a *sign* of softness which encourages nurturing behaviour. This performance of a cultural narrative of the parent then

encourages fellow players to respond to Kylie accordingly, casting her as figure of both parental authority but also nurturing.

We can also consider the artefacts in Caden's Lego play as significant texts. I observed Caden discussing with adults the Lego constructions he had made, using constructions as props in socio-dramatic play, and explaining the Lego instruction booklet. The latter artefact, he had carried with him in his book bag and referred to when the school day has almost finished - it is an item from home. His passion for describing the stages of Lego building demonstrated that this artefact was permeated with personal value for him. It graphically represented what he could achieve in his own construction play. These constructions were then closely linked to his socio-dramatic and fantasy narratives – as props but also prompts. We may consider then that there is little separation between the forms of sign Caden uses: whether he is shaping the space ship for a Lego figurine to fly or he is planning to 'fly it' himself, his play is not consciously separated into discrete areas, but has one final aim: the pleasure of flying his creation. It seems essential to draw on Kress' comments on multi-modality here as they apply to Caden's play: 'the voraciously analytical eyes of child sign-makers assess the semiotic possibilities of the world around them: 'reading', in the sense of detailed analytical scrutiny of all aspects of their world for their potential use in representation' (Kress, 1997: 33-34). Kress encourages practitioners to broaden the definition of 'reading' here, thereby seeing the value of the variety of modes employed by children in their meaning-making. Caden's meaning-making here incorporated modes of printed texts, construction, and speaking, all to reach his aim in play. The artefacts he used and created then opened up narratives and contributed to his rich socio-dramatic play.



Figure 7.2: Nathaniel's notes during doctor play

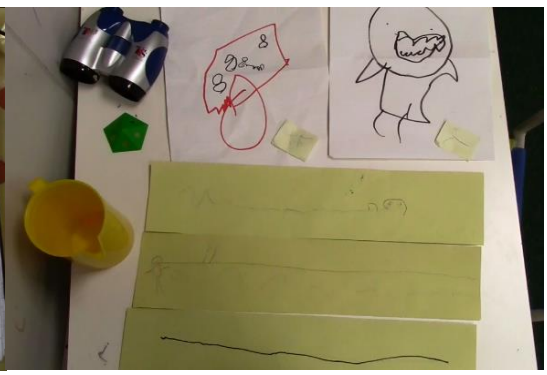


Figure 7.3: artefacts from a monster hunt

The artefacts created *during* socio-dramatic play can also point towards the various meaning-making processes taking place for players. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show the artefacts from two episodes of socio-dramatic play. Figure 7.2 shows notes taken by a child playing a doctor, treating a patient with a broken leg. What does this meaning-making point toward? I would argue that in this child's play, there are signals of desire: a desire to follow the appropriate script for a doctor character, who must be seen to be taking notes on the patient. It points to a desire to make marks in this notebook belonging to an adult. Finally it points to a desire to write down and log what happened during the play experience. Figure 7.3 shows artefacts used or created by players in the monster hunt described in Ryan's episode of play. The binoculars were used during the hunt, the jug to throw liquid over the beast, and the small green block was declared as having magical powers. This hunt was not limited to a specific area, but started at a table, moved into home corner, across the carpet, then to the quiet room as a hidden space. Afterwards, the journey was represented in the three yellow 'maps' which the players chose to draw at the end of the play episode – one appears to be only a straight line, but the other two show gradations and figures – as children chose a visual means of representing their performed journey across the classroom. Others chose to draw the monster, or make notes on post-its. These modes of map-making, drawing, and note-taking were all adopted without adult prompting and were closely linked to the socio-dramatic narrative. Kress' comments on the transformative quality of sign-making ring true here: 'we transform the set of resources as we transform ourselves in acts of representation and communication' (Kress, 2001: 407). The players transformed the resources they found to become part of their socio-dramatic play, and in doing so, rendered themselves as cartographers and artists, socially binding them in the play experience they had just had. With these newly created artefacts, there is the potential for conversation, writing, drawing, and further socio-dramatic play. The players asked to take the artefacts home – where their play could extend further.

7.2 Themes of play

What do the themes of socio-dramatic play tell us about the player's interests and learning experiences?

a. Playing with identity: home and family life

The most overt theme adopted is that of home and family life, for example when Ryan invites me into his home, Kylie tends to her child, and Emily plays the father visiting school. The players may be considered to be 'taming home': accommodating their home life into the cultural standards which school life demands. Through re-enacting family roles and routines, they are speaking, moving, and responding to their peers as they would in a home setting. Playing of family roles then could be described as recreation of home *habitus*, being negotiated in a new setting. We see the enacting of routines such as in Emily's episode of play; Sam appears to be encouraging his co-players in the representation of home life – insisting on meal timings that should be followed, and asking everybody to participate. He interrupts the doctor narrative with home experiences. The players are becoming accustomed to a new routine of the school day which may be dissimilar to their home routine, therefore re-enacting home routines may help in the process of accommodation. This family theme allows for an exploration of parental roles. This manifests in Kylie's play with her 'work' as a necessary factor of adult life. Re-enactments of the familiar routines of family life may also act as a means of cementing group identity amongst the players, as they discover the congruity of each other's routines. As Sutton-Smith comments on group play as an aid in establishing a collective identity: 'the integrative character of group play as itself an "enactive rhetoric" that persuades us of the worth of belonging together' (1997: 92). In playing as family groups, the players may be agreeing on the rules of *their* living together, and forming a new type of family in the classroom.

b. Playing with identity: names and age

The weighty status of identity afforded in children's names was particularly salient for the class, and names was a subject of discussion which came up repeatedly in dialogue both inside and outside the play frame. The first task completed by children every school day was to 'sign in': writing their forename and surname on a whiteboard, to be scrutinised by the teacher and their peers. As Claire in her teacher role expresses, producing your name neatly and legibly during signing-in was a means to being rewarded with classroom duties. Though this was not actually a reflection

of how duties were given to children, it may reflect the importance of this routine for her as a pupil and her understanding of what it means to achieve. Attention would be drawn to achievement in this name writing task. Therefore, being certain of one's name was a vital lesson for each child. This may go some way towards explaining why many children found the concept of changing their name within socio-dramatic play either amusing or difficult, often choosing their own names instead. Mistaking your own name outside the play frame comes with its own consequences; perhaps being labelled as someone else within the play frame was too uncomfortable for some children. Altering one's identity can at times be unsettling. However, Ryan tended to choose a different name for himself in socio-dramatic play. Most other children in the class did not adopt a different character name during play, so this set Ryan apart in his desire to enter the play frame in a particular manner: where his identity itself was changed. With his interest in computer games, links could be drawn with the process of adopting a character in virtual arenas: personal identity is given to avatars (the player's representative in the game) which might then be physically translated into non-virtual play (Burn in Willet *et al*, 2013: 123).

Identity as expressed through age is a common theme emerging in the play dialogue**.** This was further explored when the children tended to a doll, nominated each other as 'the child', or adopted an adult character. We see Kylie exploring the concept of age when she expresses of her doll: '- she's a big girl' […] she's a big girl and she's a baby'. We can link this theme of play – and why children may take up this theme – with wider understandings of childhood. James and Prout (2014), in their elucidation of the relationship between transitions of time and childhood, comment that 'concepts of age are the main scaffolding around which western conceptions of childhood are built and it is through reference to concepts of age that the daily life experiences of children are produced and controlled' (p206-7). In the Reception classroom, reference to the age of children was an almost daily occurrence, particularly relating to punishment: staff would highlight the age of those misbehaving and compare behaviour with that of 'the nursery children'. A punishment for misbehaviour was being asked to go and sit in the nursery classroom; the visible and public suggestion that you are not the age you are supposed to be. It follows that age is understood to be the definitive variable in development and

certain behaviours *should* be adhered to at certain ages. We can also consider that children are questioned about their age more so than adults are, and, James and Prout suggest, contained in this question is: 'will you soon be grown up?' It is not unexpected then that re-enactments of routines and rites of age-passing emerge in socio-dramatic play. If adults repeatedly ask children of their age and future plans, then playing adult characters may be one means of therapeutically dealing with the pressure of *how* and *when* one is to grow up.

c. Phantasmagoria and transformations

Phantasmagoria is defined as 'a sequence of images […] like that seen in a dream' (Oxford Dictionaries), used by Sutton-Smith as one of his rhetorics of play. In the data, we see such dream-like sequences in the 'gloopy' monster which Ryan attacks, the whale appearing in Charlie's cup, and in Andrew's sequence of attacking man-eating birds. In the data, these images occur more frequently in the boys' play than in the girls'. It is accurate to say that the girls observed initiated more domestic play with family roles than in play with themes considered as phantasmagorical. Girls did devise such images in their play, though these may have been less overtly or frequently expressed than in the focus boy's play. The images created in this play are irrational and dream-like, alluding to caricatures, magnitudinous beings, and the grotesque. These images seem to reflect imaginative originality in play. There are certainly influences from commercially-driven media and toys in these images (Ryan's interest in the Transformers caused him to demonstrate transformations to me almost daily), but as Sutton-Smith comments, the relationship between toys and imaginative play is not as straight-forward as some critical theorists may suppose. 'Players' minds are clearly not entirely the stereotypic tabulae rasae of the modern commercial world; children still have their private imaginary gardens' (Sutton-Smith, 1997: 153), he comments, though those imaginary gardens may bear fruit which adults can find alarming. Sutton-Smith decries the tendency for studies of play to rationalise (and thereby somewhat suppress) child phantasmagoria. He also comments that phantasmagorical play is sometimes disallowed: 'children, who are supposed to be the players among us, are allowed much less freedom for irrational, wild, dark, or deep play in Western culture than are adults, who are thought not to

play at all' (*ibid*: 151). The irrational quality of this play reflects imaginative aspects to be celebrated, preserved, and perhaps qualities which adults can use to engage with children in play. To abate feelings of dismay at such themes and images, participating adults may wish to locate the space between commercially-driven narratives and children's own interpretative phantasmagoria.

d. Bodily functions and medical themes

In the data, we see Andrew's amusement at referencing baby poo, Emily warning Kylie of the blood that comes with injections, and Andrew exclaiming he holds the 'blood an' flesh' of the imagined beast. Bodily functions, the associated fluids, and the exploration of the body through medical tests are themes which emerge from the socio-dramatic play. These themes conjure up a sense of disgust, whilst they also allow players to explore a sense of vulnerability; that we will all bleed at some point – that we are all made of changeable flesh which is not immune to injury. At Reception age, children are still facing the challenge of controlling their bodily functions, importantly when and for how long they go to the toilet. Though this seems trivial for adults, at this stage when children are being introduced to more rigid daily structures and discipline, toilet habits (and related use of time in the classroom) can affect the way that teaching staff react towards children. Incorporation of bodily functions in play can therefore once again be seen as having a therapeutic value as children assimilate, bodily, to classroom life. Additionally, socio-dramatic play is a safe arena in which to discuss such themes. Whilst conversation concerning bodily themes which could be 'rude' are sometimes highlighted and policed by staff, these conversations are more freely permitted in the (often private) arena of play. Socio-dramatic play then allows children to joyfully push the boundaries of what is acceptable language-use, to test the reactions and emotions provoked by such themes.

e. Playing schools



Figure 7.4: playing at schools involving re-enacting the morning 'sign-in' routine

I observed the children of the class playing at recreating school routines, which can be seen in Claire's episode of socio-dramatic play. This became more regular as the year progressed – as they grew familiar with the routines and governing rules. As shown in the images above, class members would often begin to set out boards, emulating the start of each school day, and substituting themselves with dolls. This play routine tended to attract larger groups of players each time it was played. It could be considered that this new play routine was a means by which the class were collectively realising what it meant to 'do school' – to adhere to routines, to place their bodies correctly in the right spaces and positions, to speak when it is acceptable. With the emphasis towards the end of the year on moving to becoming Year 1, the children had an awareness that practices such as 'signing in' and 'Letters and Sounds' were to be ongoing. The re-enactment of such routines in play, then, seemed to be a way of expressing 'this is what we do now, this is who we are' and a demonstration of the competence at the practice. Claire, engaging me in her 'little talks' (taking me aside and stating to me: 'you know the rules'), was re-presenting the gentle disciplinary practices of her teacher with immense accuracy and seriousness. It was clearly a process she had experienced, and she now wished to find herself on the opposite side of the power balance. My presence as a participating adult gave her an ideal opportunity to practise this.

As the Opies noted, playing school prompted a significant change in behaviour of the children they observed: 'it is noticeable that the most demure child in the real

classroom is liable to become the most talkative when the canes are make-believe' (Opie, 1969: 333). The make-believe here gives the opportunity to both break the rules and to practise the gestures and attitudes that they should be using on a daily basis. It seemed somewhat ironic that the further the players went into the structured school routine as they moved up year groups, the less time they would have to re-enact, and thereby become competent at, new school routines. We may also see the opportunity for satirical representations as one basis for 'playing schools'. Satire has long been a function of ritual play, as seen in Bakhtin's comments on the feasts as portrayed by Rabelais: 'we may sum up by saying that the popular marketplace aspect of this feast was, to a certain extent, a satyrical drama which parodied the Church ritual of the Corpus Christi' (Bakhtin, 1984: 230). As the attendees at the feasts were using masks and costume to parody the Church which governed their moral and religious identities, so do the children parody the school which governs their intellectual, social and moral identities. The dolls placed by the players re-present the 'me and yet not me' – malleable figurines who are now subject to the rule and authority of the teacher-player. Being able to satirise and laugh at their own schooling may give the players a great sense of liberation. Simultaneously, 'playing schools' allows a space for players to engage in transgressive behaviour in a fictional classroom setting, whilst still being physically present in the classroom.

f. Power and punishment

Socio-dramatic narratives of both home/family life and school life necessitate that some players assert authority over others. In the data, there is clear process of dialogism in action; a 'double-voiced' property to the speech of players – as expressed by Bakhtin (1981). It is double in that as children author the characters which they desire to portray, their dialogue is, as Bakhtin expresses, populated with the intentions of others; the intentions of the character. 'The word in language is half someone else's' Bakhtin states, and it only becomes one's own when it is appropriated with one's own expressive intention (1981: 294). We hear this in Kylie's direction of her fellow players towards the 'naughty corner' and in Claire's 'you promise you'll be good?' Through utilising these disciplinary scripts, the two girls are controlling both *where* their fellow players are and *how* their fellow players respond

to them. They are gaining a sense of control both physically and emotionally, a playful manipulation of others to test their own powers and ability to punish. By emulating the adult voice, they find authority which they may lack outside the play frame. They may also be internalising the rules they are governed by, resulting in the players being better able to understand and respond to these rules.

In Claire's play episode, Emily and Claire are acting out their own routines through play even whilst being governed by those routines themselves. They similarly emulate parental disciplinary practices; at home, they are both witnessing the raising and disciplining of their younger siblings. The repetitive nature of their play routines has a therapeutic function, allowing them to explore the school rules by which they are governed and which, at Reception stage, are still becoming familiar to them. They experience the power of discipline from the opposite side of that which they are used to: they are here holding the pen which can mark down the names of the scolded and rewarded. That I refer to only the girls' play here should not lead to a generalisation that it is only girls who regularly employ adult-like dialogue in their play. However, with the presence of more female teachers in all Key Stages of the school, it could be considered that the girls feel an affinity to women of authority and are more likely to re-enact such positions in their play.

g. Battle narratives

Battle narratives are part of many of the children's cultural vocabulary. In the data, we see these narratives in Andrew's birds, Ryan's description of attacking a monster during his quest based play with Kayla, and Caden preparing a weapon/handcuffs to use in the wider classroom. Battle narratives provide clear binaries of good and bad, the clarity of which children find comfort in. The sets of rules in battle narrative tend to be easily understandable and can be communicated to children wanting to join in with play narratives. Such themes are commonly found in computer games and as Burn (in Willet *et al*: 2013) notes these are easily translated into playground/pretend play: computer games 'are already organised around ludic principles, we might expect them to be more similar to the games of the playground than comics' (p121), and they are structured with resources, rules and outcomes managed by the game engine (p123). In the data we see allusions to the characters and structures of

computer games: as Andrew announces the arrival of 'the big boss' and Ryan alludes to computer game motifs (the monster he encounters has 'one health'). Though these are relatively minor references in the data, when observing the socio-dramatic play (particularly of the boys) in the classroom the influence is clear. A difficulty is faced by players here in that battle narrative can be provoking of adult concern: 'they can provoke, in equal measure, adult delight at their apparent social benefits and adult dismay at their apparent celebration of violence' (p124). Burn reminds us the warrior-like men represented in games have a long and ancient history in art and literature. As well as this, the binary of 'good vs evil' is evidently present in current world affairs, and children's play may be influenced by these narratives, whether adult observers may find that hard to accept or not.

7.3 Social relationships

Socio-dramatic play provides a space in which social relationships can be practised and can develop through a shared peer culture. From their studies of children's views on play, Rogers and Evans comment that this was often a paramount function of role-play: 'children's desire to affiliate with others and maintain friendships often took precedence over the content and nature of the play' (2008: 77). I noted this when children entered a space and asked to play; the act of playing with the person/people present was more important than the actual character they would then adopt in play. Episodes of play would unfold as new people asked to join and were either accepted or rejected. Socio-dramatic play was an imaginative rehearsal, as children were learning how to be in a class group. This includes practising diplomacy, rule negotiation, and sympathetic treatment of others in the social spaces they shared daily.

a. Social strategies of the focus players

The focus players managed their social relationships using a variety of different strategies in socio-dramatic play. In Andrew's play we see him induct others as co-players, communicating the implicit rules of play by instructing new player Charlie to what was happening inside the frame of play. Charlie then takes cues from Andrew's narration, and was inducted in the play frame without Andrew's narrative flow being

broken. In Claire's play we see her managing the behaviour of those around her, and managing me as an adult player, inverting the status relationship between us. In Isaac's play, he employs affirmative tags in his speech, with both Charlie and Isaac including the other in their dialogue and developing a sense of co-operative flow in their play. Turn-taking is emphasised within the play dyad of Emily's doctor play, with the girls changing who is the dominant character. In their study, Sachs *et al* comment that the doctor theme has some intrinsic difficulty: 'the doctor role is generally preferred, leading to some conflict between the children' (1985: 47). Emily and Kylie do not appear to be affected by this difficulty, easily relinquishing to the other's status. The repetition of their play then seemed to afford pleasure, as they both adopted the same role in turn and Kylie was able to mirror Emily's actions. This repetition demonstrates that Kylie was attentive to Emily's actions, and shows that even in seemingly small actions of pretence they share valued practices. Through these strategies used to negotiate their social relationships, the players develop shared practices and 'ways of interacting that community members expect from one another' which combine to become a 'part of group habitus' (Scollon in Wohlwend 2009: 61-62). There is a *habitus* in socio-dramatic play which includes the common expectation that one person is 'leader' of the play, that new players must ask to join in, and that new players should take on a character and adapt to the narrative that has already been established. Socio-dramatic play, then is not only a way to practise existing relationships, but forms an important part of the habitus of the classroom.

b. Emotional expression

Socio-dramatic play also allows emotions to be communicated and shared with others. This incorporates joy expressed during play, as well as tension, anger and frustration which may occur. The argument can be made that, as Sutton-Smith and Kelly-Bryne (in Smith, 1984) comment, the emotions of play are not always comfortable; children's play can be 'brutal and unpleasant' (p311), callous, and risky. This is not to invalidate my first assertion that children experience joy and pleasure when they play, but to say that the anticipation and then the understanding which surround pleasure (in Eberle's definition of play, 2014) often lead to play experiences which deal with worry, violence, and cruelty. We can observe this in the interaction

between Claire and Emily, in which Emily shows anger in the frame of play, displaying this through physical force and control over objects which symbolise power. Vygotsky (2004) once again offers commentary which can highlight the profound emotional experience of play. In his theorising on the child's imaginative capacities, he claims that 'every construct of the imagination has an effect on our feelings […] if this construct does not in itself correspond to reality, nonetheless the feelings it evokes are real feelings, feelings a person truly experiences' (p19). I argue that this applies to socio-dramatic play as an imaginative activity; player's emotional reactions may be prompted by or directed towards non-existent scenarios but the emotion experienced is nevertheless true. This is the case, Vygotsky goes on, with other cultural experiences: 'the emotions that take hold of us from the artistic images on the pages of books or from the stage are completely real and we experience them truly, seriously, and deeply' (Vygotsky, 2004: 20).

In the data, we see Emily displaying to others her anger during school themed play, when she forcefully removes the names from a whiteboard representing the 'sad' and 'happy side'. Though this was within the frame of play, there was a genuine sense of anguish and tension in the voices and movements of both players. Whilst emulating the disciplining adult voice, Emily's movements to clean the boards were swift and strong, whilst Claire's calls for her to stop contained a hint of distress. The concept of this action in the imagination of the players, prompted an emotional reaction that was felt strongly by them at that moment. At other times, Emily had put herself at the edge of the boundary between play which was acceptable (to an adult in the classroom) and that which could mean she was given a warning. During July, Emily kicked a cupboard as her character in the frame of play became angry, which the teacher questioned but then excused as it was within play. Regularly, Emily used socio-dramatic play as a means by which to explore strong emotions, negotiating which were acceptable ways to express these emotions physically and verbally. Vygotsky's ideas on the reality of emotion are useful for practitioners in considering the emotional potentials of socio-dramatic play.

c. Social status and liminality

Finally in this section, I wish to move from the notion of the term 'social' regarding interactions between people, to a wider notion, which considers social status and draws on the writings of cultural anthropologist Turner. The social status of a child refers to their part within a social community and their status as an individual within that community.

The very meaning of the word Reception means a welcoming in, or an entrance. This suggests that the time spent by children in a Reception class is a transition between two stages: before school has started and when school itself has started. In the Reception class then, children are discovering what it means to be a *pupil*. Here, Turner's writing on liminality can offer theoretical insight into what children's state of being may be. The children were neither in the nursery class – where play was more explicitly referred to as an activity rather than the ambiguous 'choosing time' – nor in Year 1 where, as both teachers and children expressed, their work would take greater priority than play. They were therefore experiencing a state of 'betweenness' or 'liminality' that occurs during their 'rites of passage' (Turner in Mahdi, 1987: 3). Turner terms a person in this state as 'neophyte' and describes that the neophyte is 'neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of any recognised cultural topography), and are, at very least "betwixt and between" all recognised fixed points in space-time of structural classification' (*ibid*: p7). Though Turner's work may be deemed to refer largely to the mystic practices of tribal communities, it nevertheless has a macro relevance when applied to the cultural practice of schooling. The 'rite of passage' for the children studied was the entry into school: demanding more strictly defined school uniform, a fuller adherence to the National Curriculum and the label of being a pupil. Turner describes that the knowledge gained in this liminal period is 'impressing' on the neophyte 'as a seal impresses wax, with the characteristics of his new state. It is not mere acquisition of knowledge, but a change in being' (p11). Indeed, the children of the Reception class were reminded as the year progressed, that they were about to 'become Year One' and that they must know how to behave as Year Ones. Their impending change of being was expressed to them almost daily by the summer term. The Reception classroom, then, becomes a 'between' space

where the child awaits the next stage and must move on from the behaviours and understandings of his childish self (as I have mentioned children were often punished by being sent to the nursery). I have already noted how the home corner may be considered a liminal space; bridging the home habitus and the school habitus in a way that appears to ease children into the status of school pupil. I would then take this further to suggest that being in a state of play itself is a liminal state – it is a state that is between the playful comforts of the home, the younger self, and the new routines and power dynamics of the school pupil state that is yet to come.

Further to this, in Turner's work outlining *The Human Seriousness of Play*, he posits a potentially provoking notion that 'work' and 'play' form a distinct part of our being. 'The *persona* "works", the *individual* "plays"' he expresses '…the former is governed by economic necessity… the latter… the moods of feeling and desire' (Turner, 1982: 115). Indeed, as discussed previously, socio-dramatic play allows the player to experience desire and emotion in a way that is – in Vygotsky's words – truly, seriously and deeply felt. Turner goes on to comment that theatre 'represents the reality behind the role-playing masks' (*ibid*). That is, theatre claims to reveal the truth about the individual. It is then 'the mundane world that is false, illusory' and the theatre that is real and that is 'representing a standing critique of the hypocrisy of all social structure which shape human beings' (*ibid*: 116). If we consider children's socio-dramatic play to be an essential social ritual – a form of theatre – we can apply Turner's notions once again. When children represent the structures of school, or parenthood, or other power structures to which they are subjected, they are presenting a critique of the social structures which shape their lives as young human beings.

This draws me to make three interlinked conclusions about play. Firstly, that the child is a being that is at once between two states: between the state of young child where play is celebrated and explicitly encouraged, and the state of the school pupil. The activity of playing then, is a therapeutic process which brings with it the comfort of a past-time and the joy of the parental bond of the home. But it is an activity which is subject to the pressures of the 'wax seal' process which is taking place; shaping the child into the pupil. This includes the pressures of controlling one's body appropriately, the pressure to practise self-regulation and behave diplomatically, and

the pressure to treat the work (whether it be termed a 'challenge' or a 'literacy target') with the correct degree of seriousness. This leads to the second point that players are finding the state between their demeanour of working and their demeanour of playing – as Turner's thesis defines: between their working *persona* and their playing *individuality*. The act of playing is a means of asserting one's own individuality, particularly when faced with the shaping and moulding process which aims at developing a 'new state of being': a pupil. Thirdly, play acts as a means of not only *understanding* the social structures which shape the player's lives but is a way of critiquing these structures, of asking 'why is life this way?' If we consider socio-dramatic play to have these functions, we can understand the immense social, emotional, and symbolic potential it carries.

7.4 Gender

Socio-dramatic play allows children the possibility to 'try on' an identity different to their own and this includes gender identity. How children performed gender was an initial research question, though as the fieldwork progressed, this focus became less prominent. I believe my standpoint as a feminist researcher also diminished practically, as I became more absorbed in the play narratives and less inclined to challenge (or indeed record) stereotypical behaviour. However, one child who did often refer to a gender distinction was Isaac. It was typically related to costume choice, as revealed in my fieldnotes:

> 17th May
>
> *Isaac goes to the home corner and reiterates to me*: 'Did you know boys can wear girls' costumes and girls can wear boys' costumes if they want to?' *He puts on a dress*
>
> 24th May
>
> *Isaac wears a gold shiny dress*
>
> L: This is for boys or girls, isn't it?
>
> *He joins Claire in the shopping game* (from fieldnotes)

He was explicit in his questioning of costume as being related to gender identity, though his questions seemed more statements of intention than concerned inquiry.

Isaac had an understanding that dresses could be considered as a symbol of femininity and therefore an individual might be judged by specific social standards according to their clothes. His use of the phrases 'girls' costumes' and 'boys' costumes' already underlines a notion that one's sex influences the physical items one uses. I never observed his choice to wear a dress during socio-dramatic play being questioned by staff or children, though staff once commented that it caused them to laugh. So, whilst he is aware of a distinction related to physical appearance, by choosing to wear these dresses, we may consider that he is disrupting a repeat performance of gender that might highlight his status as 'boy' in the classroom. He is seemingly not affected by hegemonic discourses about boy's clothes choices. Characters adopted by the children largely did not fall into a distinct binary that might have been expected as this binary is reflected in many popular texts. It was the case that girls adopted caring roles more frequently (e.g. parent, teacher, doctor/nurse) and boys tended to initiate roles which included battle elements, though both boys and girls participated in these narratives. Domestic themes were adopted by both boys and girls in the data, both within the home corner and in other spaces. It would be of interest to continue observing the focus children's socio-dramatic play into Key Stage 1, to note the influence of binaries presented in popular texts which they encounter, and whether texts which challenged stereotypical notions of gender were accepted and re-enacted in play (as in Davies, 1989). Longitudinal studies are useful here, as Rogers and Evans (2008) also note that whilst children may show non-stereotypical play at the start of school, 'the normalising discourses of their peers' offer a picture of 'what is socially appropriate behaviour in relation to gender' (p92-93).

Boy's control of space has been noted by other researchers with a focus on gender (MacNaughton, 2000; Rogers & Evans, 2008). I noted that though control of space was not explicitly stated (e.g. not allowing girls/boys into a space), boys' movements occupied a greater amount of space, for example in Caden and Andrew's episodes of play. The observed socio-dramatic play indicated that girls were more static (for instance in Emily's play episode) though this was determined by the choice of narrative, and doctor narratives were engaged in by both boys and girls, usually using the same space.

a. Lines of division

Despite focusing less on gender roles in play, I did begin to note how classroom practices made distinctions between the sexes and how these practices were then re-enacted in play. The most prominent example of this was staff asking children to form a line of alternating boy/girl. This would occur almost daily, and was mostly done in order to separate small friendships groups who were deemed 'disruptive' when sitting together. The practice was therefore criticised by some children (Fieldnotes from 19th April: 'upon lining up for singing, Isaac says 'I *hate* boy girl'').



Figure 7.5: whilst lining up, Safi lines up figurines in boy-girl sequence

In Claire's enactment of the teacher role, she announces that 'I need two boys and two girls' to be helpers from her fictional class. For her, dividing by gender had come to be understood as normative; gender for her becoming a function which conducts how a group of people are organised. Apt in analysing these two routines is Thorne's concept of 'lines of division' (1993): management practices which make a distinction between the genders. Though children were not divided into gender groups for getting changed into P.E. kits, for use of equipment, or for seating arrangements, this practice of dividing by gender for roles, and boy/girl lining-up, had become a part of some children's understanding of routine as represented in their play.

b. Narratives for girls?

In Ryan's episode of play, Ryan and Kayla adopt a narrative of a monster hunt when Molly enters their play. This narrative culminates in an attack of the monster. The

comment from the staff member prior to this play may be insightful: 'it's good that the girls got involved too' (from fieldnotes). This could imply that such hunting and battle narratives are understood by the staff member to have a typically masculine quality, and are not often freely chosen by girls. Her approval also implies that she wants to open up narratives featuring powerful characters to girls, where they may otherwise be less accessible. Though this narrative is not superhero-based, I would relate the powerful hunter/battler as having similar characteristics to a superhero. Therefore Marsh's commentary on girls and superhero play is useful here. She states that powerful superhero characters *do* draw girl's interests, but that 'female superheroes are generally located in patriarchal sites of power struggles and violence' means we might note a lack of interest by girls (Marsh, 2000: 211). If the involvement of girls in these narratives is seen as positive force towards gender equality then, staff may wish to interact in such play and encourage girls to extend narratives of powerful characters.

c. Parental roles

The re-enactment of parental roles in play may reveal to us how players consider their gender. It is worth noting a limitation of the study here. Though I met parents on several occasions I cannot claim to know fully what the parental influence may have been on the players; therefore, the following discussion provides only suggestions. (This is one aspect of the research which I would wish to extend further, linking home-based and school-based socio-dramatic play.) Just as Rogers and Evans refer to a girl in their study who continually played the role of mother, (leading them to question whether they should intervene to 'widen' her 'gender script'), Kylie's episode of play shows her parenting a doll. She acts as concerned and attentive caregiver (not expressing whether she is a mother or father), but the episode is also about her working life; her representation of parental duties is not an entirely domestic role but professional too. The play episode broadened so her focus was not only on the doll but moved on to be largely based upon her control of others and authority over a group of boys who entered the space and whom she included in her frame of play. At that start of the year, Kylie was one of three children in the class who was judged as not achieving the base level of self-confidence and self-awareness

in the baseline assessment. In this socio-dramatic play episode, filmed in July of the same academic year, having the status of a parent figure means Kylie asserts herself over fellow players. Though some of her responses appear defensive or socially demanding, using her role to instruct others renders the social script she uses empowering rather than restrictive. Domestic play is a valuable social tool for Kylie. As Rogers and Evans comment: 'domestic play is more important to children than we sometimes recognise', such themes are 'familiar and safe' and are rarely identical to those they experience at home (Rogers and Evans, 2008: 98-99).

Caden often spoke about his father in conversation with me and with his peers. He actually saw his father very irregularly, a fact which only brought his comments closer to my attention. It could be suggested that Caden's play persona of a powerful superhero is an expression of masculinity linked to his relationship with his father. He may feel a greater need to 'perform' in front of his peers, and to express his presence as a boy with a sense of physical dominance. This performance might help him to feel empowered in the classroom and to combat emotions relating to the estrangement of his father. His interest in superhero figures – and he only referenced male figures (Marsh's comment on patriarchal sites of power rings true) – may also have been for him examples of male role models who demonstrated competence and reached victory through physical strength and prowess.

After observations, a staff member commented that Caden 'plays rough', one reason being his interest in superhero characters. This was becoming a problem for staff as they had to monitor when this 'rough' play became violent in the playground. Attention was drawn to behaviour by a routine in which children were given a yellow face token for good behaviour (such as finishing their dinner) and a blue face token for misbehaviour (such as kicking another child). Children would then line up by the teacher, in front of the class, to discuss which token they had received and why. Whilst this is an exercise which accentuates self-awareness and the need for self-regulation, it also became what Connolly (1995) refers to in his work: public vilification. Connolly notes a group of boys who were 'identified and publically vilified by the teacher for being more aggressive' which meant the boys were then 'set up with an even stronger 'masculine' identity' (Connolly in Holland *et al*, 1995: 177) and thus a classic self-fulfilling prophecy perpetuates. Other members of the class during

observations did engage in play which could be deemed 'rough', though Caden had become more visible in the way that Connolly describes. Whilst also addressing behaviour that endangers the safety of other children, I would assert that it is important for staff to attempt to engage Caden in narratives that demonstrate physical strength used for positive ends, which he could then adopt in his own play.

How could Caden's play be conceptualised then, or what positive changes could be made? Firstly, practitioners may wish to consider the phrase employed in the EYFS: that play should be 'purposeful' (DfE, 2008: 11). Richards' comments that boys are facing a 'regime of masculinity' in which they are expected to express strength and resilience, may help us to see Caden's *own* purpose in his play: he wishes to demonstrate his resilience in a physical manner whilst attempting to find the balance between physical dominance and affectionate physical interaction. Caden fulfils Jordan's concept of boys who fall within the 'warrior definition' (1995) in that he finds formalised academic tasks more difficult than some of his male counterparts. Jordan theorises that this leads the child to feel a need to reinforce a powerful persona and challenge the authority of the school, in fear of losing his identity as hero within a warrior narrative. She suggests the need for activities/play themes for boys, in which 'some of these definitions are built around physical courage and strength, while others that are not nevertheless involve some sense of the battle between good and evil that underlies the 'warrior' definition of masculinity' (1995: 81-82). With the struggle that I noted Caden facing in finding the balance between asserting his own strength and acceptable physical behaviour in the classroom/playground, Jordan's suggestions may still give valuable insight for how adults can promote and interact in socio-dramatic play.

7.5 Bodily engagement

I will now explore the freedom of bodily movements and engagement in socio-dramatic play and how this might compare to the body as subject to school requirements. By bodily engagement I mean the ways in which children choose to physically engage with each other's bodies through play. Jenks (in Hultquist and Dahlberg, 2001) and Bradbury (2013), two theorists on childhood and early

education, provide critique and insight into the bodily experience of children in school which acts as a valuable comparison.

a. Intimacy and vulnerability

In the data, it is clear that having the space – and the 'choosing time' – for play, gives children chances to engage in physicality which is intimate, exaggerated, and sometimes highly stylised. By employing a doctor/patient scenario, Emily and Kylie allow themselves to be open to the scrutiny of another person's investigation of their body. As they press, measure, and 'inject' each other, they allow a process of touch unique to this play scenario which may (and did!) become invasive. I would suggest that the intimacy of touch in play bears a symbolic significance as one mode of communication at this stage of the children's lives. Touch here is used to assert the authority of one player over another, and seems to be a means of bringing players closer in their relationship. The classroom rule that children should 'keep hands and feet to yourself' is transformed significantly in socio-dramatic play. The touch between the players here is both integral to the roles they are taking on, as well as pushing them to explore what is acceptable to their co-player, what the boundaries of physical pressure and restraint are. These intimate moments between two players take a different form and inhabit a different space to both playground play and interaction during the mundane day-to-day moments of the classroom.

When commenting on Emily and Kylie's doctor play, I had written: 'funny how intense this close interaction can be' (from fieldnotes). What did I mean here by *intense*? It may have been the sometimes-risky physicality within the play, or the attitude taken up by the players – or this comment may have been communicating the feeling of being an outsider on a private world. It may have been the seeming seriousness of the process of diagnosis in this play – expressions of solemnity were mingled amongst smiles as the girls tested each other's bodies. There was not a 'diagnosis' as such, delivered at the culmination of the tests; it was the process of testing itself which brought pleasure in this play. What also seemed 'intense' at this stage of my observation was the girls' willingness to be physically available to the other person, making themselves vulnerable and accepting the closeness of the other whilst negotiating the boundaries of inflicting pain or pleasure. On another occasion during

observation of socio-dramatic play, Emily hit me with force on the forehead with a plastic hammer. After explaining that this hurt me, Emily became upset and told me to 'leave this house'. Her personal exploration of what are physically acceptable actions towards another body were once again tested in the sphere of her socio-dramatic play; her actions were performed in pretence, but the resulting emotions she felt were very real. She dealt with this emotion through maintaining instructions within the play frame, though had to move away from this space and narrative to understand the reality of her physical actions.

b. Learning to be assessed

From Emily and Kylie's doctor play, we can draw an interesting conceptual comparison about the nature of physical assessment. In order for Emily to assess Kylie's body, she must make herself physically prepared: sitting correctly, listening to and obeying Emily's instructions, moving when asked. In the routines of the classroom to which these two girls are becoming familiar, children's physicality is also scrutinised and assessed. Indeed, they are both learning how their bodies should *be* in different moments of the school day. In Bradbury's (2013) commentary on being the ideal learner, she comments how physical development is highlighted in the Early Year Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) assessment: 'the task of the Reception teacher is not only to 'develop' the child's mind in academic terms, but to *shape the body* and the temperament or attitude of the child' (p7, my emphasis). There emerges a scrutiny over the child's body and the 'correct' development and use of the body – a scrutiny which, she notes, is unlike that at any other stage of assessment throughout school life. In her observations of Reception classes, Bradbury identifies that alongside freely-chosen play, classes were required to join in with many behavioural conventions 'of primary schooling' such as:

> …lining up before moving rooms, sitting cross-legged in assembly and on the carpet, and putting up your hand to request permission to speak. These moments required a further facet of being a good learner – self-regulation and submission – in the form of joining in with all of these routines quickly and quietly… (Bradbury, 2013: 11)

Bradbury describes the class teacher looking for 'good listeners', as signalled by a poster in the classroom showing the elements of a good listener (including sitting still). She comments that the 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1991) required, directly contrasted to how the children were required to act during games or singing – with a level of enthusiasm which meant children who remained quiet were criticised. Being a 'good learner' involved recognising different requirements, and having a flexible response to these requirements, Bradbury theorises (2013: 11). These behavioural requirements (including a poster showing the qualities of a 'good listener') were almost identical to the class of my observations, as staff members used management strategies to contain children's actions. Children had to identify the moments where they needed to maintain stillness, and the moments where enthusiasm had to be demonstrated physically (such as in singing sessions, where stickers were handed out to children who had joined in with actions and sung with fervour). Choosing time, including choosing socio-dramatic play with peers, gave children moments to break from this required docility or required enthusiasm, and allowed them a space to control their own bodies and to choose how they engaged physically with other children.

c. Calm, roughness, and bodily placement

Caden was involved with extra yoga sessions in which an instructor led children through a story and incorporated yoga postures into the storyline. Yoga is an activity often related to femininity due to its relation to the smooth lines of the body and similarity to dance. Though yoga functions as a means by which to develop a sense of focus and calm, it also pushes areas of the body to extremes of extension and strength. Of course, this session with a group of 4-5 year olds did not hold the exact same pragmatic function but the recognition of yoga as a meditative, positive force remained, especially when the instructor used a singing bowl for meditation. In Caden's case, it seemed that the purpose of the yoga instruction was to allow his movements around the classroom, which could be judged as erratic and even disruptive, to become contained and gain a sense of calm. Caden was having to negotiate many differing rules about how he should use his body. Some physical intimacy was accepted, but 'roughness' was seen as problematic. Poses in which the

body is twisted, lowered, and stretched were acceptable in the yoga session, but not during a maths lesson. Caden was still developing his understanding of what his body can do, and *should* do, at particular moments of the school day. Jenks (2001) speaks of the 'pacing and timing' of children's bodies in school. Referring to the self-regulative processes which a child is required to adopt, he suggests that 'mastery in "shaping one's own future" takes place through attending to past and present behaviour' (Jenks in Hultquist & Dahlberg, 2001: 71). This links to my previous comments in this chapter about age; that children are sometimes forced to recognise their own physical development as measured by age. They are asked to recognise that they are no longer occupying the 'babyish' bodies of their nursery or home life, and perceived misbehaviour is sometimes related back to these less competent placements of the body. Attending to *present* behaviour, Jenks states, 'involves the successful development of an acceptable vocabulary of bodily placement, both as the locus of self but also as the normalising symbol of incorporation, that is, of being "in one's place" (*ibid*). The yoga session demonstrates how Caden was being instructed to place his body in acceptable spaces at the acceptable moment. If Caden could use the correct spaces and not breach the personal space of other children, he was deemed as being 'in his place'. This was also the case in other daily routines, such as use of the carpet area, where each child had an assigned space and was not allowed to move into another child's space. These requirements, alongside Caden's desire to express both power and affection through physical performances, regularly rendered him as a less than ideal learner. This meant he was in danger of being 'constituted through the EYFSP as failing to develop in the *right* ways' (Bradbury, 2013: 16), a label that could at as a standard or benchmark for his future progress beyond the Early Years.

d. Caden's all-encompassing imaginative play

I would argue that Caden's imaginative play world was all encompassing – displayed during just about every moment and during any activity. Throughout the day he could be seen physically presenting himself as a hero character and using his body to 'perform' in ways which risked highlighting him amongst a group and leading to him being disciplined. My initial definitions of play types did not seem to fit easily in

analysis of Caden's play, he was not a round peg for a square hole, just as the formal activities of the classroom did not always contain his physicality. Caden's play became an analogy for me on several levels: that children do not always fit the tasks set out for them by the curriculum (or indeed, the curriculum does not fit the children), definitions of play do not always apply as clear-cut standards and the tested methods we use in research do not always allow us to capture all we hope to. Observing Caden brought me an understanding of imaginative play as a way of being, a way of physically performing one's own personhood, and a way of bringing life and energy to the mundane. That Caden could not always contain his physicality and ended up hurting other children was part of his growth in self-regulation and into becoming the *pupil*. Observing him closely throughout daily tasks with a focus on his imaginative play brought me to the realisation that play was the frame through which he was coming to understand his new life in school. Whether that frame fitted neatly over tasks and obligations was a matter he would have to negotiate; understanding what adults required of him and what play could be interwoven with his duties as a pupil.

e. Bodily freedom

Moving away from this focus on the regulatory constraints placed upon children's bodies then, what can the data show us of the bodily freedom afforded in socio-dramatic play? If we look at Andrew's episode of play, we see that the narrative he engages with and the space in which he plays, afford the possibility for a bodily performance which can be described as clowning. In exaggerated moments, Andrew throws himself to the floor, leaps on fellow players, and varies his movements from a state of attentive calm (observing the 'bad guy birds') to frantic panic (wide-eyed, arms flailing, running in circles around the room). Looking back on my writings about Andrew, I make a comment which highlights the immense value of his physical play: 'the playful disruption in the socio-drama that takes place in the classroom is almost exactly opposite to Andrew's nature in the rest of classroom proceedings'. Andrew is given the freedom to choose to perform with a certain physical *hyperbole*. Through this he experiments in ways that he can use his body which are the opposite to how he must use his body the rest of the time. Following this interpretation, Andrew's play – as well as the playing of schools and parents - can be seen as 'carnivalesque'

(Bakhtin, 1984). It is a merry clowning, a bodily celebration which acts as an 'uncrowning' (*ibid:* 212) of the oppressive values and constraints of the system of authority to which the players find themselves subject. The physical risk at which Andrew places himself by performing dives and leaps, contributes to the joy of the clowning play experience. It is a physical transgression from the acceptable bodily vocabulary that he has learnt to employ in the classroom during non-play tasks, and a celebration of the freedom from these bodily requirements.

7.6 Adult in play

An initial research aim was to investigate the effect of adult participation upon socio-dramatic, specifically participation by school staff. Through the course of the ethnographic fieldwork, it became clear that adults had little time to interact in socio-dramatic play. To maintain the naturalistic quality of the study, I did not wish to engineer or force interaction from staff, but instead discuss reasons why they might not interact. This research aim therefore became less prominent. Any fieldnotes regarding the adult in play refer to my own interaction, and I did not wish the study to move towards auto ethnography. However, I will consider briefly my presence as an adult in socio-dramatic play.

In the first weeks of fieldwork my participation appeared to cause amusement and even confusion, perhaps as it was unusual for an adult in a classroom setting to take up the character roles of play. My participation evoked joy in the children; once they were familiar with me, they requested my participation. My participation allowed roles to be reversed: I could act as the child and the child as the adult, giving a chance for players to experience the emotions of differing power dynamics. I was not excluded from the inequities of playing – there were at times disagreements about who had me in their play narrative!

a. Staff participation

Staff members commented, informally and during interview, about opportunities to participate in play. The class teacher commented that when she 'came down to their level' and sat on the carpet to participate in play, some of the 'more nervous' children would join her, whereas, at that point in the term, they would not join in with a group

of peers. She became a comforting presence for them and/or legitimised the act of playing. She commented that during the baseline assessment period, staff felt there was more space and opportunity for them to engage in socio-dramatic play. This was particularly as they were conducting observations for assessment. From the interview data:

> M - How about role play and fantasy play, do you ever join in? I've seen you join in a few times. It's just - not a lot of time is there?
>
> Ms W - No, there's not a lot of time for that.
>
> Mrs M - I'd be confident and comfortable enough to join in -
>
> Ms W - I do - I did it a lot - I was in nursery before so I did it a lot -
>
> […]
>
> Ms W - I suppose it happens more in the first few weeks when we didn't have any planned activities so we spent more time playing, then it's easier to join in
>
> Mrs M - During the baseline as well, there was more room for us being on the carpet at their level and playing.
>
> M - Yeah. I remember talking to you (signalling R) about the baseline assessment, you said it was quite nice - nice to do.
>
> Mrs M - Yeah it was nice, because it allowed you time, we didn't teach phonics, we didn't teach maths or writing - or –
>
> Ms W - It gives you that chance to get to know them
>
> Mrs M - Yeah yeah yeah. As a person and not a little academic person. As a whole person.
>
> (from interview transcript, 3rd July 2016)

The staff claim they did not lack the ability or confidence to participate, but that participation occurred more often in Foundation Stage 1 (Nursery). However, they suggest it is 'easier' to do when they were not 'teaching'. The distinction made by Ms W between 'planned activities' and 'time playing' suggests a dichotomous relationship; that play is unplanned, and that 'planned activities' may not be considered play. It is revealing that it was during assessment observations that staff

found opportunities to participate in play; assessments using other forms may not have afforded this possibility. The final comment suggests that observational assessment gave staff the opportunity to know the children in a holistic sense. (It is important to state that this interview was recorded in May: my opening comment about the lack of time sprang from a recognition of this during the previous 6 months of observing the class. As my observations of play had taken place and been discussed with staff, their answers may have had a bias. However, I still regard their comments about previous practice as valid and therefore insightful.)

How do these staff comments compare with policy recommendations? The Practice Guidance given by the DCSF for Planning and Resourcing encourages practitioners to 'provide for, initiate and join in [with] imaginative play and role-play' (2008: 50) whilst the EYFS framework states that 'children learn by leading their own play, and by taking part in play which is guided by adults' (DfE, 2017: 9). In interview, it was clear that staff valued the provision of role-play spaces and this provision encouraged children to express themselves differently from during other play activities. Guiding and initiating was mostly done through provision of resources, instructing the class as to how resources could be used and joining in when and if time allowed. However, time allowance appeared to be the key issue for staff and limited the amount of time that 'guidance' by adults could take place. The Ofsted Early Years best practice documentation published in 2015, gives an example of a setting in which 'staff constantly played alongside the children, one-to-one and in pairs' (Ofsted, 2015: 21). This 'constant' availability of adult as co-player would appear unrealistic for the interviewed staff members. They expressed that the demands of 'teaching' phonics, maths, and writing to develop 'a little academic person' did not allow them to understand the whole child as comprehensively, as playing 'at their level' would allow.

b. Children's imagination and adult participation

Returning to Vygotsky's thoughts about children's imagination can guide adults to participate in socio-dramatic play. In observations, I noted that the pretence context of socio-dramatic provided a space where players could engage in word play, absurdism, hyperbole and exaggeration. When Isaac describes that they have

discovered ‘a trillion’ whales and Kylie states that she has worked for ‘one hundred years’, exaggeration pushes the possibilities of reality, and hyperbole becomes an accepted part of the play narrative. Vygotsky notes children’s passion for exaggeration which he states ‘has a very profound internal basis—the influence of our internal feelings on external impressions’ (Vygotsky, 2004: 26). He states that this exaggeration corresponds to our emotional needs, and quotes Gros and Buhler to outline the function of exaggeration:

> “This exaggeration,” says Gros, “is a result of interest in everything outstanding and extraordinary, combined with a feeling of pride associated with imagined possession of something special.”[…] Buhler, with complete justification, suggests that this process of alteration, and especially exaggeration, provides the child with practice dealing with quantities of which he has no direct experience. (Vygotsky, 2004: 27)

Firstly then, there is pleasure in the mere action of representing something extraordinary and expressing this representation to fellow players. Pride is created, particularly when the exaggeration is referring to a possession, and the authority of ownership is fostered within the pretence. Vygotsky’s assertion about the importance of this imaginative exaggeration is what I wish to highlight here: the fact that the child has ‘no direct experience’ of the quantity referred to yet still refers to it in play is a practice that is essential for the development of human culture. He reminds us that scientific discovery and artistic endeavour progresses due to the imaginative exaggerations: without considering such exaggeration we may never have happened to imagine molecules or light years – things that were once beyond our own experience. ‘We see that exaggeration, like imagination in general, is essential in art and science alike’ (*ibid*: 28) he states. Though this is a grand statement, it does relate back to the verbal exaggeration seen in children’s socio-dramatic play, and adults may wish to consider this notion when participating in play. Adult participation can act to legitimise play, but also extend the concepts which arise from playful conversation. If we consider Vygotsky’s comments on exaggeration, encouraging absurdity and hyperbole in play is a valuable way of opening out the concepts children are dealing with imaginatively and is therefore a valuable means of addressing children’s interests and progressing their learning. Entering the frame

of play together, brings players into an arena where they can explore concepts of 'a trillion whales' or 'one hundred years of work' without the constraints of what is *right* or *wrong*, and without the adult being obliged to guide players towards their own learning objectives.

c. Participation techniques

How can this manifest pragmatically? Research about participation techniques provides practical suggestions which may be useful in Early Years classrooms. Lobman (2005) trains practitioners in an improvisation technique in which the phrase 'yes and…' is repeatedly used to accept and extend children's ideas. She describes this as creating 'a forum for practicing making small, connected offers' (p311). This simple technique allows practitioners to recognise the direction which play is taking whilst participating and encourages active listening whilst working with children. Research from the University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands has looked at how to stimulate children's language acquisition and the quality of their play through adult-child interaction. Boland *et al* (2016) noted that practitioners claimed they lacked knowledge of how to interact 'in a natural way' in the socio-dramatic play of 3 to 6-year-olds. After conducting observations and analysing video data of 16 early childhood teachers, Boland *et al* have aimed to develop a set of good practice guidelines for this interaction, which practitioners can use in reflective practice. These guidelines ensure that play is child-led whilst being enriched by adult participation.

> - Observe first what children are playing. Join *their* play before you bring in new initiatives.
> - Don't be too dominant: join children's actions, prioritise the children's *own* story.
> - Create play situations in which children need to communicate.
> - Involve *all* children in verbal/non-verbal communication.
> - Underline the pretend world with your language, for example: refer to their characters not people, make use of 'I' and 'we', use language that your character would use.
> - Leave space for children's own initiatives: keep silent, show you are listening and following the children.
> - Connect children in play and conversations, ask *open* questions. (Boland *et al*, 2016, my own emphases)

These guidelines might be valuable for practitioners as they ensure play is child-led and that adult direction is avoided, meaning children's interests take priority. They encourage the practitioner to focus on language-use but recognise the immense value of non-verbal communication, especially in encouraging inclusive practice. Interaction within the frame of play is promoted. This means that the adult is essentially 'in character', which previous research has shown can encourage more complex language use amongst child players (see Kontos, 1999; Meachem et al, 2013). Finally, the guidelines devised by Bolan *et al* reinforce the value of the adult as an attentive listener, who then uses children's own prompts to question openly and develop conversation topics from play which extend outside the frame of play.

Chapter 8
Conclusion

8.1 Research question

Through analytical scrutiny of the rich data generated, the research question: 'how do children experience socio-dramatic play in the Reception classroom?' has been answered on several levels. Firstly, the initial answer upon inspection of the data draws attention to the joy experienced by children through partaking in such play. This joy largely springs from a sense of agency manifested in being able to share, and control, narratives with peers through a socially-rich imaginative, affective experience. However, players experience this type of play with some difficulty: the pressures of an environment where specific work standards are expected to be achievement and maintained, have the real potential to curtail and interrupt rich play narratives.

8.2 Summary of findings

The results show the importance of space, both physical and conceptual, being provided for socio-dramatic play. This incorporates specifically designated spaces, alongside flexible, non-assigned spaces which act as canvases for children to develop their own narratives and to, where possible, exercise their agency away from the adult gaze. The specific space of the study – the quiet room - has been identified as that which offers the (seemingly opposite though both valuable) qualities of rest and ruckus through shared play. The liminal status of the home-corner has been highlighted, as a space which plays an imperative part in bridging the gap between home and school, and allowing the habitus of each to *seep* into each other. Artefacts are promoted as symbolically powerful items which are used in socio-dramatic play, and have the potential to serve as links between artistic, scientific, cultural and social spheres. Costumes are accentuated as items which, at once, act as markers of play and significant cultural symbols. They can become a means by which children can understand hierarchies of status and unique identities whilst also bringing a feeling of comfort and pleasure to the wearer both within and outside of the frame of play.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted play as a liminal activity during an identity transition stage, utilising Turner's definition of 'the liminoid' to consider the transformation process of the Reception aged person, from child to pupil. The experience of re-enacting and re-imagining roles of power and authority allows children to re-conceptualise and demonstrate how they are learning to *do* school and how to *be* pupils. Socio-dramatic play is proposed as offering a unique conceptual space in which players can explore expressions of bodily freedom alongside the requirements of the bodily comportment and control which are demanded by school routines.

8.3 Contributions of the study

This research makes significant contributions to the areas of Early Years studies, ethnographic methodologies, and discourses and debates surrounding the child's right to play. The study acts as an important example of the potentiality of sensitive and prolonged observation in an Early Years setting. The socio-dramatic play documented is that which staff may not usually have the time and opportunity to observe (and transcribe, analyse, and reflect upon), as explicitly expressed by the staff members in the focus school and subsequently readers of the developing study who are Early Years professionals. Pragmatically then, the study acts as a window to a children's play culture which is most likely visible in educational settings, though somewhat obscured from adult view. This is a central contribution of the study. As the EYFSP is largely constructed through observational assessment, Early Years practitioners can identify the benefits of prolonged observation and this, in turn, effects future practice. Socio-dramatic play is highlighted as activity through which the child's sociality, linguistic dexterity, physical abilities, and use of their surroundings and resources are all emphasised. These are capabilities included within the EYFSP specifications. Therefore, not only is such observation useful to understand the child's holistic development but it contributes towards the fulfilment of formal guidelines. This is a central aspect of the research which will be drawn upon in future publications.

Methodologically, the study employs a wide range of data generation techniques combined as part of the ethnographic practice. The use of video data is justified as a

means by which to capture rich experience, alongside giving participating children (both in the class and the wider school) the ability to participate in the data generation process and consider how they represent their own spaces and routines through use of the camera. Visual methods such as maps of play and photographs taken by children are combined with interview data and researcher fieldnotes to create evocative description. This contributes to the ethnographic field of research, building on the works of practitioners and theorists such as Haas-Dyson, Richards, and Flewitt. Additional methodological techniques used during the fieldwork contribute to conceptions of how children can be involved in generating data. For example, though influenced by previous research, the *Book like Matilda's* was uniquely used to inspire and promote transcription of children's spoken narratives as part of their rich play-worlds. It was a resource which children used within their play and was therefore considered a multi-model artefact that played a significant part in both their learning experience and their relationship with the researcher. This sets the study alongside research which seeks to identify innovative methods by which to capture children's expressions and opinions, such as the work of Clark and Moss, and Thomson. I plan to draw upon these methodological techniques in future publications. Further to this, the rich data transcripts of extended socio-dramatic play themselves are significant resources available for practitioners, trainee teachers and for use in departments of Early Childhood Studies.

The data generated, and findings of the study, contribute towards the growing movement of organisations and collectives who are defending and protecting the notion of child-centred Early Years practices, whilst faced by the pressures of 'schoolification'. Published papers and associated documents will contribute towards the body of knowledge used by organisation and movements such as Keeping Early Years Unique, More Than a School, and TACTYC.

8.4 Implications for practice

The findings discussed have implications for practice in the Early Years. The following may be practical suggestions or concepts which practitioners can incorporate into their reflective practice. All the noted implications for practice here aim to cultivate

an atmosphere in which children's play is taken seriously and is allowed space to develop. I have taken points for consideration from each section of the chapter.

a. Spaces

Children seem to have a deep need, socially, to negotiate power in the safe arena of play. Spaces in the school which are specifically for socio-drama can legitimise this play and show children that their freely-chosen play is valuable. Practitioners could seek not only to supply spaces specifically for socio-dramatic play, but also to recognise the potentiality of non-assigned, or neutral, spaces. Private and discrete spaces also allow children secret spaces for powerful personal narratives to be played out, without adult scrutiny.

b. Time

Bradbury's comments about children's time remind us that any critique of children's use of time at this stage may remain with children as 'a benchmark for all future progress' (Bradbury, 2013: 17). Practitioners should recognise that their judgement about children's use of time is based upon a defined set of values and that choices made by children during choosing time could be influenced by specific personal relationships, cultural values, or the pressures of the curriculum. The concept of free time or *spontaneously* spent time still appears to be in tension with assessed and monitored curriculum time. We should ensure that we protect the free time that children have at this stage, allowing play narratives to develop. Practitioners should consider how this time might be invaded by structured tasks, and be sensitive to the play needs of children.

c. Costumes and artefacts

Costumes, though seemingly mundane artefacts of the Reception classroom, fulfil multiple symbolic functions: they provide a new identity for players, are a marker of the play frame, allow individuality, and can carry with them a sense of ownership. Costumes are additionally comforting – the costume which was most often used in the focus classroom was the soft, furry one piece dog costume. Children would often rush straight to the costume trolley to obtain this first! With children often continuing to wear costumes after socio-dramatic play had finished, costumes took on the

function of comforting items. This function is akin to the comfort blankets and toys of Winnicott's theory (1971); costumes acting as reassuring items of warmth and physical familiarity in an environment that can at times be unusual for new learners. If we consider costumes to be tools by which children can 'try on' different identities, they can be used further to bridge the identities of home and school, allowing cultural practices to overlap. For these reasons, these seemingly mundane artefacts should be taken seriously by practitioners who wish to understand children's learning identities.

Engaging with children's artefact use in socio-dramatic play is a potential way to successfully follow the child's *interests* in play, which practitioners are emphatically encouraged to do in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014b). Pahl and Rowsell suggest that 'building community' in the classroom could be achieved through a focus on artefacts, particularly those from young people's home cultures. Identity is embedded in artefacts, and this potential can be harnessed rather than artefacts simply being displayed. To further this, practitioners could ask children to take pictures of everyday objects to bring into the classroom and through these find 'listening methodologies that unite communities' (p145). Home artefacts 'hold' the habitus of the family and are 'resonant with narrative', Pahl reminds us (Pahl, 2004: 341). Indeed, the sharing of home artefacts was manifested in the 'Show and Tell' practice of the study classroom. I suggest that there may be further potential in artefacts: for them to be harnessed by adults in socio-dramatic play, thereby prompting further exploration, conversation, and linking of school and home cultures.

d. Themes of play

The themes which I have identified as emerging from children's socio-dramatic play are not unexpected, indeed many seem to persist from the Opies' work until today. Further thought might be given then to *why* children choose these themes and what can be understood from each individual player in terms of their needs and interests. Through play children are authoring their own versions of heroes or avatars; virtual, imagined, or emphasised copies of themselves. Practitioners should not only note this in observation but also find ways for children to take control of these narratives,

helping them to find positions within such narratives that contribute to their social learning experience.

If concerns about battle narratives are highlighted by Early Years practitioners, there may be further need to incorporate these games into the curriculum or to encourage and legitimise these games through adult presence and interaction. This can then prompt discussion about behaviours that are often seen as linked with battle narratives. Concerning computer games, there are formalised programmes being developed which are attempting to integrate and use these media tools in school settings. Minecraft (which Ryan stated an interest in at the start of the academic year) is being utilised across educational arenas (see for example Wernholm & Vigmo, 2015) and as a medium through which children's social play worlds can be studied. Such games have presence across media platforms which young children engage with, such as through YouTube videos and online gaming. Themes, characters, and settings from game narratives are therefore woven into the daily play of children. The Reception stage, then, is a period in which practitioners can engage with these narratives through play.

e. Social relationships

Campaign groups who argue that the pressures of a formal curriculum are 'too much, too soon' for young children may find the notion of the liminal stage – its pains and confusions – useful in defining the need for play in the early stages of life. Notions of liminality may contribute to Early Years practitioners understanding of the term 'school readiness', as well as helping to contextualise the struggles and pressures faced by those wishing to advocate the child's right to play at this age.

f. Gender

In settings where practitioners are concerned about negative or damaging gender stereotypes being perpetuated through play, adult interaction in socio-dramatic play can function to gently question certain forms of gender performativity. The structured performance practice of Author's Theatre is another means through which adults can help children direct their characterisations and explore multi-layered identities. MacNaughton (2000) suggests using Author's Theatre to provide

boys with 'understandings of masculinity in which dominance is not always seen as positive' (p126).

g. Bodily engagement

We have seen that socio-dramatic play incorporates intimacy and vulnerability, as well as giving chances to practise the bodily states which need to be observed during school routines. It simultaneously provides a space where children can engage in physical clowning and slapstick, experiencing the exhilaration of movements that bring with them an element of risk, and ultimately a socially shared joyfulness. Practitioners should be aware of the need for spaces which allow this kind of physical engagement.

8.5 Implications for further research

The study brings to light implications for further research at this stage of school and beyond. Firstly, limitations of the locations of the study meant that the home life of the focus children was not able to be explored. Whilst several ethnographers have explored the socio-dramatic and fantasy play of children in school, further studies should strive to identify the relationship between children's play at home and at school. This will allow for a focus on the interactive potential of parents and siblings, and allow an exploration of the powerful popular culture and media influences upon socio-dramatic play practises.

With the freedom of greater resources, longitudinal studies exploring the changing status of play throughout the Infant years would give insight into how the conceptual work/play dichotomy influences children and staff. Whilst ethnographies, including this study, manage to capture rich snapshots of socio-dramatic practices in the classroom or playground (and for example in the recent works of Marsh, Flewitt, Richards, Rogers and Evans, and Willet), further studies are needed to explore the longer-term evolution of creative play. This is currently pertinent considering the continued debates surrounding the curriculum content of the Infant years (and related conditions of examination). Further action research studies should be conducted to determine whether Author's Theatre can influence children's understanding of powerful roles and gender stereotypes. My participation

throughout the fieldwork rendered me an adult player in a children's play culture. Further studies should seek to ask questions of: how can adults sensitively and successfully participate in children's play narratives without dominating? What strategies can adults (whether teachers, parents, or independent practitioners) make use of to engage and encourage language-rich, challenging socio-dramatic play? Is there a conception of the teacher-player role which could be further explored and defined? Further to this, studies may seek to identify the potential role of a play worker or play leader in equipping spaces for socio-dramatic play and legitimising its status as a freely-chosen activity amongst children.

8.6 Reflections on the research project

It was an absolute privilege to have the time and professional opportunity to observe children's play. Many practitioners I have spoken to have expressed their envy of this process, and wished they had time to devote to observing children's own play: play which is both profoundly personal and social. It was an honour to be accepted into the frame of play and to be part of a process which let me form a close relationship with the children. Sometimes it felt like I was being given special access to a secret society of players run by some brilliantly creative people. I worked my way up to being accepted! Going back to see the focus children in the next year was returning home to old friends who were eager to keep me updated about their news: Claire had brand new Frozen glasses, Emily had another baby brother from mummy's tummy, and Isaac *still* liked cheddar cheese sandwiches with the crusts cut off the best – *even though* he's in Year One now. The concerns about schoolification, with which I opened this thesis, could be identified on a micro level, even in the stress faced by children at completing challenges and trying to please teaching staff with their work. In turn, the dedicated teachers of the study were genuinely struggling with ticking every child's name off task lists, putting all their effort into this process and yet feeling some lingering sense of discomfort in the process of doing it.

My research aims to support efforts for play to be the conceptual and practical foundation of Early Years practice, and I hope it gives insight to those who campaign for the rights of the child to play in the classroom. It has been fascinating to look at a setting in a new light and from a range of perspectives. Any classroom is multi-

layered with interaction – I was privileged to see many levels of this interaction, from what Ryan shaped his satsuma peel into when he thought no-one was watching, to the comments of school governors as they took official walks through the school. Ethnographic studies are intense and almost tantalising when you realise you are awake to so many levels of existence at once. I do note the difficulty of trying to remain free from a critical stance; researchers are human after all and our empathy and willingness to relate to others' emotions makes any pursuit of complete objectivity an impossibility. I often found myself 'on the side' of the children, despite my adult authority, and then having to step back and ask myself what 'side' I *should* be on and indeed why I felt there were *sides* at all! I believe being an ethnographic researcher, even in a space you are familiar with, offers a challenge and a unique opportunity for learning about the cultural processes through which we interact, learn, and exist together.

My immense thanks go to the class for allowing me to become a member of their theatrical troupe and allowing me, and others, to peep into their world of play.

References

Alexander, R (2004) Still no pedagogy? Principle, pragmatism and compliance in primary education, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 34(1), 7-33

Ariel, S. (1992) Semiotic Analysis of Children's Play: A Method for Investigating Social Development, *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 38: 1, pp119-138

Baert, P. & da Silva, F.C. (2010) *Social Theory in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Bakhtin, M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, University of Texas Press

Bakhtin, M. (1984) Rabelais and His World, Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Barley, R. & Bath, C. (2013) The importance of familiarisation when doing research with young children, *Ethnography and Education*, 9:2, pp182-195

Barrs, M. (1988) Maps of Play in Meek, M. & Mills, C. (eds) *Language and Literacy in the Primary School*, The Falmer Press

Bateson, G. (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind – Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology*, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc.

Bateson, G. (1978) A theory of play and fantasy, in Bateson, G. (ed*) Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, St Albans: Paladin

Bennett, N., Wood, E. and Rogers, S. (1997) *Teaching through Play: Teachers' thinking and classroom practice*, Buckingham: Open University Press

Big Think (2011) *Your behaviour creates your gender* [online video], Available at: http://bigthink.com/users/judithbutler [Accessed on 22nd May 2015]

Bingham, S. & Whitebread, D. (2012) *School Readiness: A critical review of perspectives and evidence*, TACTYC Publications

Bishop, J. (2014) The lives and legacies of Iona and Peter Opie*, International Journal of Play*, 3:3, pp205-223

Bolland, A., Veldhuis. D., Van der Zalm, E. & Damhuis, R. (2016) *Opportunities in play: stimulating make-believe play, complex language and thought*,

Proceedings of EECERA, 31st August – 3rd September 2016, Dublin, Ireland

Blair, T. (1996) *Leader's speech*, Blackpool 1996, transcript, www.britishpoliticalspeech.org, Available online at http://www.britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=202, [Accessed on 28th April 2016]

Blaise, M. (2005) A feminist poststructuralist study of children "doing" gender in an urban kindergarten classroom, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 20, pp85-108

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (2001; 2nd edition) *How to Research,* Buckingham: Open University Press

Bradbury, A. (2013) Education policy and the 'ideal learner': producing recognisable learner-subjects through early years assessment, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 34:1, pp1-19

Bradbury, A. & Roberts-Holme, G. (2016) *The Introduction of Reception Baseline Assessment: "They are children... not robots, not machines"*, London: National Union Teachers

Brady, A. & Schirato, T. (2011) *Understanding Judith Butler*, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Bretherton, I. (1989) Pretense: The Form and Function of Make-Believe Play*, Developmental Review*, 9, pp383-401

British Education Research Association (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*, London

Broadhead, P. (2001) Investigating Sociability and Cooperation in Four and Five Year Olds in Reception Class Settings, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 9:1, pp23-35

Broadhead, P. (2006) Developing an understanding of young children's learning through play: the place of observation, interaction and reflection, *British Educational Research Journal*, 32:2, pp191-207

Brooker, L., Rogers, S., Ellis, D., Hallet, E. & Roberts-Holmes, G. (2010) *Practitioners' Experiences of the Early Years Foundation Stage*, London: Department for Education

Brown, S. (2009) *Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*, New York: Avery

Bruner, J.S., Jolly, A. & Sylva, K. (1976) *Play: its Role in Development and Evolution*, New York: Basic Books Inc.

Burke, C. (2008) Play in focus: Children's visual voice in participative research, In Thomson, P. (ed) *Doing visual research with children and young people*, London: Routledge

Burn, A. Marsh, J., Bishop, J.C., Willet, R., Richards, C. & Sheridan, J. (2009) *Children's playground games and songs in the new media age,* Institute of Education, University of London, 11

Butler, J. (1990) *Gender Trouble – Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge

Canning, N. (2010) The influence of the outdoor environment: den-making in three different contexts, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 18:4, pp555-566

Canning, N. (2013) 'Where's the bear? Over there!' – creative thinking and imagination in den making, *Early Child Development and Care*, 183:8, pp1042-1053

Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (2016) *Running the BASE Assessment* [online], Available at: http://www.cem.org/our-solution-base, [Accessed 27th May 2016]

Charon, J.M. (2004) *Symbolic Interactionism: an introduction, an interpretation, an integration*, Boston: Pearson

Children's Workforce Development Council (2009) *The Team around the Child* (TAC) and the Lead Professional, Leeds

Chief Secretary to the Treasury (2003) *Every Child Matters*, Norwich: the Stationery Office

Coles, R. & Thomson, P. (2015) Beyond records and representations: inbetween writing in educational ethnography*, Ethnography and Education*, 11:3, pp253-266

Connolly, P. (1995) Boys will be Boys? Racism, Sexism, and the Construction of Masculine Identities amongst Infant Boys, in Holland, J., Blair, M. & Sheldon, S. (eds) *Debates and Issues in Feminist Research and Pedagogy*, Open University Press

Corbin, J.M. & Strauss, A. (2008*) Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, London: Sage Publications Inc.

Corsaro, W.A. (1985) *Friendship and Peer Culture in the Early Years*, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation

Corsaro, W.A. (2003) *We're friends right? Inside kids' culture*, Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press

Corsaro, W.A. & Molinari, L. (2008) Entering and Observing in Children's Worlds: A Reflection on a Longitudinal Ethnography of Early Education in Italy, in Christensen, P & James, A. (eds) *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Coughlan, S. (2016) *Parents keep children off school in test protest*, BBC News, 3rd May 2016 Available online at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-36188634

Clark, A. & Moss, P. (2001) *Listening to Young Children: The MOSAIC Approach*, London: National Children's Bureau

Clark, A. (2011) Multimodal map making with young children: exploring ethnographic and participatory methods, *Qualitative Research*, 11:3, pp311-330

Craft, A. (2003) Creative Thinking in the Early Years of Education, *Early Years*, 23(2), 143-154

Cremin, T., Swann, J., Flewitt, R., Faulkner, D. & Kucirkova, N. (2013) *Evaluation Report of MakeBelieve Arts Helicopter Technique of Storytelling and Storyacting*, Make Believe Arts/The Open University

Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research*, London: Sage

Csikszentmihályi, M. (2014) *Flow and the Foundations of Positive Psychology: The Collected Works of Mihaly Csikszentmihályi*, Dordecht: Springer Netherlands

Curran, J. (1999) Constraints of Pretend Play: Explicit and Implicit Rules, *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 14:1, pp47-55

David, M., Edwards, R. & Alldred, P. (2001) Children and School-based Research: 'informed consent' or 'educated consent'?, *British Educational Research Journal*, 27:3, pp347-365

Davies, B. (1989*) Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tales*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008) *Fair Play: A consultation on the play strategy*, London: Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008a) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, London

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008b) *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage,* London

Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008c) *Every Child a Talker*, London

Department for Education (1994) *Circular number 1/94: Religious Education and Collective Worship*, London, Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/collective-worship-in-schools

Department for Education (2010*) Phonics teaching materials: core criteria and the self-assessment process*, London

Department for Education (2010a) *Reading at an early age the key to success*, Available online at: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/reading-at-an-early-age-the-key-to-success

Department for Education (2012) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, London

Department for Education (2013) *Topic Note: Results of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) Pilot Research report* [Accessed on 24th April 2017]

Department for Education (2014) *Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools*, London

Department for Education (2014a*) Reforming assessment and accountability for primary schools: Government response to consultation on primary school assessment and accountability* [online], Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/297595/Primary_Accountability_and_Assessment_Consultation_Response.pdf [Accessed on 11th January 2017]

Department for Education (2014b) *Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage,* London

Department for Education (2017) *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*, London

Department for Education and Employment (2000) *Progression in Phonics: materials for whole class teaching*, London

Department for Education and Employment (2001) *The National Literacy Strategy - Developing Early Writing*, London

Department for Education and Skills (2002) *Birth to Three Matters,* London

Department for Education and Skills (2003) *Excellence and Enjoyment: A Strategy for Primary Schools*, London

Department for Education and Skills (2004) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children*, Nottingham: DfES Publications

Department for Education and Skills (2007) *Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics*, London

Despicable Me (2010) Directed by: Coffin, P. & Renaud, C. California, USA. Universal Studios

Despicable Me 2 (2013) Directed by: Coffin, P. & Renaud, C. California, USA. Universal Studios

DeWalt, K.M. & DeWalt, B.R. (2010; 2nd edition*) Participant Observation: A Guide for Fieldworkers*, Plymouth: AltaMira Press

Dunn, J. & Dale, N. (1984) I a daddy: 2-year-olds' collaboration in joint pretend play with sibling and with mother, in Bretherton, I. (ed) *Symbolic play*, London: Academic Press

Durant, D. (2003) *The introduction of the Foundation Stage Profile; the early experiences of one LEA*, Available online at: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/00003154.htm [Accessed 27th May 2016]

Dyer, C. (2010) *Is there dramatic play in Montessori classrooms?* [online] Available at: http://www.amontessorimusingplace.org/search/label/dramatic%20play, [Accessed on 19th July 2016]

Early Excellence (2015) *EExBA-R: Baseline Assessment for Reception Handbook 2015*, Huddersfield

Eberle, S.G. (2014) The Elements of Play: Toward a Philosophy and a Definition of Play, *American Journal of Play*, 6(2), pp214-233

Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. (1993) *The Hundred Language of Children: The Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education*, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation

Ellyatt, W. (2011) *What do they mean by readiness?* [online], Available at: http://www.toomuchtoosoon.org/uploads/2/0/3/8/20381265/what_do_they_mean_by_readiness_-_eye_magazine_jan_2011.pdf, [Accessed on 28th April 2016]

Emerson, R.M., Fretz, R.I. & Shaw, L.L. (2011; 2nd ed) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Faulkner, D. & Coates, E.A. (2013) Early childhood policy and practice in England: twenty years of change, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 21:2-3, pp244-263

Flewitt, R. (2005) Using multimodal analysis to unravel a silent child's learning, *Early Childhood Practice: The Journal for Multi-Professional Partnerships*, 7:2, pp5-16

Flewitt, R. (2006) Using video to investigate preschool classroom interaction: education research assumptions and methodological practices, *Visual Communication*, 5:1, Pp25-50

Flewitt, R. (2011) Bringing ethnography to a multimodal investigation of early literacy in a digital age, *Qualitative Research*, 11:3, pp293-310

Franks, A. (2015) How Environment Affects Learning: Schoolteachers Engaging with Theatre-based Pedagogies, in Davis, S., Fremont, B., Grainger Clemson, H., Jansson, S.M., Marjanovic-Shane, A. (eds) *Dramatic Interactions in Education Vygotskian and Sociocultural Approaches to Drama, Education and Research*, London: Bloomsbury Academic

Froebel, F. (1885) *The Education of Man*, D. Appleton-Century

Froebel, F. (1912) *Pedagogics of the Kindergarten*, translated by Jarvis, J., New York: D. Appleton and Company

Galda, L. & Pellegrini, A.D. (1985) *Play, Language and Stories*, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation

Garcez, P.M. (2008) Microethnography in the Classroom in K. A. King and N. H. Hornberger (eds), Encyclopaedia of Language and Education, 2nd Edition, Volume 10: *Research Methods in Language and Education*, Springer Science + Business Media LLC

Garvey, C. (1991: 2nd edn) *Play*, London: Fontana Press

Garvey, C. & Kramer, T.L. (1989) The Language of Social Pretend Play, *Developmental Review*, 9, pp364-382

Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

Giroux, H.A. & Pollock, G. (2010) *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the End of Innocence*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Goffman, E. (1969) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Harmondsworth: Penguin

Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organisation of Experience*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Goin, C.M. (1997) Malinowski's ethnographic photography: Image, text and authority, *History of Photography*, 21:1, pp67-72

Gray, P. (2011) The Decline of Play and the Rise of Psychopathology in Children and Adolescents, *American Journal of Play*, 3:4, pp443-463

Greene, S. & Hogan, D. (2005) *Researching Children's Experience: Approaches and Methods*, London: Sage

Groos, K. (1898) *The Play of Animals*, New York: Appleton

Groos, K. (1901) *The Play of Man*, London: William Heinemann

Gueterbock, R. (2010) *Montessori and the EYFS*, Available at: http://www.montessorisociety. org.uk/article/montessori-and-eyfs, [Accessed 1st July 2016]

Haas-Dyson, A. (1997) *Writing Superheroes: Contemporary Childhood, Popular Culture, and Classroom Literacy*, N.Y.: Teacher's College

Haas-Dyson, A. (ed) (2016) *Child Cultures, Schooling, and Literacy: Global Perspectives on Composing Unique Lives*, Oxon: Routledge

Hakkarainen, P., Brėdikytė, M., Jakkula, K. & Munter, H. (2013) Adult play guidance and children's play development in a narrative play-world, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21:2, pp213-225

Hammersley, M. (2006) Ethnography: problems and prospects, *Ethnography and Education*, 1:1, 3-14

Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (2007; 3rd edn) *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, Oxon: Routledge

Harcourt, D. & Conroy, H. (2011) Informed consent: Processes and procedures in seeking research partnerships with young children, in Harcourt, D., Perry, B. & Waller, T. (eds) *Researching Young Children's Perspectives*, Abindgon, Oxon: Routledge

Heath, S.B. (1983) *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hendy, L. & Whitebread, D. (2000) Interpretations of Independent Learning in the Early Years, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 8(3), 243-252

Henricks, T. (2008) The Nature of Play: An Overview, *American Journal of Play*, 1(2), pp157-180

Hilton, M. (ed) (1996) *Potent Fictions: Children's Literacy and the Challenge of Popular Culture*, London: Routledge

Hirsch-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R.M., Berk, L.E. & Singer, D.G. (2009) *A Mandate for Playful Learning in Preschool: Applying the Scientific Evidence*, Oxford University Press

Hobson, P.R. (2002) *The Cradle of Thought*, London: Macmillan

Hobson, P.R. (2008) Interpersonally Situated Cognition*, International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 16:3, pp377-397

Holland, P. (2000) Take the Toys from the Boys? An Examination of the Genesis of Policy and the Appropriateness of Adult Perspectives in the Area of War, Weapon and Superhero Play, *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 4:2, pp92-108

Holzman, L. (2006) *Vygotsky at work and play*, Hove: Routledge

Howard, J. & McInnes, K. (2012) The impact of children's perceptions of an activity as play rather than not play on emotional well-being, *Child: care, health and development*, 39:5, pp737-724

Howe, N. (2006) Superhero toys and boys' physically active and imaginative play, *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 20:4, pp287-300

Hughes, B. (2002) *A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types*, 2nd edition, London: PlayLink, Available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/childreneducationandfamilies/educationandlearning/earlyyearschildcare/workinginearlyyears/outofschool/firstclaim/playtypes.pdf

Huizinga, J. (1938) *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Isaacs, B. (2012) *Understanding the Montessori approach: early years education in practice*, London: Routledge

James, A., Jenks, C. & Prout, A. (1998) *Theorizing Childhood*, Cambridge: Polity Press

James, A. (2001) Ethnography in the Study and Children and Childhood, in Atkinson, P., Coffey, A., Delamont, S., Lofland, J. & Lofland, L. (eds) *Handbook of Ethnography*, London: Sage Publications

James, A. & Prout, A. (2015) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Jenks, C. (1996) *Childhood*, London: Routledge

Jenks, C. (2001) The Pacing and Timing of Children's Bodies, in Hultquist, K. and Dahlberg, G. (eds) *Governing the Child in the New Millennium*, NY: Routledge Falmer

Jewitt, C., & Kress, G. (2003) *Multimodal Literacy*, London: Peter Lang.

Jones, K. (2011) Capitalism, creativity and learning in Sefton-Green, J., Thomson, P., Jones, K. & Bresler, L. (eds) *The Routledge International Handbook of Creative Learning*, Oxon: Routledge

Jonson, P. (1999) Play and 'Enjoyable Experience': A Pedagogical Framework, *Motriz: J. Phys. Ed.*, 5:2, pp18-21

Jordan, E. (1995) Fighting Boys and Fantasy Play: the construction of masculinity in the early years of school*, Gender and Education*, 7:1, pp69-86

Kitson, N. (1997) Adult intervention in children's socio-dramatic fantasy play, Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, *Elementary and Early Years Education*, 25:1, pp32-36

Kline, S. (1995) *Out of the Garden – Toys and Children's Culture in the Age of TV Marketing*, London: Verso

Kontos, S. (1999) Preschool Teachers' Talk, Roles, and Activity Settings during Free-play, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 14:3, pp363-382

Kress, G. (1997) *Before Writing: Rethinking the Paths to Literacy*, Routledge

Kress, G. (2001) ``You've Just Got to Learn How to See'': Curriculum Subjects, Young People and Schooled Engagement with the World, *Linguistics and Education*, 11: 4, pp401-415

Lillard, A. (1993) Pretend Play Skills and the Child's Theory of Mind, *Child Development*, 64:2, pp348-371

Lillard, A. (2001) Pretend Play as Twin Earth – A Social Cognitive Analysis, *Developmental Review*, 21:4, pp495-531

Lillard, A. S., Lerner, M. D., Hopkins, E. J., Dore, R. A., Smith, E. D., & Palmquist, C. M. (2012) The Impact of Pretend Play on Children's Development: A Review of the Evidence [online], *Psychological Bulletin*, American Psychological Association

Lobman, C. (2005) "Yes And": The Uses of Improvisation for Early Childhood Professional Development*, Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 26:3, pp305-319

MacNaughton, G. (2000) *Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood Education*, London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd

Madrid, S. & Kantor, R. (2009) Being kitties in a preschool classroom: maintaining group harmony and acting proper in female peer-culture play routine, *Ethnography and Education*, 4:2, pp229-247

Marsh, J. (1999) Batman and Batwoman go to School: popular culture in the literacy curriculum, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 7:2, pp117-131

Marsh, J. (2000) 'But I want to fly too!': girls and superhero play in the infant classroom, *Gender and Education*, 12:2, pp209-220

Marsh, J. (2004) The techno-literacy practices of young children, *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 2:1, pp51-66

Marsh, J. (2010) Young children's play in online virtual worlds, *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 8:1, pp23-39

Marsh, J. (2014) From the wild frontier of Davy Crockett to the wintery fiords of Frozen: changes in media consumption, play and literacy from the 1950s to the 2010s, *International Journal of Play*, 3:3, pp267-279

Marsh, J. & Bishop, J. (2013) *Changing Play: Play, Media and Commercial Culture from the 1950s to the Present Day*, McGraw-Hill Education

Massey, D. (1994) *Space, Place, and Gender*, University of Minnesota Press

Massey, D. (2013) Doreen Massey on Space, *Social Science Bites*, Sage, [Accessed on 15th August 2017] Available at: https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2013/02 /podcastdoreen-massey-on-space/

McInnes, K., Howard, J., Miles, G. and Crowley, K. (2011) Differences in practitioners' understanding of play and how this influences pedagogy and children's perceptions of play*, Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 31:2, pp121-133

Meachem, S., Vukelich, C., Han, M. and Buell, M. (2013) Preschool teachers' language use during dramatic play*, European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21:2, pp250-267

Mills, D. & Morton, M. (2013) *Ethnography in Education*, London: SAGE Publications

Mitchell, Jr. R.G. (1988) Social implications of the flow experience, in Csikszentmihályi, M. & Csikszentmihályi, I.S. (eds) *Optimal experience: Psychological Studies of Flow in Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press

Montessori, M. (1965) *The Montessori Method*, Cambridge MA: Robert Bentley

Montessori Schools Association (2008) *Guide to the Early Years Foundation Stage in Montessori settings*, London: Montessori St Nicholas Charity

Moore, D. (2015) 'The teacher doesn't know what it is, but she knows where we are': young children's secret places in early childhood outdoor environments*, International Journal of Play*, 4:1, pp20-31

Morris, E. (2010) 'Important questions still need to be answered about the academies bills', *The Guardian*, 27th July 2010

Moss, P. & Dahlberg, G. (2008) Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - Languages of Evaluation, *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work*, 5:1, pp3-12

Moyles, J. (2005, 2nd edn.) *The Excellence of Play*, Maidenhead: Open University Press

National Foundation for Educational Research (2015) *Reception baseline research: views of teachers, school leaders, parents and carers, Research Report*, London: Department of Education

National Foundation for Educational Research (2016) *NFER Reception Baseline Assessment: About the Assessment* [online], Available at: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/schools/ baseline-assessment/about-the-assessment.cfm [Accessed 27th May 2016]

National Union of Teachers (2015) *Stand up for education: a manifesto for our children's education*, NUT Strategy and Communications Department

Ofsted (2014) *Early Years Annual Report 2012-2013*, London: H.M.S.O

Ofsted (2014a) *Are you ready? Good practice in school readiness*, London: H.M.S.O

Ofsted (2015) *Early Years report*, London: H.M.S.O

Ofsted (2015a) *Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?,* London: H.M.S.O

Opie, I. & Opie, P. (1959) *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren*, Oxford University Press

Opie, I. & Opie, P. (1969) *Children's Games in the Street and Playground*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Opie, I. (1993) *The People in the Playground*, Oxford University Press

Oswell, D. (2013) *The Agency of Children: From Family to Global Human Rights*, Cambridge University Press

Pahl, K. (2004) Narratives, artifacts and cultural identities: an ethnographic study of communicative practices in homes, *Linguistics and Education*, 15, pp339-358

Pahl, K.H. & Rowsell, J. (2011) Artifactual Critical Literacy: A New Perspective for Literacy Education, *Berkeley Review of Education*, 2:2, pp129-151

Paley, V.G. (1990) *The boy who would be a helicopter*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Paley, V.G. (2009) *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Piaget, J. (1951) *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Pillow, W.S. (2010) Dangerous reflexivity: rigour, responsibility and reflexivity in qualitative research, in Thomson, P. & Walker, M. (eds) *The Routledge Doctoral Student's Companion*, Oxon: Routledge

Postman, N. (1994; 2nd edn.) *The Disappearance of Childhood*, New York: Vintage Books

Premack, D. & Woodruff, G. (1978) Does the chimpanzee have a theory of mind?, *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 1:4, pp515–526

Pring, R. (2000) *Philosophy of Educational Research* (2nd edition), London: Continuum

Puffett, N. (2010) *Government clarifies ban on Every Child Matters, Children & Young People* Now [online], Available at: http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1053008 /government-clarifies-ban-every-child-matters [Accessed 27th May 2016]

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2000) *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*, London: Department for Education and Employment

Roberts-Holmes, G. (2015) The 'datafication' of early years pedagogy: 'if the teaching is good, the data should be good and if there's bad teaching, there is bad data', *Journal of Education Policy*, 30:3, pp302-315

Rogers, S. (2011) Play and pedagogy: A conflict of interest? In *Rethinking play and pedagogy in early childhood education: Concepts, contexts and cultures*, London: Routledge

Rogers, S. and Evans, J. (2006) Playing the game? Exploring role-play from children's perspectives, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 14:1, pp43-55

Rogers, S. & Evans, J. (2007) Rethinking role-play in the Reception class, *Educational Research*, 49:2, pp153-167

Rogers, S. and Evans, J. (2008) *Inside Role-Play in Early Childhood Education*, London: Routledge

Rogers, S. & Lapping, C. (2012) Recontextualising 'Play' in Early Years Pedagogy: Competence, Performance and Excess in Policy and Practice, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 60(3), 243-260

Rose, J. (2006*) Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading – Final Report*, Department for Education and Skills

Rosen, C.E. (1974) The Effects of Sociodramatic Play on Problem-solving Behaviour among Culturally Disadvantaged Preschool Children, *Child Development*, 45, pp920-927

Roud, S. (2010) *The Lore of the Playground*, London: Random House Books

Rousseau, J. (1763) *Emile, or On Education,* Available at: http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/ rousseau-emile-or-education, [Accessed 3rd April 2017]

Richards, C. (2011) In the think of it: interpreting children's play, *Ethnography and Education*, 6:3, pp309-324

Richards, C. (2012) Playing under surveillance: gender, performance and the conduct of the self in a primary school playground, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33(3), pp373-390

Richards, C. (2013) Agonistic Scenarios in Willet, R., Richards, C., Marsh, J., Burn, A. & Bishop, J. (eds) *Children, Media and Playground Cultures – Ethnographic Studies of School Playtimes*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan

Richards, C. (2013a) "If You Ever See This Video, We're Probably Dead"—A Boy's Own Heterotopia, *Journal of Children and Media*, 7:3, pp383-398

Richards, C (2014) Rough Play, Play Fighting and Surveillance: School Playgrounds as Sites of Dissonance, Controversy and Fun in Burn, A. & Richards, C. (eds) *Children's Games in the New Media Age: Childlore, Media and the Playground*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd

Russ, S. W. (1993) *Affect in Creativity: The role of affect and play in the creative process*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Russ, S. W. (2004) *Play in child development and psychotherapy: Toward empirically supported practice*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Russ, S. W. & Dillon, J. (2011) Changes in Children's Pretend Play Over Two Decades, *Creativity Research Journal*, 23:4, pp330-338

Sachs, J., Goldman, J. & Chaille, C. (1985) Narratives in Pre-schoolers' Sociodramatic Play: The Role of Knowledge and Communicative Competence in Galda, L. & Pellegrini, A.D. (eds) *Play, Language and Stories*, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation

Saltz, E. & Johnson, J. (1974) Training for thematic-fantasy play in culturally disadvantaged children: Preliminary results, *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 66:4, pp623-630

Sandberg, A. & Heden, R. (2011) Play's importance in school, *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*, 39:3, pp317-329

Save Childhood Movement, *Too Much Too Soon Campaign* [online], Available at: http://www.toomuchtoosoon.org/, [Accessed on 11th January 2017]

Schechner, R. (2013) *Performance Studies*, Taylor and Francis

School Curriculum Assessment Authority (SCAA) (1996) *Nursery education: Desirable outcomes for children's learning on entering compulsory education*, London: SCAA and Department for Education and Employment

Simmons, C.A. (2014) Playing with popular culture – an ethnography of children's sociodramatic play in the classroom, *Ethnography in Education*, 9:3, pp270-283

Singer, D.G. & Singer, J.L. (1992) *The House of Make-Believe*, Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press

Singer, D.G., Singer, J.L., D'Agostino, H. & DeLong, R. (2009) Children's Pastimes and Play in Sixteen Nations: Is Free-Play Declining?, *The American Journal of Play*, 1:3, pp2-7

Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R. & Bell, D. (2002*) Researching effective pedagogy in the early years,* London: Institute of Education, University of London/Department for Education and Employment

Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Sylva, K. (2004) Researching pedagogy in English pre-schools, British *Educational Research Journal*, 30:5, pp 713-730

Smilansky, S. (1968) *The Effects of Sociodramatic Play On Disadvantaged Preschool Children*, London: John Wiley and Sons Inc.

Smilansky, S., & Shefatya, L. (1990) *Facilitating play: a medium for promoting cognitive, socio-emotional, and academic development in young children*, Gaithersburg, MD: Psychological and Educational Publications

Spencer, B. (1873) Recent discussion in Science, Philosophy and Morals, New York: Appleton

Stake, R.E. (1995) *The Art of Case Study Research*, London: Sage Publications Ltd

Standards and Testing Agency (2016) *Reception baseline comparability study - Results of the 2015 study*, Department for Education

Stickley, M.K. (2010) *Five days in home corner: the development of gender roles and drama in the socio-dramatic play of a Year 1 class*, unpublished undergraduate dissertation, University of Cambridge

Sutton-Smith, B. & Kelly-Byrne, D. (1984) The Idealization of Play in Smith, P.K. (ed) *Play in animals and humans*, Oxford: Blackwell

Sutton-Smith, B. (1997) *The Ambiguity of Play*, MA: Harvard University Press

Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. & Siraj-Blatchford, I. (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Final Report*, DfES Publications

Taylor, J. & Woods, M. (1998) *Early Childhood Studies: An Holistic Introduction*, London: Arnold Publishers

TEDx Talks (2010) *TEDxRochester – Scott Eberle* – 11/02/09, Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jApW2tilJOI, (Accessed: 7th July 2016)

Thomson, P. (2008) *Doing Visual Research with Children and Young People*, Oxon: Routledge

Thomson, P., Hall, C. & Jones, K. (2010) Maggie's day: a small-scale analysis of English education policy, *Journal of Education Policy*, 25:5, pp639-656

Thorne, B. (1993) *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School*, Buckingham: Open University Press

Tisdall, E.K.M., Davis, M. & Gallagher M. (2009) *Researching with Children & Young People: Research Design, Methods and Analysis*, London: Sage Publications

Trawick-Smith, J. (1998) A Qualitative Analysis of Metaplay in the Preschool Years*, Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 13:3, pp433-452

Turner, V. (1982) *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications

Turner, V. (1987) Betwixt and Between: Liminal Period in Rites of Passage, in Mahdi, L.C., Foster, S. & Little, M. (eds) *Betwixt & Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, Open Court Publishing Company

Umek, L. & Musek, P. (2001) Symbolic Play: opportunities for cognitive and language development in preschool settings, *Early Years*, 21: 1, pp55-64

Vygotsky, L.S. (1976) Play and its Role in the Mental Development of the Child, in Bruner, J.S., Jolly, A. & Sylva, K. (eds) *Play: its Role in Development and Evolution*, New York: Basic Books Inc.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society – The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Vygotsky, L.S. (1930/2004) Imagination and Creativity in Childhood, *Journal of Russian & East European Psychology*, 42:1, pp7-97

Walford, G. (2009) The practice of writing ethnographic fieldnotes, *Ethnography and Education*, 4:2, pp117-130

Walkerdine, V. (1999) Violent Boys and Precocious Girls: regulating childhood at the end of the millennium, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 1:1, pp3-23

Walsh, G., Sproule, L., McGuiness, C., Trew, K. and Ingram, G. (2010) *Developmentally appropriate practice and play-based pedagogy in early years education: A literature review of research and practice*, Belfast: CCEA

Wernholm, M. & Vigmo, S. (2015) Capturing children's knowledge-making dialogues in Minecraft, *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 38:3, pp230-246

White, F., Hargreaves, L. & Newbold, C. (1995) The midday playground experiences of five and six year-olds: mixed messages and neglected opportunities, *International Journal of Play*, 3:3, pp153-167

Whitebread, D. (2010) Play, metacognition and self-regulation, in Broadhead, P., Howard, J. & Wood, E. (eds) *Play and learning in the early years*, London, UK: Sage

Whitebread, D. (2013) *Too Much Too Soon: School starting age - the evidence*, Cambridge University Press

Whitebread, D. & Jameson, H. (2005) Play, storytelling and creative writing, in Moyles, J. (ed) *The Excellence of Play*, 2nd edition, Maidenhead: Open University Press

Whitebread, D. & O'Sullivan, L. (2012) Preschool children's social pretend play: supporting the development of metacommunication, metacognition and self-regulation, *International Journal of Play*, 1:2, pp197-213

Willet, R., Richards, C., Marsh, J., Burn, A. & Bishop, J. (2013) *Children, Media and Playground Cultures – Ethnographic Studies of School Playtimes*, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan

Willis, P. (1981) *Learning to Labour*, New York: Columbia University Press

Winnicott, D.W. (1971) *Playing and Reality*, London: Routledge

Wohlwend, K.E. (2009) Damsels in Discourse: Girls Consuming and Producing Identity Texts through Disney Princess Play, *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44:1, pp57-83

Wood, E. (2009) Developing a pedagogy of play, in Anning, A., Cullen, J. & Fleer, M. (eds) *Early childhood education: Society and culture*, London, UK: Sage

Wood, L. & Bennett, N. (1997) The Rhetoric and Reality of Play: Teachers' Thinking and Classroom Practice, *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 17: 2, pp22-27

Wood, E. & Bennett, N. (1999) Progression and Continuity in Early Childhood Education: Tensions and contradictions*, International Journal of Early Years Education*, 7(1), 5-16

Woodhead, C. (1999) Is the formal approach better?, *Early Years Educator*, 1(6), 10-11

Wyver, S., Tranter, P., Naughton, G., Little, H., Sandseter, E.B.H. & Bundy, A. (2010) Ten Ways to Restrict Children's Freedom to Play: The Problem of Surplus Safety, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 11:3, pp263-277

Appendix 1

Data corpus: list of data as generated during fieldwork

6 notebooks (A5 size) containing fieldnotes, totalling 169 pages typed notes
3 'Books like Matilda's' containing transcribed stories, children's drawings and children's writings
16 hours 18 minutes video recording
Transcripts of socio-dramatic play episodes totalling 48 pages (see Appendix 2-7)
110 digital photos
5 (A2 size) maps of play
Artefacts – various craft items from children
School specific documentation: letter to parents, Baseline Assessment documents, statement from Governors

Appendix 2

Transcript of socio-dramatic play episode: focus player Isaac

Tuesday 22nd March 2016

9.55am – 10.05am (transcribed extract, from 16:22min of video)

Players: Isaac, Charlie, Kylie, Issabelle, researcher, Ryan, Claire

From fieldnotes: *'The class have been listening to and doing activities about the Easter story, preparing for Easter'*

'Home corner: Charlie, Isaac and Kylie in the H.C. Issabelle joins and asks to draw in my book.'

'Issabelle refuses most of the attempts at inclusion and simply observes (my attempts)'

'Havoc at 7.15mins when Ryan and Claire both want to play at H.C.'

Isaac and Charlie have been preparing food for around a minute before the video begins.

1	Isaac: I'm going to put it in here for now (jug and food) I'm cooking it in a different place Charlie (stacks plastic food into overflowing jug, an egg falls out) – oh my eggbert!
	Charlie: Wait, I will bake us some wine – abracadabra!
5	Isaac: Wine? Matilda look at it! I filled it up!
	M: Have you?
	Charlie: Here's some wine (pours from a jug into plastic cups)
	Isaac: Yes, I'm making juicy poocy
	Charlie: I'm making wine (bashed gravy jug into teapot)
10	M: Juicy poocy?
	I: Yes, it's a kind [unheard]
	Charlie: Put one there (places cups on cooker top) all this I'll pop some wine there (places teapot on top of kitchen unit)
	I: We need some drink (picks up two cups and taps them together)

15	Ch: Now -
	I: I'm going to make everybody some drink (hugs and dances with a cup, sings) I'm going to make some everybody drink (walks around back of Charlie, they swap places, Isaac flicks a small alarm clock)
	Charlie: (showing small wine glasses to Isaac) I've made some wine Isaac, here
20	you go (he puts the glasses down and picks up the small alarm clock)
	I: Charlie! Let's get that big bowl
	Ch: (looks at the clock and begins winding the hands manually) Look how fast the clock's going (looks down to Isaac)
	I: (removing bowl from the oven) Charlie we need this big bowl to cook in don't
25	we?
	Ch: So fast (looks at Isaac's actions and then the clock)
	I: Charlie, put everything in this big bowl
	Ch: (puts clock on top of kitchen unit) Okay
	I: Then I'll stir it for mixture pudding (they both add food items to the bowl)
30	Ch: I don't need – that stirring – because mine's cooking on there
	I: Well mine needs mixing, on the cooker, doesn't it? (He mixes with a wooden spoon)
	Ch: Yep. (He moves away and picks up two plastic knives, turns to Isaac) Does it need chopping?
35	I: (turns to look) Ah yes I need a big one (takes large knife, starts 'cutting') I'm cutting up my potato
	Ch: (bangs knife rapidly against slice of plastic bread) I'm chopping up my bread
	I: Now I'm chopping up my sweetcorn
	Ch: (takes the potato) now I'm chopping up my potato
40	I: Now I'm chopping up my chicken. Now I'm chopping up my biscuits
	Ch: I need a spoon to mix, oh of course! I need this (demonstrates some tongs gripping)
	I: WHAT! I need one of those! (continues to chop with knife)
	Ch: Oh, you can have it then – I'll have this (picks up a spatula)
45	*Silence for 6 seconds as they rearrange utensils and food*
	I: 'kay, time to get getting stuff oooh (picks up plastic bread bun with tongs and moves to researcher at table). Would you like a donut?
	Ch: (watches Isaac move away, says with annoyance) that's not a donut, that's my bread for my burger
50	*Researcher hands bread back to Charlie, who puts it in the bowl on the cooker*
	I: (snatching bread) no that's mine, I had it in there
	Ch: 'kay (takes bread out and places in pan on cooker) it's in there
	I: Oh some plates! We need those!
	Ch: Yes!
55	I: (pinching his chin with the tongs) I forgot those, did you?
	Ch: Oh and tomato ketchup (he holds a bottle of ketchup)

	I: Oh yes, we needer that (he takes it) I'm gonna squirt some in ours (makes squelching noise with lips and squeezes the bottle). I put some in yours too.
	Ch: (picks up a pill bottle) what about some gravy! Gravy!
60	I: What about (hold jug and shouts) mixtured juice! Mm mmm! Let's use the mixture juice pan.
	Charlie looks in lower cupboard for pan
	Ch: What about some of these? (puts items on cooker top as Isaac watches)
	I: (turns to the researcher and two seated girls, holds jug in the air triumphantly)
65	who wants some mixture?
	Kylie: Me
	Isaac: It's only Matilda having some at the moment (pours from jug into wine glass) here you go
	Kylie: Me, I want – I like it
70	Charlie: okay, you can have some but you have to have some in the little cup
	Isaac: that's not - hey, that's mine
	Charlie: okay, here's another one, it has to be a little one
	Isaac: I want to have it in a beer cup (pours from jug into wine glass, makes noise of liquid flowing)
75	Kylie: give it to me, give it to me I want it
	Charlie: I want a beer cup too
	Kylie: Can I have beer now?
	Isaac: Charlie, this is beer cup (holds the wine glass up and turns back to cooker), I'll make one for you
80	Issabelle: Isaac! She's drinking Matilda's!
	Isaac turns to the table
	Kylie: I didn't drink all of it
	M: There's still some left. (Changes tone of voice) excuse me I have a hole in my cup
85	Isaac: Huh?
	M: There's a hole in my cup
	Isaac: Okay! (he looks through other plastic cups by the cooker)
	M: I'm really unhappy because all my drink is spilt
	Charlie: Are you sure? (he holds my cup up to the light and inspects it)
90	Isaac: We haven't got – oh, would you like this tiny one? (passes me an egg cup)
	Ch: I know I'll fill -
	M: I wouldn't like a tiny one thank you
	Ch: - I know -
	Isaac: it fits lots and lots in
95	Ch: I know I'll fill the
	Kylie: Give it to me, give it to me
	Ch: - watch -
	Isaac: it's a magic cup

Isaac refills my cup from the jug, while Kylie drinks

Kylie: It's gonna make me fly

Ch: Matilda, watch this, I'm going to do a clever trick. (Picks up a gravy jug and cup) Fill that up with water and tip it in there (pours into a cup), see it hasn't got a hole (looks at bottom of cup) ow there's water in my eye

M: Oh no…

Ch: I think there is

Isaac: Matilda, how should this drink?

Researcher looks at bottom of cup

Kylie: Now it's out of your eye

Isaac: No, this one has a hole too, it's an invisible hole

Ch: What about this one? (passes researcher a pill bottle)

Isaac: Doesn't matter, it's magic!

Ch: That one has a hole too

Isaac: (picks up a slotted spoon) A potato spangler!

M: Excuse me

They both approach the researcher

M: – there's a very small frog in this one

Isaac: (laughs) A frog!

Ch: (picking up a cup on the table) what's in this one?

Isaac: (points into cup at plastic potato) a potato head!

M: There's a very, very small potato head in this one

Ch: (suddenly shouts) Ah! There's a whale! A whale! (He drops the cups and runs to the box of costumes, starting to frantically look through them.

Isaac: I'll collect the whale (holds up potato on slotted spoon towards Charlie). Here's the whale

Charlie backs off with arms wide open as if terrified of the potato

Kylie: (in a high pitch tone) Whale! There's a whale under my feet!

M: shhh

Isaac: That's my potato. I found the whale – hey that's not a potato

Kylie: A whale, a whale under my feet

M: (to Isaac) there's a whale under Kylie's feet I'm afraid to say

Isaac: (flails arms with slotted spoon in hand) Attack! No, that wouldn't work. Er… (searches for other props to use)

Ch: I know, the kick.

Isaac: De-tack! (Holds wooden spoon in air)

Ch: I know, the kick. That always works (kicks the air and appears to hit foot on something) ow! (hops)

M: Oh dear

Ch: Usually…

Isaac: (holds two plastic knives and lunges towards researcher) let's fight! Ya!

140	*Isaac waves the knives in the air, knees bent into attack stance, bears his teeth, screws up his eyes* Isaac: Ting ting ding ding pew pew pew Kylie: I kitted it, I kitted it. I kitted the whale Isaac: It has swords you know and I can fight with knives
145	M: We don't want to hurt the whale, do we? *Charlie is in the background of the frame, putting medals on himself* Kylie: I kitted it Isaac: No, it likes to be fighting stuff Kylie: It spits blood in my face
150	M: (in despair) There's blood in your face Ch: Isaac, Isaac, look I've got two medals (he taps Isaac on the shoulder) Isaac: Ahh! Kylie: On my face, I need a wipe - Ch: Do you want one?
155	Isaac: Not yet (he picks up a phone and turns towards the researcher and table) I'm going to ring the police (he pretends to push buttons on the phone making tone noises each time) Kylie: It wasn't me Isaac: I'm going to the whales
160	Ch: (after sorting through items on the table) I know where we can go – (he puts on sunglasses over his glasses can grins at girls at table) to the seaside! Isaac: (with phone to ear) No. Ch: (takes off the glasses) are you sure?
165	Isaac: (waggles his finger at the phone, explains) Police! We need you because there's a baddie whale here and he likes to fight people, and they love to EAT US! Ch: (puts his own glasses above his sunglasses) I know I'll wear two glasses Kylie: And it's fighting me Isaac: (into phone) Yes – it is – probably – bad guy one, but there's a - Kylie: It's fighting me
170	M: It could be a good whale Isaac: - a trillion of them! M: It could be a good whale? Ch: NO! Isaac: No it's a bad, bad whale
175	M: Shh, shh – listen (beckons players) we're having lots of fun but we need to make sure we're not shouting Isaac: (whispers) it's a trillion whales M: It's a trillion whales? Isaac: Yes (he goes to pick up items by the cooker)

After turning several times from what she is playing with to watch, smiling, the play in the home corner, Claire has approached out of frame and asked Charlie if she can play, Charlie points to Isaac

Ch: It's not my game, it's his

Claire: Can I play?

Isaac: (counting people currently playing) there's one two three four five in already. (To researcher) there's five in already. I counted you too Matilda (leans against the cooker looking at Claire)

Ch: (approaches researcher) I know what we can do, we can go to the seaside

Ryan has also approached to play

Isaac: No, I just said already and I've been playing Ryan

Kylie: (counts people) one two three four five six seven

Isaac: There's already five playing, I wanted Charlie, Matilda, Issabelle and Kylie

Claire: But I wanna play though

Kylie: But there's seven

Without speaking, Charlie takes the plastic knife out of the hand of Ryan who recently picked it up. Ryan looks towards the teacher then walks away. Isaac and Charlie stand watching as he leaves.

Kylie: I got in here first. I got in here first.

Claire: (to Kylie) you lot are not letting me play.

Kylie: There's seven

Isaac: Well, I am the king, you see (opens his arms, draws attention to costume)

Claire walks away to another part of the classroom. Ryan has returned

Isaac: Wait, I need my crown (taps his own head), I forgot my crown (leans into costume box as Charlie looks on) I've got my crown

Ryan stands in front of Isaac and 'speaks' to him as though his lips have been glued together. Charlie watches their conversation solemnly

Isaac: (to Ryan) you're not having it

Ryan: I said it in bumble bee mode, look -

Mrs M: (from across the classroom) Ryan, have you done your egg colouring challenge?

Ryan: I already have

Mrs M: You already have, go and cross your face off then please

Kylie: I not finished. I not finished.

Charlie stands playing with his glasses, until called by Isaac, who now wears a crown and a red cape

Isaac: Come on then, let's talk to her

Charlie follows Isaac and they walk to Mrs M. Isaac has his hands on hips and grin. Charlie walks with fists clenched and arms tense behind Isaac, as if he's a bodyguard. Mrs M has a joyful reaction to their appearance, saying Charlie looks like a gangster. Though unheard, it's clear that Mrs M asks Isaac and Eliot whether Claire can play. Charlie turns Isaac around to speak to him briefly and then Isaac

	throws his hands up in the air and runs towards the costumes, Charlie and Claire follow
	Isaac: I know! I know!
225	Ryan: (approaching them again) King Isaac? King Isaac?
	Isaac: (searching through costumes) Charlie, she could be our cat
	Charlie pulls out a furry dog costume and Claire takes it and begins to undress. Isaac approaches the group
	Isaac: Who wants my glasses?
230	*No-one responds and he puts them on himself. After watching the others in the home corner for 5 seconds, he begins to walk off across the room towards Mrs M, Charlie follows him close behind. For the remaining 6 minutes of the video, Isaac and Charlie can be seen in the background working at a table next to the class teacher, both still capes from the game before. Isaac wears his 'crown' as he*
235	*listens to the teacher.*
	END OF VIDEO

APPENDIX 3

Transcript of socio-dramatic play episode: focus player Kylie

	Monday 4th July 2016
	10.54am – 11.11am (transcribed extract 16:22mins)
	Players: Kylie, Cole, Hayden, Sam, Tara, Lacey
	From field notes: **'**Kylie explains her work, at 7 mins in she is disciplining others' 'Naughty corners, cages, locking each other up – control of the space – empowerment'
	Before the video begins, Kylie has entered the quiet room carrying a baby carrier with a doll in. She also carries a handbag and wears plastic shoes instead of her own shoes. She sits with the doll in the carrier next to her on two block seats. Cole is already in the room but out of the frame of the camera, his words are said out of shot. Kylie has exclaimed 'I went to work today'.
	(Irregular words or phrases are transcribed *sic*)
1	M: You went to work today?
2	Kylie: (rummaging in handbag) Yeah
3	Sam: What is going on in here? (runs across room shouting)
4	M: What do you do for a job?
5	*Kylie displays a face of worry and pulls the doll towards her*
6	Ky: Don't -
7	M: What's your – what's your job?
8	Ky: (To Sam) You're gonna scare my baby, she's sleeping
9	Cole: I'm the baby, I'm the baby, I'm the baby
10	M: (to Cole) Kylie's just saying she went to work today
11	*Kylie rocks the baby carrier*
12	M: What's your job Kylie?
13	Ky: Uh… taking care of cars
14	Cole: I'm the baby, yes
15	M: Taking what?
16	Kylie: Ah - this is my baby
17	Cole: I'm the baby as well
18	M: Taking hair?
19	Ky: I know
20	Cole: Yours is a girl, I'm a baby brother
21	M: Taking hair off?
22	*Kylie moves around the blanket beneath the doll and picks up plastic spoons and fruit from*
23	*the baby carrier*
24	Ky: My baby's called, my baby's called – er – um – er – Charlotte
25	Cole: Mine's called trickshot
26	M: Where – Kylie where d'you work again?
27	Ky: Er - in the car station
28	M: Oh, in the car station – you fix cars?
29	Ky: Yeah (she feeds the doll)
30	Cole: Oh I've got loads of guns, I've got loads of guns, I'll get them in the air and shoot
31	*Kylie spoons from the carrot to the doll's mouth then puts the carrot in her handbag*
32	M: Do they pay you quite well at the car station?
33	Ky: (looking at the doll) Yeah –

Hayden: Ga ga gee gee gag a goo gah
Ky: (looking at me) I always do a good job. I always do a
M: Do you enjoy your job as well?
Ky: Yeah – (she searches in the handbag) I always – I haven't
Tara: Kylie
Cole pushes a pushchair across the room in front of the camera. Kylie watches him. Tara has entered the quiet room.
Tara: Kylie 'cav those shoes?
Ky: I haven't had them for long though
Tara: How long you 'ad them for?
Kylie: Hmm – one (she sticks her bottom lip out, she's found a small peg in the handbag)
Tara: One a minutes?
Kylie: Yeah. Is that long or not? (She looks up to Tara) Actually not one minute (shakes her head, squints her eyes) not one minute, not one minute, ten minutes (she pulls back the eyelid of his eye as if about to clip it with the peg which she holds) is that long? Ten minutes long? I don't want (sighs, inspecting the peg) I don't - (she looks down at her shoes and towards Tara who has begun to walk away, shouts) okay! Okay.
Kylie runs out of the quiet room, holding her handbag
Hayden: Goo goo ga ga
Kylie: (returning) Can you look after – can you look after my baby?
She picks up the baby carrier and gives it to me
M: You going to work?
Kylie: No I'm – telling Tara something
M: Okay
Cole: I'm, I'm a baby. I'm a baby, I'm a baby doggy.
M: You're a baby?
Cole: (Looks at me) I'm a baby doggy
Hayden crawls next to Cole on his hands and knees and barks
Cole: I'm a baby doggy
M: Like a puppy?
Cole: I'm – I'm a baby doggy.
Hayden: (out of shot) I'm a big dog
Cole: I'm a baby -
Hayden: I can do powers
Cole: I'm a baby

- - - Second video - - -

Ky: I'm putting my shoes back on, 'cause I give - *where* is my baby? Here she is
M: How long have you worked at the car station Kylie?
Ky: (without looking at me) One hundred years
M: One hundred years?
Ky: Yeah (rearranging the doll's blanket)
M: D'you – is it always -
Hayden: Here's the other baby
M: D'you always have a good day there?
Ky: Yeah
M: Or sometimes do you get a bit tired of work?
Hayden: Go go gag a
Ky: No
Hayden: I'm a baby -
Ky: There's no – there's no waters there -
Cole: Kylie?
Ky: - and I never need a drink
Cole: Kylie, Kylie, I'm a baby puppy
Hayden: I'm a big dog

Ky: I'm a ba - this is a real baby
Hayden: I'm a big dog
Cole: I'm a baby puppy
Hayden: I'm a big dog though
Ky: (doing up the handbag) this is mine -
M: Who looks after your baby while you're at work Kylie?
Ky: Er – no-one I just bring her with me. The people what look after the work says you can bring your baby
M: Well that's very good -
Cole: Well I stay at home because I'm a dog
M: Ah that's very good isn't it, if you can bring your baby and the dog stays at home
Kylie looks at me intently
M: Can the dog go to work with you?
Ky: (pouting her lips) No – no - hmm
Cole: I'm a baby dog
Ky: no – hmm
Cole: Wait you can fit me in a cage, I'm a baby dog
Ky: No, only if I had a cage I could put my doggy in it – and ah – I – I have a toy doggy at my house -
Cole: Or you could just use the lead
Ky: - and it has a ca-cage. I wish I could bring it to school
Cole: And I wish it was wookie day, so I can bring my talking wookie. What?
Ky: I wish it was doggy toy day, so I could bring my – uh - doggy and my cage
Cole: Er – that day isn't true. That day isn't true. That day isn't true
Ky: I wish it was
Cole: 'Cause I've already got a lightsabre and I can chop it in pieces
Tara enters the quiet room, Kylie puts her socks and shoes on
Tara: Mrs M said I'm allowed to take my tights off because my legs are hot
Ky: Naya's – my best friend… told you. If you've got socks take those off, if you don't – if you have tights take those off
Tara: My legs are hot so I took them off, I asked Mrs M
Ky: And did she say you don't need them?
Lacey: (to camera) Boo! Goo goo ga ga
Cole: Baby doggy
Kylie stables her baby carrier with both hands and then picks up her handbag and places it over her shoulder
Kylie: (shouts) I'm going to work now
Swings baby carrier around onto her shoulder
M: Oh are you – are you going to fix some cars?
Ky: Yeah -
M: Enjoy -
Ky: It's not going to take a long time it's only going to take zero minutes
M: Zero minutes? But I thought you had to work quite hard and do lots of work?
Ky: No
M: No?!
Kylie walks to the door of the quiet room
Ky: I just tidy up some cars, then I'm finished
M: Do you play when you're at work?
Ky: (turning back to me) No, baby doesn't mess about or nothing and I give her a sticker when she's good
M: You give baby a sticker
Sam: (out of frame) And I can be a baby doggy too?
Cole: A what? No, there's only one baby doggy
Kylie moves some objects which lay on the table just outside the quiet room curtain, then turns back to the quiet room

143	Ky: Done - done
144	M: That was very quick
145	Ky: Haha!
146	M: Do they give you – do they pay you some money?
147	Ky: Yeah, my money's in my handbag
148	M: And what do you then use your money for?
149	Ky: Buying baby some toys
150	M: Oh I see and d'you have to buy some food as well with that money?
151	Ky: Yeah
152	*Kylie places the baby down on the seat next to her as before*
153	M: D'you get enough money?
154	Ky: Yeah – I just need to buy something
155	*She takes her handbag off her shoulder and opens it whilst watching the two boys who are*
156	*speaking out of frame. She looks in her handbag and takes out a spoon and plastic banana,*
157	*glancing three times at the boys*
158	Ky: Stop fighting you two
159	Cole: No, he gets told off 'cause I don't fight him
160	Ky: Don't do that again please, I'm bored out this (points to head)
161	*She taps the banana with the spoon. Tara comes to look at her.*
162	Ky: (to Tara) What… what? What Tara?
163	Tara: Nothing
164	Ky: I need to - (holds banana up) this is **my** banana, I'm gonna have – this is **my** food and
165	the - baby's food is in my handbag and carrot
166	M: Does baby eat ever-anything?
167	Ky: (glances at baby) just a carrot
168	M: Just a carrot, aren't carrots a bit hard to chew?
169	Ky: No – (waves the spoon) I just use the spoon (demonstrates scooping in the air with the
170	spoon)
171	M: Oh right!
172	Ky: So it's easy (feed herself banana)
173	M: Does the baby go to sleep at night or does she cry?
174	Ky: She goes to sleep, she doesn't cry – she's a -
175	M: She doesn't cry?
176	Ky: - she's a big girl
177	Cole: Kylie, I'm a baby puppy
178	Ky: She's a big girl and she's a baby
179	Cole: I'm a baby puppy
180	M: She's a big girl **and** she's a baby at the same time?
181	Ky: Yeah
182	Cole: I'm a baby
183	M: How does that work?
184	Ky: I got a peg in my bag 'acause
185	*Sam approaches the baby carrier from left of frame*, *Kylie shows a look of concern and leans*
186	*towards him*
187	Ky: NO! Get away from her now!
188	*Sam kneels over the carrier looking down into it. Kylie picks the carrier up and walks towards*
189	*the entrance of the quiet room. Sam crawls after her making gentle whining noises. Kylie*
190	*backs towards the entrance watching him crawl. After pausing, she walks back into the*
191	*room but Sam is close and puts his head inside the carrier.*
192	Ky: Oh no! Oh no! OH NO! Sam Holloway, why are you doing…
193	Sam: You don't know my miggle name anyway, don't tell you
194	Cole: I do
195	Sam: Don't tell, don't tell you two
196	*Kylie places the baby carrier where it was previously and watches the others, she grins*
197	*slowly*
198	Ky: I know now (laughs and picks up an eye mask which was in her handbag)

Cole: Logan
Sam: You shun'ta helped
Cole: Logan
Kylie hurriedly tries to put the eye mask on herself
Ky: Sam Logan Holloway
Cole: Logan! Logan, it's Logan
Kylie puts the eye mask onto her forehead and looks at the researcher, then places them over her eyes
Ky: I know. (Picking up the baby carrier and walking towards the camera) finally it's time for bed. Baby up. Baby – her crib is actually in my bed. So she sleeps next to me.
M: Doesn't that wake you up in the night?
Ky: No, she never cries when I'm asleep
M: Wow, so you must get a lot of sleep before you go to work the next day?
Ky: Yeah – ah (yawns)
M: That's good
Ky: Ne-night
M: Night night
Sam: (out of frame) ne-night. I know because I'm not going to sleep
Kylie puts the eye mask over her eyes and lies down on the baby carrier for three seconds before she sits up again
Ky: It's morning
M: That was quick
Ky: (laughs) 'acause the moon always go really slow then it's – then it's morning
M: The moon goes really slowly?
Ky: Yeah – if the moon goes fast then – then -
Cole and Sam crawl towards the doll
Ky: Get away from my baby or she's gonna die and then… (she puts the eye mask into the handbag) - sit down and have my breakfast now
The two boys take food items out of the baby carrier and chew them
M: Huh? What happened?
Ky: (in horror) No! No! No!
Cole: I'm a little doggy so I am -
Ky: (mock baby cries facing the researcher) She's crying 'cause he hate -
Cole: I'm a little doggy I'm a little doggy so I'm -
Ky: No! Shh, shh (she rocks the doll in the baby carrier)
Cole: - I'll tell him off when he -
Ky: Oh she needs a burp
Kylie rests the doll on her shoulder and pats the doll's back
Cole: - she tells her off, he's telling her off when she – shows you her baby and makes her cry and you tell him off when I -
Ky: (pointing to Sam who is out of frame) You need to go to the naughty corner if you do that one more time to my baby
She places the doll in the carrier, Sam crawls towards it and hits the carrier
Ky: That wasn't on my baby
He hits again
Ky: No that wasn't on my baby, that wasn't on my baby
Cole: That was on her foot
Ky: No it wasn't. (Moves around items in her handbag) Sam can't get her when it's standing up. Don't worry baby, Sam is really not – mmm -
Sam lurches forwards and roars at the doll. Kylie picks up the baby carrier as Cole stands and stamps nearby, making crying noises. Sam looks up at Cole, smiling.
Ky: Shh!
Cole: Tell him off when I cry, tell him off when I cry
Ky: (pointing to Sam) stop doing that or you're going on the naughty corner if you do it one more time
Sam: I try can rip you to pieces – (to Cole) not you

Kylie stands up with the baby carrier and the handbag. She walks into the corner of the quiet room where there is a wicker picnic basket with plastic utensils and crockery in

M: Oh food!

Ky: What could I have for breakfast?

She picks up a plastic cabbage and a pair of dolls trousers from the picnic basket. Cole approaches her

Cole: Sam is being naughty. Doggy fetch some bone (throws an item across the room) go get it doggy

Kylie sits next to me, placing the baby carrier on the floor and clearing a space for it on the bench next to her

Ky: When I get home, in real life – I'm gonna feed my doggeh (the baby carrier falls to the floor, she sighs) – I can't get this to stand up, I'm not using this, I'm not. (Picks up a blanket, shouts) who wants this blanky? Who wants this blanky? (Throws it at Cole) 'cause you're only little so you can have it. (To me) d'you wanna sit next to me?

M: Yes, oh I am

Ky: I mean over there (points across the quiet room to the seat she began sitting on)

M: Oh over **there**

Ky: I mean you could just sit – mmm – on the floor where -

M: It's alright, I'm quite happy sitting here

Ky: Yeah

M: Yeah

Ky: Yeah

She crosses the room holding the baby carrier and the handbag, with the doll under one arm. Places the baby carrier on the block seat

Ky: The baby sits here, I sit here and you can sit on the floor (smiles whilst moving objects from nearby cushions and throwing them at Sam)

Cole: Ruff ruff ruff ruff ruff ruff ruff. Ruff ruff, be naughty

Sam: (out of frame) No… (points to Cole) he been naughty

Ky: No (points to Sam) *you're* being naughty

Lacey crosses the room and picks up (out of frame) objects from the floor. Kylie watches her whilst rearranging the baby carrier blanket

Cole: (rocking forward and backward) See saw, see saw

Ky: (to Cole) good boy

Cole: See saw

Ky: Good boy (places plastic food into her handbag), good boy. Good girl (shakes her head) – good boy

Cole: I'm a boy

Kylie puts the handbag into the baby carrier

Ky: (to me) You can just sit right here where the little gap is. (She picks up the doll) it's time to put your little leggings on, it's time for your bedtime (places doll on lap)

Cole: Kylie, where's the naughty corner?

Ky: (Quietly) the naughty corner's where Matilda is (pause) – the naughty corner – (loud) you're in the happy side of the naughty corner Matilda and then next to you is the naughty corner

M: Okay

Ky: You're on the good corner

M: Am I in the – so I'm not in the naughty corner?

Ky: You're in the good corner

M: What did I do – what did I do that was good?

Ky: Mm – you letted me have the writing book, that's why you're sitting there

M: But I'm not in the naughty – I'm not in the naughty corner?

Ky: (to Rose) You're in the doggies naughty corner. Urr – Rose – you're in the doggies naughty corner.

Rose: Why?

Ky: You might have to sit… on the bench -

Cole: (out of frame) You're in the doggy naughty corner

Ky: ‘Cause that’s not the naughty corner (arranges leggings onto doll)
Cole: (out of frame) You’re in the doggy naughty corner. The little doggy naughty corner’s there (points to right hand corner of room)
Ky: (to Cole) you haven’t been naughty so you’re not going there very much
Rose: (out of frame) Matilda, will you write me a story?
Cole: Anyway, I’m a little dog
M: (out of frame) I’m just using my camera at the moment
Cole: ‘Til I’ve been naughty I’ll go there
Ky: If you just – if you just scratch-ed my baby, you’re going in the **naughty** corner
Cole: The baby naughty corner where the dogs are there
Ky: Yeah – some dogs – doggies in the box, there’s no more room the pencil one
Cole: But I sit on the box
Sam: Kylie – Kylie you’ve got a cake for me
Ky: No I haven’t
Cole: What? If we be super dupe – what if you be -
Sam: Be doggies -
Mrs M: (heard from the classroom) we’re stopping in two minutes
Cole: But if you be naughty – but if you be – but if you be – but if you be naughty
Sam: I know big doggy, big doggy’s got [cay gun?]
Cole: Yeah – big doggy -
Ky: There you go, (places doll in carrier) my baby’s in her little leggings ready for bed. Rock a bye -
Sam hits the baby carrier
Ky: (points at Sam, pushes him) Go in the naughty corner now
Cole: You can put me in the naughty corner (shouts) naughty corner, doggy corner
Ky: (leans towards Cole and speaks quietly) I’d just take – hold his hand and take him in the naughty corner if you can do that
Cole crawls towards Sam and takes him to the corner of the room. Kylie watches them cross the room, grinning
Cole: Naughty corner, naughty corner, naughty corner
Cole: Naughty doggy, naughty doggy, naughty doggy
Kylie glances at me and then her grin goes, she turns back to baby carrier, begins rocking it with one hand
Ky: Rock -
Sam: You can put me in my cage
Ky: (sings in a high pitch) - rock a bye baby, on the tree tops, when the wind blows, the cradle will rock
Cole looks at Kylie singing and lies on the cushions in the corner. Sam crawls towards Kylie
Ky: When she goes to sleep my baby -
Sam: You can put me in my cage Kylie
Ky: (points to the corner of the room, in straight tone) go to your cage (she pouts)
Cole: (out of frame) ‘Cause he’s been naughty
Sam: (out of frame) No, I’ve not done that – locky
Ky: Can you go and get that little thingy out of the bottom one please? (Stands and points at a hanging toy organiser at the back of the room)
Cole: (waving a stick) locky locky locky
Ky: I just need – I don’t want – I don’t want the other ones. Get it – get -
Cole: Locky key locky key locky key
Kylie takes the stick from Cole’s hand, holds it still
Ky: I need the other one
Cole: (out of frame) This is my locky key
Ky: Give it. I need it – for a reason
Cole: (out of frame) There’s only one of them
Ky: Oh I thought there was something else, I thought they was locks -
Cole: (out of frame) I opened the naughty corner, you open the cage
Ky: Okay

367	Cole: I open the cage and you open the naughty corner ‘cause you’re that better
368	*Kylie stands up with stick held out straight and walks across the room*
369	Ky: Both of ‘em (she sits down again) I opened both of ‘em
370	Cole: Yeah I can open both of them as well
371	*Cole moves out of frame and Kylie picks up a peg from the floor*
372	Ky: Two pegs, perfect for me
373	Cole: Locky – and – locky. Me can lock ‘em
374	Mrs M: (heard from the classroom) Amber class, can you stop please, put your things down
375	carefully
376	*Sam picks up his shoes. Kylie tries to clip the peg she found onto the stick in her hand, she*
377	*looks up towards me*
378	Ky: Matilda, you have to get out -
379	Mrs M: Out of the quiet room and -
380	
381	END OF VIDEO
382	

APPENDIX 4

Transcript of socio-dramatic play episode: focus player Ryan

	Monday 7th March 2016 **VIDEO: 1.55pm – 2.15pm** **Players: Ryan, Kayla, Eve, Issabelle, Molly, researcher** **From field notes:** Ryan is with Sam and Eve for a maths task. His jumper is on back to front. They must pay Mrs M for plastic fruit off a tray with price labels on, with plastic money which they are given. L is always keen to articulate what's happening and to narrate what he does. Ry: I'm going to eat this strawberry because it's juicy and I know what to buy next. L picks up his coins. Ry: A juicy chocolate coin! He opens his mouth as if to engulf them all. He wants to show Mrs M that his fruits are dancing together – sings a tune and makes them dance, but she has to focus on the money and questions him on this. Each time he describes something as 'juicy' his way of saying the word becomes more heightened. Returning to the foam money, he holds up the large £2 coin. Ry: who wants to come to my shop and buy some stuff? Okay, you can buy some, you can buy some, you can buy some, you can buy some, you can buy some. VIDEO of shop game and extension of it: escalated into a walk around the classroom to walk his character's cats. (Chairman Meow!) **VIDEO: 1.55pm – 2.15pm**
1	Ry: Yay! (He looks towards the camera and holds up a foam coin) Big fat coin.
2	Ry: Big fat coin.
3	M: Can you see?
4	Ry: Okay, what should I buy? Should I buy… er – 10p -
5	M: What shall I – hmm -
6	Ry: Twenty… (He holds a pair of plastic pincers in each hand) 20p
7	M: (adopts deeper voice) What shall I buy? (clears throat) Hello.
8	Ry: Okay -
9	M: I would like umm… ten orange sticks please, they’re my favourite flavor
10	Ry: That - (looks down at sticks and then at foam coins, picks up a £2 coin and looks at it) that
11	will be – this big pee
12	M: Umm – how much?
13	Ry: (Looks between me and the £2 coin) um – those – um those orange sticks, they’ll be this big
14	10p
15	M: (turns head to side) Is it 10p?
16	Ry: Yeah – (Turns it around to reveal a the text ‘£2’ on the reverse, looks between me and the
17	coin, about to speak, look at me, pauses)

18	M: Looks like two to me
19	Ry: No it isn't!
20	M: (leaning in and tracing the number two with a finger) Two
21	Ry: (looks at coin) It isn't 2p, it's 10p
22	M: Is it two pounds?
23	Ry: (furrows brow and bares teeth) No it isn't – pounds - and you're not even the boss here
24	M: Well I'm confused – that's -
25	Ry: (turns the coin around again) Okay, this is… it is 10p
26	M: 10p. 10p. Where's ten p-
27	*Ryan lifts the 10p coin and looks at me*
28	M: There we go, 10p (lays out hand to receive)
29	*Ryan slams the coin onto my hand, smiles*
30	M: Thank you (hits coin against face)
31	*Ryan throws his head back in laughter, before rubbing his hand over his forehead and eyes then*
32	*sitting up and leaning forwards to pick up the coloured matchsticks*
33	Ry: Here's ya orange sti-
34	M: Hello orange sticks please
35	Ry: Er that'll be this big 10p
36	*Ryan holds up the £2 coin*
37	M: Oh right
38	*I pass back the ten pence coin in exchange for the £2 coin*
39	M: Good thank you
40	*Ryan places the ten pence coin on his head, smiling broadly*. *I hit my own face with the £2 coin.*
41	*Ryan laughs and hits his face with the ten pence coin three times before releasing his arms to*
42	*flop by his side and tilting his head backwards in laughter*
43	M: Can I have my sticks please? Excuse me I want my sticks
44	Ry: 'ere ya go (he passes me a plastic tweezer) it's a stick
45	M: I'm sorry those are not my sticks. I want ten orange sticks please
46	*Ryan looks down at the bowl of sticks, his smile fades. He begins counting out sticks*
47	Ry: One – two – three… you're not allowed to take all of them or the kids will be sad
48	M: Oh – erm – okay
49	Ry: You're only allowed um two
50	M: Only allowed two
51	Ry: Only allowed two
52	M: Hello, I can only have two? Well then -
53	Ry: Here you go (passes me a selection of coloured sticks)
54	M: - I want my money back (passes Ryan the £2 coin). Ah! This one's blue-
55	*Ryan laughs and passes me back the ten pence coin*
56	M: - and this one's red. This isn't what I asked for at all. Please (places sticks in bowl and hands
57	to him) – have that.
58	Ry: No! (Takes sticks from bowl and points them towards me) You'll take – you'll take these red
59	blue sticks
60	M: No (hits coin against face)
61	*Ryan leans his head back and laughs loudly before stretching out his arms to my open hand and*
62	*placing the sticks in my hand*
63	Ry: (shouts) take them!
64	M: What am I meant to do with these?
65	Ry: You're meant to build stuff with them
66	M: Like what?
67	Ry: Like – um – building houses (he picks up more sticks)
68	M: Oh – okay.

69	Ry: Like – (he places upright sticks on the table)
70	M: I'll build a house (places sticks above head)
71	Ry: (laughs) that even isn't a house… that isn't a house, you -
72	M: Come in to my house, hello – (places the sticks either side of Ryan's face)
73	Ry: (leans towards the table) He-la!
74	M: Is this my house or your house?
75	Ry: Okay – er – okay (pats bowl of sticks) would you – okay -
76	M: Excuse me, I tried to build a house with these sticks and my house fell down, tell me (puts
77	the sticks into a bowl) why did it happen?
78	Ry: Er – it's because they're just only sticks so you have to use a number (picks up laminated
79	number card from a tub on the table) to count them out
80	M: Oh I see. Okay so -
81	Ry: These can pick a number ten (passes me the number)
82	M: Okay.
83	*Ryan leans to pick up a coin from the floor and hold it under his arm*
84	M: Ahem. Hello – ahem – I'll be somebody else now. Hi -
85	Ry: (Ryan passes me a coin) Here's 5p
86	M: (in different accent) - oh thank you. Now I would like to buy -
87	Ry: This one (passes me a coin)
88	M: Oh thank you
89	*Chloe approaches and begins picking up coins from the table. Ryan and I watch in silence for 3*
90	*second.*
91	Ry: Erm -
92	M: (to Chloe) Excuse me, would you like to use those?
93	*Chloe holds the coin to her chest and nods*
94	M: We still have some, that's okay
95	Ry: Can I just – can I – can I have one of those – hey - the coin – I'll have one of those (he takes a
96	20p coin from Chloe's grasp)
97	M: Can we have one back? There we go, now we've got two each okay?
98	Ry: Can I have 10p, this one, there we go (places the coin back on the pile on the table)
99	Chloe: That's the biggest (takes the £2 coin)
100	M: Okay – we'll use these ones, thank you. (To Ryan) Hello, I've got my money here so tell me
101	what you're selling
102	Ry: Erm – I'll selling these numbers that you can count out. Or these sticks, to use to make
103	weapons (he waves a stick around as if a sword) like pick-axes
104	M: I don't like pick-axes
105	Ry: Or axes
106	M: I need number ten, I need ten – I have 10p
107	Ry: You've got 10p
108	M: [unheard to Eve who stands next to the table] Can you give that to the shopkeeper
109	*Ryan takes the coin and the laminated number card*
110	M: Thank you. Can I have ten yellow ones please? My name's Alison, what's your name?
111	Ry: Ur – my names – ur – Steve
112	M: Steve, nice to meet you Steve (I put out my hand, we shake hands)
113	*Ryan smiles and continues selecting sticks*
114	M: So how long have you had this shop then Steve?
115	Ry: (high pitched tone) Ur – fifty eight ten weeks
116	M: Fifty eight ten weeks?
117	Ry: Yep
118	M: Fifty eight ten weeks is surely a long time
119	Ry: Yeah. I've actually kept it as my home

M: Have you?
Ry: Yeah
M: D'you have any children Steve
Ry: Ur – no
M: A wife?
Ry: (raises eyebrows and shakes his head) No
M: A husband?
Ry: No
M: No – oh! D'you have any pets Steve?
Ry: Oh I do have a cat upstairs if you want to go inside -
M: Oh a cat!
Ry: - and meet him?
M: Let's get what I need to buy first and then maybe I'll meet your cat
Ryan counts sticks in his hand
Ry: Okay, you've got ten sticks
M: Oh thank you very much. Now tell me, if one of my sticks doesn't work properly can I bring it back?
Ry: You can repair it up and bring it back to the shop and I'll give you the [unheard] repair back up
M: Oh we can prepare it?
Ry: I've got loads of yellow sticks
Eve who has been standing next to the table listening picks up a yellow bowl
Eve: And we put it in the bin – we put it in the yellow bin
M: In the yellow bin, thank you
Ry: But then –
M: Okay, let's see
Eve and Ryan watch the matchsticks
M: (tapping the matchstick on the table) that's fine. (Tapping) that's fine. (Tapping) that's fine. (Tapping) huh? That's broken (Eve laughs). (Tapping) that's fine. (Tapping) that's fine. (Tapping and puts to ear) that one sings.
I make a high pitch singing sound, Eve and Ryan laugh
Ry: No…
M: (tapping) that one's broken (puts in yellow bowl and picks up bowl). Hello Steve
Ry: Ur – hi
M: I got three that don't work
Ryan inspects the bowl
Ry: Oh okay (pours them into the bowl of matchsticks), I've gotta repair those up
M: Can I have my money back for those or are you gonna give me some new ones?
Ry: Ur – (picks up a 10p coin) here you go, here's 10p you can have, that's 10p
M: Okay thank you
Ry: (squeezes his nose) You've got loads of money there
M: I've got loads of money yeah
Ryan moves his hands as if wiping the air in front of him
M: Shall I give some of my money away to somebody?
Ry: You can give the brown – um – you can give the brown money away – to me. And I'll have that (reaches for the 2p coin in my hand)
M: Can I have some green sticks for the money?
Eve: Have this one (reaches for 50p coin)
M: Eve can take one
Chloe reaches across the table and grabs a handful of matchsticks. Ryan immediately takes them off her

171	M: Which one would you like Chloe? There's a five, ten or twenty
172	Chloe: A five ten or twenty - twenty
173	Ry: I've got- (holds up a 2pm coin)
174	M: (to Chloe) twenty – there you go
175	Ry: - I've got 2p – then have you – would you like this one? (hands me the 2p coin)
176	M: Okay, I'm gonna be somebody else now. Hello I'm Barry, thanks for letting me come to your
177	shop today. What's your name?
178	Ry: My names – ur – Steve
179	M: Steve? Is that a good Scottish name
180	Ry: Ur – I, I, I knew, I – your sister told me about you, as her brother, her brother
181	M: My sister? Oh yes – Evangelina – she told about me. And what did she say about me?
182	Ry: She said you're normally kindness and shareable with fruit, and stuff
183	M: I have kindness and shareable, well that's -
184	Ry: D'you have any animals? Cause I have some in the (signals behind him)
185	M: Oh I have three snakes, and I also have a rat, and also -
186	*Ryan grimaces at my mention of a rat*
187	M: Yes, just three snakes, a rat, and also a snail
188	Ry: I have two cats named Mittens – d'you want to come and meet 'em?
189	M: Where are they?
190	Ry: They're upstairs (points behind him)
191	M: I want to buy some sticks first but then we'll go and meet the cats, okay?
192	Ry: Erm - yeah
193	M: Is that okay?
194	Ry: Erm – yeah – (turns to Issabelle who has sat down next to him) you're – you're – d'you
195	wanna be that shopkeeper girl?
196	Issabelle: No thank you
197	Ry: (shrugs) whatever you (shrugs). Well – (turns to me showing a laminated number card) well
198	if you use a number you get, you get to buy something that's really good
199	*Eve is arranging the large coins in a pile*
200	M: Okay, let me just talk to my friend here. I'm Barry, this is Katlyn. Hello Katlyn
201	*Eve hides her face behind a coin and laughs*
202	M: Now Katlyn. Katlyn? Katlyn Katlyn, what do you think we should buy? Katlyn's very shy
203	Ry: Yeah -
204	*Kayla, having seen Eve hiding, runs over to the table and grabs a coin from the pile, Ryan pulls it*
205	*from her*
206	M: (to Kayla) are you Katlyn? This is Steve, my name's Barry
207	Ry: (reaches out to touch Kayla on the arm) This is my sister Alex. She might – she might steal
208	your coins (he makes eye contact with Kayla)
209	M: Oh Alex, would you like some coins?
210	*Kayla leans over suddenly and picks up the whole pile of coins*
211	M: Oh, okay, well I don't know if you should steal all the coins, 'cause I won't have anything to
212	buy my food with
213	*Eve passes me a coin which she's taken from Kayla. Ryan waves a 5pm coin in the air. Kayla grins*
214	*as she holds the coins back from Eve*
215	M: Thank you Katlyn. Did you say Alice or Alex?
216	Ry: Erm – Alex. (Touches Kayla on the arm) You're my sister
217	*Kayla nods than her and Eve jostle over a coin, laughing*
218	Ry: Hey, give that coin back – (wipes his mouth) to my customer. (Purses his lips) give it back to
219	her. Now (points his finger at Kayla, passes me a 5p coin)
220	*Eve tries to take the coin, Kayla holds her back*
221	M: (reaching out hand to shake) Nice to meet you Alex

222	Eve: (pushing her hand at intervals up Kayla's body) Cut cut cut cut cut
223	Kayla: Stop it please
224	*Eve pushes a coin against Kayla's face, Kayla pushes it away*
225	M: I don't think Alex likes that do you Alex? Okay, my name's Barry, this is Steve. Oh, (signals to
226	Kayla) you know Steve already -
227	Ry: Yeah -
228	M: 'cause he's your brother
229	Ry: Yeah – we're, we're, we're – (points between himself and Kayla rapidly) me and you are
230	Steve – sisters – you're my sister, I'm your brother
231	*Eve pushes the coin into Ryan's face, Ryan yelps*
232	M: Who's that? Is that Katlyn?
233	*Ryan laughs while holding his head*
234	M: Katlyn's my friend but she's gone a bit strange with the coins today
235	*Eve continues pushing the coin into Ryan's face, Ryan laughs and pushes back*
236	M: Katlyn, could you be careful? (points to coin) What is it?
237	*Eve runs out of frame with the coin.*
238	M: (holds a 5pm coin) Right, I'd like to buy -
239	Ry: 5pm (scratches his head). Would you like buy – five – would you like buy a number or a
240	stick?
241	M: Oh – I'll buy a number please, what number can I get for 5p?
242	Issabelle: Twenty
243	Ryan: Erm – you can get – you can buy -
244	Kayla: You need to make [a chain] first
245	Ry: You can buy (picks up a laminated number)
246	*Eve puts a coin in front of Ryan's face and he gives a mock scream*
247	M: Katlyn, would you be careful please? He's trying to sell me something in the shop
248	*Kayla pushes Eve back from the table with her arm. Ryan wipes his nose.*
249	Ry: I've got blood. Look, I've got now blood coming down my nose
250	M: He's got blood coming down his nose, Katlyn you need to be careful
251	*They all look at Ryan's nose*
252	M: Are you okay?
253	Ry: Yeah, I'm okay
254	M: Katlyn, go get a tissue, this is very bad, there's blood everywhere
255	*Eve pulls a coin away from me. Ryan puts his hand in his pocket and pretends to pull out a tissue.*
256	*He wipes his nose with the pretend tissue.*
257	M: Oh, he's got a tissue, that's fine
258	*Eve puts the coin in Ryan's face again. He shouts incoherently*
259	M: Be careful, be careful now
260	*Kayla and Eve grapple again with the coins*
261	M: (to Eve) You want a 5p?
262	Ry: `This is – this is - (passing me a 15 card) This is 5p
263	M: (to Eve) Can I swap with you for that one? (Takes 15 card, points to number on it) Thank you,
264	what's that?
265	Ry: Five um -
266	M: Eve, be careful please – be gentle
267	Ms M: Zane. Put the sticks back please
268	*Kayla and Ryan arrange items on the table. I exchange cards and plastic links with Issabelle who*
269	*is sitting to the left of the camera, out of frame. I add a plastic link onto the laminated number*
270	*card. Ryan watches and pats the bowl of matchsticks in front of him*
271	M: Look what happens if I put that in there...
272	Ry: Oh! Er – it, it – it's supposed to be, it's also time for me to erm close the shop now

273	M: Oh no but I'm really liking buying stuff in your shop. Tell me -
274	Ry: I don't really have something special like – only buy - only buying a toy for any of those pets
275	Kayla: You can always have flowers and… (she holds out her hands in as she explains)
276	Ry: I – I do work at a different shop I – I – I – but, but you, but Alex, but Alex works at it
277	Kayla: But you can bring – you could bring flowers back here (she uses both hands to signal
278	flowers in the home corner) and bring them back to you
279	Ry: But I don't have those I need to [have] you Alex
280	*Ryan shrugs as Kayla nods in agreement*
281	Ry: [unheard] pet sheep
282	Kayla: We can go in our kitchen and tidy our kitchen up
283	Ry: (to me) Would you like to come and see the cats quickly?
284	*Kayla walks towards the home corner*
285	M: Oh yes, where are they? Is Alex taking me?
286	Ry: Oh – yeah. Come with us. They're inside, they're inside the -
287	*Kayla returns and sits on the table in front of me*
288	Kayla: Well they may be outside or inside (signals to the home corner with both hands)
289	M: Oh really?
290	Ry: No, they're actually still inside
291	Kayla: (leaving again) yeah
292	M: They're inside
293	Ry: They're in the front r- they're in the front, they're in the front room, playing together.
294	Kayla: (from the homer corner) Playing in the kitchen somewhere
295	Ry: They might be a bit – they might be a bit playful, but -
296	M: Can I take my camera with me as well?
297	Ry: - but they're actually - they're – they're kittens so they don't have sharp claws
298	Kayla: And they might lick you in the kitchen
299	M: Oh really?
300	Ry: Come on, come on
301	*I follow Kayla with the camera to the home corner where Ryan has approached the cooker unit*
302	Kayla: And they're really nice to everybody but not scared [unheard] smack ya'
303	Ry: Here they are (signals a space on the floor). This one's name's - this cat's name's Chairman
304	Meow (looks up at me, whilst pointing to the ground)
305	M: Called what?
306	Ry: Chairman Meow
307	M: Chairman Meow, right
308	Ry: Yeah – and this is King Mittens
309	M: King Mittens? (Laughs) Oh right. Hello cats (bends down to stroke the cats) such a nice cat
310	*Eve waves a feather duster in the area of the 'cats'*
311	M: Oh you're tickling it! And how long have you had the cats, Steve?
312	Kayla: We've had them for ages
313	Ry: If I, if I – they were just about - they've just about, I was just about to come out and take
314	them for a walk
315	*Eve uses the feather duster on the lens of the camera*
316	Kayla: Yeah and I was gonna ring dad, and dad ringed me
317	Ry: Oh – would you like come take them walk with me?
318	M: You take your cats for a walk?
319	Ry: Yeah – they walk - I don't even have to use the lead -
320	Kayla: Let's have dinner first -
321	Ry: - they just walk themselves
322	Kayla: Let's have dinner because you might – you might -
323	Ry: Come on, let's go

324	Kayla: - you might be sick
325	*Kayla arranges plates on the table, Eve sits down at a seat*
326	M: (to Ryan) Well what about dinner?
327	Ry: Er - that's for – that when they been back, come back, that's when we come back from when
328	they've had a walk
329	M: Okay
330	Ry: We take them out for a walk, we take them for a walk out in the back garden
331	Kayla: We we we -
332	M: Alex, we're just gonna take them for a walk and come back for dinner, is that okay?
333	Kayla: Yeah and sometimes that's the inside -
334	Ry: And then we – and then I'll take you back to where -
335	Tara: Your pennies
336	*Tara passes Ryan the pile of large coins, he passes them to me*
337	M: Oh thank you
338	Ry: There's your pennies
339	M: I can't carry them though at the moment actually, can we put them -
340	Kayla: Let's put them on here and then when, when you go home – yeah – you can get them
341	yeah?
342	Ry: If you go past the shop I'm gonna take 5p
343	M: Okay
344	Ry: And I'm gonna take -
345	Kayla: (returns to the home corner) Right now let's start
346	Ry: - can I take 10p back? Okay. Come on.
347	M: Okay, we're taking the cats for a walk
348	*I follow Ryan with the camera across the classroom towards the quiet room entrance*
349	M: Where's their favourite place to walk?
350	Ry: Their favourite place to walk is in the park
351	M: Oh is it?
352	Ry: I normally take them to the park but it's a bit windy out there (he blows as if creating a wind)
353	Ry: But we don't – we don't get wind in here 'cause there's a roof if you look up, there's a roof
354	here -
355	Eve: (holds a clock up to show us) It's ten in clock
356	M: So we're not on the park now?
357	Eve: It's ten in a clock now
358	Ry: - so it doesn't come here
359	Eve: You have to go [unheard]
360	Ry: It's nearly o'clock. Oh I suppose it's about time for you to go back home.
361	M: Oh is it?
362	Ry: Yeah
363	M: Oh yes, might be my bedtime soon
364	*Ryan stacks the coins he was holding on the table where the game began*
365	Ry: Coins. Put back.
366	M: I don't know – you know what – Steve? Steve?
367	Eve: (ringing a bell) It's the morning
368	M: You know what, I feel a bit sick actually
369	Eve: It's the morning
370	Ry: Would you like me to – to – take you back in the car?
371	M: It might be a good idea, I'll say goodbye to Alex
372	Ry: Okay
373	M: You coming in?
374	Ry: Yeah I'm coming in

M: (to Issabelle, who stands behind Ryan) Are you coming in as well? Sorry, I don't think I met you, my name's Barry (holds out hand to shake), what's your name?
Issabelle laughs and wanders away
M: Steve? Oh there you are. Oh Steve.
Ry: Err. That's um – that's, that's – that's the girl from the [rainbow] blacksmiths. She might not talk because she goes [off]
Kayla: Do you want a drink? It won't hurt – it won't hurt - the drinks won't hurt your foot
Molly has approaches with a drawing and puts it in front of the camera
M: Let me see, let me see. Ugh!
Ryan and Kayla look at the drawing
M: This is why I feel sick Steve, because I've heard that there's this thing – going around the streets. Have you heard about it?
Ry: Ah yeah! I need – I need my sword out (pretends to pull a sword and begins swinging it around the space)
M: I don't know about that -
Kayla: And I need -
Ry: My diamond sword
Kayla: (pretends to draw out a sword) And I need get my sword out. My diamond, very big sword
Molly: (to me) We have to find it. And get my invisible friend back -
Ry: (to Kayla, pushing down her arm to talk to her) Alex, Alex – get your [unheard] armor on and let's go
Molly: We need get my invisible friend back don't we? And that's the monster who eated it
Kayla: (defiantly) Come on
Ryan and Kayla pull clothes on as if dressing in armor. Kayla gallops towards the classroom, whilst Ryan swipes his sword into the space
Molly: (holding her picture) We need him to cough, don't we?
M: We need him to cough?
Molly: Yeah
M: Good plan, good plan yeah
Molly: But when it drinks syrup drinks it changes colour and I'll switch it off, and it turns in… and it, and I 'tend… and it turns in orange juice, and then it's orange, and then it – and then it turns in to lemon, and lemon makes him cough and then I'll get my friend back
M: Good idea! Because the lemon's quite sour isn't it and it makes you go oop (pulls a wincing face, coughs) like that
Molly: Yep
M: Where's that man Steve gone?
Molly: Oh, we need to get him don't we?
Issabelle: He's in the quiet room
Eve starts to walk, looking across to the quiet room
M: Let's go and find him shall we? Have you got your shoes on? Yes. Where is he?
Issabelle walks ahead of us across the carpet area
Issabelle: He's in here fighting the baddies
Molly: I think he's over this way
Issabelle, Molly and I approach Ryan who is talking to Kayla
M: Steve -
Ryan: (holds up his empty hand to show us) It's got blood an' flesh. I've got the flesh of him
M: What did you find?
Ry: (holding out his hand to Molly and wiggling his fingers) Do you want the blood an' flesh?
Molly: No I want to -
M: What did you find?

426	Ryan: (looking at his hand, then up at me) Um – he – he had minions, we had to kill all of them
427	and he only had one health and he died quickly
428	M: Oh did he?
429	Ryan: And I've got his flesh (holds out hand), his blood an' flesh
430	M: What did he look like?
431	Molly: (points into quiet room) He's in there! I see him!
432	M: Where?
433	Ry: He's a big – he's a big gloopy monster
434	Molly: It's a bit dark in there, I'll get my light out -
435	M: He's what colour?
436	Ry: Gloopy
437	Molly: I've got my light
438	*Molly walks as if holding a torch by her shoulder, Kayla runs in to the quiet room and appears to*
439	*be casting spellings with a stick, her teeth clenched. Kayla starts hitting her sticks towards*
440	*another child in the quiet room who also brandishes a stick*
441	M: Gloopy?
442	Ry: Yeah
443	M: What do you mean?
444	Ry: He's all gloopy and slimy (he waves his arms around and writhes as if made of liquid) and he
445	did hit me with his slime, himself
446	M: What did it feel like?
447	*The teacher approaches to tell Ryan that he has to be collected to go home early from school.*
448	*Molly is asked to leave to work with a teacher. Kayla stands in the background, holding a stick in*
449	*both hands and watching as the two children leave.*
	END OF VIDEO

APPENDIX 5

Transcript of socio-dramatic play episode: focus player Emily

	Monday 25th January 2016 **2.31pm – 2.52pm** (transcribed extract from 13:48 of video) **Players: Emily, Kylie, Issabelle, Sam** Facing the home corner. Emily is wearing a nurse's tunic over her clothes. Kylie is sitting on one chair with her legs up on another, she is wearing a pink crown in her hair. Emily sits next to her. Emily has brought a small trolley full of sticks which is on the floor to her left. Emily holds a bundle of sticks in her hand.
1	Emily: Get off the chair please
2	*Kylie stands up. Emily moves the chairs closer together.*
3	E: You lay...
4	*Kylie sits back on the chair and Emily pushes them together*
5	Kylie: Ow (pretends to sneeze) achoo
6	*Emily pushes Kylie's knees down with one hand as she looks at her face. She taps her legs*
7	*three times with a stick*
8	Kylie: I can't actually [unheard] so I have to [unheard]
9	Emily: Lay down. Straight.
10	*Emily taps one stick on Kylie's chest. Kylie leans back and tips her head over the back of the*
11	*chair.*
12	Issabelle: Emily, Kylie's my little kid, that's why I want you to take a look at her
13	*Emily moves towards Kylie with one stick pointed towards her chest.*
14	E: Buh – (she withdraws and looks at her bundle of sticks, briefly drinking from a plastic cup)
15	Ky: And I leave some toys over there, and I got my own ring.
16	Is: Do you want me to look after them?
17	Ky: Can you look after to those ones – and look after my chocolates
18	*Emily presses one stick into Kylie's chest and smiles*
19	Sam: Here your plate mum
20	Is: I've got a baby here so do you want to get me baby's plate? Can you get a little round
21	blue one?
22	*Emily puts two sticks on the floor and then holds two sticks in each hand, she uses them to*
23	*grasp a section of Kylie's arm and then moves them away slowly*
24	E: Do they hurt?
25	S: You're having some cake today
26	E: There's a little blood and I'll put a needle
27	*Emily holds a stick like a pencil and wiggles it slightly in front of Kylie's eyes. She starts to*
28	*press it into Kylie's left arm. She pulls it away quickly, smiling*
29	Is: Kylie, do you want to pick these ones, which one would you like?
30	E: You can't see it. Close your eyes.
31	*Emily presses the end of the stick into several places across Kylie's chest and arms,*
32	*withdrawing quickly each time. Kylie screws her eyes up.*
33	E: (Holding out four sticks, splayed) do you wanna choose - which one did you choose? We
34	done that one already. (She signals the other sticks) choose this one, or this one, or this
35	one.
36	*Kylie points to a stick and watches as Emily places the other sticks in the pocket of her tunic.*
37	*Emily pushes the chosen stick into Kylie's chest. Kylie looks down, a blank expression.*
38	E: Open it – where's the bestest? Does it feel better or bad? (She runs the sticks down the
39	zip of Kylie's dress, watching closely as she does so)
40	Sam: (loud) It's done everybody. Sit down everybody. It's done.
41	*Sam picks something up from the table*
42	Ky: (points) these are my toys

43	S: I'll take them away
44	Ky: Oh… please! (Kicks her legs and stretches out her arms) Can I have my toys back?
45	S: Now it's time for cake
46	Ky: (reaches towards the table) can you get my chocolates?
47	*Kylie picks up a cup and drinks from it. Emily watches Sam at the kitchen unit*
48	E: Hey, that's hot chocolate (she points to Kylie with a stick). Can she have a cake 'cause
49	she's poorly
50	*Emily holds a stick pressing it into K's chest*
51	S: And now you really want something different
52	Ky: (to Sam) Dad – Dad I don't want any
53	S: When you want some -
54	Ky: When I'm better, I'll have some
55	S: Yes
56	*Emily watches as she repeatedly presses the stick into Kylie's chest. Kylie sits looking*
57	*forwards, Issabelle sits holding a baby and a blue plate, looking around the room. Emily,*
58	*peering down her nose, presses the stick into K's neck*
59	E: You are fine (puts the stick in her tunic pocket)
60	Ky: (leans forwards) you need some more doctors tools
61	*Emily picks up the bundle of sticks*
62	E: You need them – which one d'you -
63	Ky: (picks a stick) this one for my toes (places it at her toes)
64	*Emily considers each stick in her hand as Kylie watches her*
65	E: That's your sticker (hands a stick to K) that's your stick. You have to put it down here
66	(points down K's school tunic)
67	*K puts the stick down her tunic*
68	S: Anyone, I've got some cakes for you all
69	E: But it's -
70	Ky: Don't give mine yet
71	Is: She'll only have a little bit please
72	Ky: Can I have a tiny bit?
73	*E leans towards K's feet and pokes her shoes with a stick*
74	Ky: Can I just try some?
75	S: On your birthday
76	Is: (to K) have you had a birthday?
77	*Emily rubs two sticks against each other and watches Sam in the kitchen area. She taps*
78	*along K's legs as if playing drums. A rearranges the stick down her tunic and takes it out. J is*
79	*hitting K's boots hard with two sticks, she moves her mouth without making noise. She*
80	*begins to stab one boot with a stick.*
81	Ky: Can I just do this – err – (pokes her own knee with a stick) to my knees because can this
82	be a doctor's stick
83	*Emily places a stick on Kylie's knees, it rolls off. She places another stick there. S places a*
84	*yellow plate on K's lap and spoons a plastic strawberry onto it. Kylie picks up the plate and*
85	*bites the strawberry. Emily watches her.*
86	Ky: I'm done Dad (she hands the plate back to S)
87	Is: Sam, are we having spoons or eating with our fingers?
88	S: We have a spoon everybody, don't eat yet – don't eat with your fingers – don't eat yet.
89	We're having spoons.
90	*Emily has picked up the sticks from the floor and puts them in her tunic pocket while she*
91	*watches Sam*
92	(out of frame) Is: Is that mine Sam? I'll go and get – I don't want any thank you
93	S: (to Issabelle) I wanna give you one piece. I've got [unheard] or [unheard] what would you

like?
Ky: (to Issabelle) A chip
Is: Um – get anything
S: Okay
Emily passes Kylie a stick
E: You're done – you're gonna be – the doctor (she begins to take off the tunic, stands)
Ky: You can wear - I don't wanna be the nurse. I wanna just – can someone doctor me. Let's – (shouts) who wants to come to the vets? (She sits in the chair where Emily sat. To Emily) this is the vets. This is the vets, if you wanna come to the vets you can.
Emily stands up and looks at Kylie. Issabelle places a doll on the seat. Emily looks down at the doll and taps its head
E: No, that's the vet
Ky: No, this is the vet and I – (to Issabelle) she needs a lie down, she's poorly. She needs a lie down, this is her drink (passes Issabelle a cup) that's your drink (points to another cup)
Emily crouches onto all fours, watching Kylie through the gap in the chair
Is: No, it isn't
S: That's another one
E: Pet, I'm a pet. Where can I get?
Ky: (holds a stick onto the dolls face) Err – you can get on here after the baby. You can have one stick
K passes a stick to E, E takes it from her and puts it in her mouth, she looks up at K
Ky: Right
Kylie takes the stick from Emily's mouth and throws it out of the home corner. Emily crawls after it while Kylie watches her
Mrs. M: Kylie – oh it's – are you playing with the sticks?
Ky: But I was throwing it for -
Mrs. M: I know
Emily crawls back to Kylie and Kylie takes the stick again. She glances towards the teacher and throws the stick, closer this time and with less force. Emily crawls away, grinning. Kylie leans in towards the doll
Ky: (Holding the dolls' head and tapping the doll's neck with a stick. To Issabelle) Does she have a sneeze?
Is: No
Ky: Does she have a fever?
Emily, with the stick in her mouth, crawls up to K's side
Ky: I just need to err – try the - she has a really bad fever (nods, screws up her eyes) Try this (takes a stick and presses into the doll's eye) I need to put in the eye. I need to do something with the eyes. I'm gonna give her some medicine in her eye.
Emily walks around the other side of the chairs and watches with her hands over the top of the chair, biting the back of the chair gently.
Issabelle: Matilda, can I write in this book please?
M: Yes, of course
S: (out of frame) You need to have your cake now
M: Oh sorry – I'll have that
Ky: (rubbing the stick on the doll's mouth) I need to [unheard].
S: It's not there yet
M: Oh it's not there yet
Ky: Give her some medicine with that, I need to get her some medicine (reaches down to change sticks)
Emily scratches at the back of the chair with both hands, gaining Kylie's attention
E: I'm going to toilet – go to toilet

145	Ky: Okay, go outside then
146	S: (out of frame) I'll give you fork and knife?
147	M: Oh yes please
148	*Emily walks around the chairs and runs across the classroom, Kylie watches her go*
149	S: (out of frame) fork and knife
150	Ky: (puts stick in doll's mouth) I'm giving her some medicine. (Looks at what Issabelle is
151	doing) is that Matilda's book? Did Matilda say your job is writing in Matilda's book?
152	Is: (writing) yeah
153	Ky: There you go, your baby's better (hands the doll to Issabelle)
154	*Issabelle continues writing, Kylie looks at her and then the doll*
155	Ky: Your baby's better – achoo (she looks at Issabelle)
156	Is: (putting the book down) okay
157	Ky: She's still got – she's stills got a fever
158	Is: What do you want me to do (fold her arms and leans towards Kylie) to make her better
159	when we're at home
160	Ky: (putting a stick up the doll's dress) Err – get her some medicine when you're back home
161	S: (out of frame) I go get medicine anyway
162	Ky: Yeah give it to her -
163	Is: Baby's 'et her food
164	*Emily returns to behind the chair, grasping the back of the chair, whilst kneeling on the floor.*
165	*She makes a high pitch noise. Kylie looks at her and then back to the stick she is pressing*
166	*onto the doll's hands. Issabelle sits nearby with a plate of plastic food and a knife and fork.*
167	Ky: It's your turn in a minute when I've done her hands and feet. It's okay. Need to – uh
168	twist (she twists the stick around)
169	*Emily watches the doll over the top of the chair*
170	S: You know, may give you some lunch?
171	Ky: (picking up a stick) No – let's (holds the stick above her head)
172	S: You trying to eat your meat there?
173	Ky: - this time… (she leans forwards and holds the dolls arm) Issabelle, I'm gonna try and do
174	something, I'm gonna try this – (leans towards Issabelle) I'm gonna get her blood out and
175	I'm gonna put her - plaster – two plasters on baby's arm
176	*Kylie presses the stick into the dolls arm, Issabelle and Emily lean in and watch*
177	Ky: Blood. Plaster plaster. Blood blood. Put some on there. (She presses into the doll's leg)
178	blood blood just there. Blood plaster plaster (picks up the doll and hands to Issabelle) –
179	there you go. It's your turn (reaches for Emily)
180	*Emily climbs onto the chairs, smiling with her legs bent*
181	Ky: Lie down. You got to put your legs on – lie down
182	*Emily turns around to face the other direction. She arranges her legs and body on the chairs*
183	*whilst Kylie moves them*
184	Ky: I'm gonna push, pull your – put your feet on can I. (She traps her finger) ow. Can you put
185	– I'm putting this chair so you can just – go like – here then you get on. I'm gonna put it a bit
186	more so I can – there we go. What's hurts?
187	*Emily makes gentle high-pitched yapping noises*
188	Ky: You got talk to me in real life then you tell me
189	*Emily points to her chest several times and makes noises which are almost speech but still*
190	*animal-like*
191	Ky: Right (presses a stick into Emily's chest) does it hurt?
192	*Emily answers in animal-like noises. Kylie presses the stick into E's arm*
193	Ky: I just need to whack ya' (hits Emily's legs with a stick)
194	Issabelle: Kylie (hands her plastic box filled with pom-poms)
195	Ky: I just need to put them in my trolley

Issabelle: (out of frame) Kylie, want some more boxes?
Emily looks between Kylie and Issabelle. They both look at somebody out of frame and Kylie rubs a stick over the mouth and chin
S: (out of frame) if you want some more I can give you some. Anybody want some more I can give you some.
Ky: (leans towards person out of frame) this is the vets. That's home (points with stick towards home corner cooker unit), over there, that's home and this is the doctors but you can't go home because I have to change your thing – you've gotta – you've gotta make your eyes go where it goes
Kylie moves the stick through the air, Emily holds up her hand and uses it to follow the path of the stick
Ky: No – you gotta use your eyes
Kylie solemnly moves the stick from side to side, Emily tilts her head at a similar speed
Ky: Now, if it's okay I'm gonna use it to stroke your cheeks
She touches Emily's cheeks gently with the stick. She picks up a spatula off the floor
Ky: Doggy, when you're better I'm gonna throw your stick
Emily flaps her hands in excitement
Ky: Right now I just need to do something more tests
Kylie moves towards Emily's face with the spatula, Emily opens her mouth and after glancing at me, Kylie puts the spatula in, looking into Emily's mouth. Emily tilts her hand back
Ky: Does it hurt? You've got to keep your mouth open otherwise -
She withdraws the spatula
Ky: I just need to pat your cheek
Emily opens her mouth, Kylie pats her on the cheek with the spatula
Ky: You don't need to open your mouth this time you just need to open it -
She pats her cheeks again, gently. Kylie reaches down to the trolley to her left.
E: (rocking her arms slightly) What is that?
Ky: I dropped the toys. No they're mine. They're mine.
E: Let's play doggy sticks
Ky: Err – this is a new doggy stick (holds up stick, withdraws it from Emily' reach) but you're only gonna have it when – you're – better (pauses). If I just look at those (taps Emily's legs)
Sam stands up and approaches Emily
S: You guys go at doctors, lay down at doctors
Emily moves down in the chairs
Ky: Lie down – no, you lie down like this
Emily sticker her legs through the bottom chair, she is lying flat. Kylie moves close to her face
Ky: Now I just need to scratch your – nose
Kylie uses a stick to rub Emily's nose, Emily smiles
Ky: Follow the light up. Follow this [unheard]
A moves the stick in front of Emily's face while Emily tilts her head, she lifts the stick high above her head and brings *it back to Emily's chest*
E: (tapping the back chair with her feet) I'm better now!
Ky: Hold on I just need to do this again (glances at me) – does it hurt? I just need to do that.
A pokes the stick into Emily's chest drawing it in a line down her legs and then poking it between her legs, Emily sprawls out her legs
Ky: (putting the stick down) there you are! You're better, but you're not better yet, I just need to do one more thing to you then you're better
Emily sits up, Kylie picks up a plastic box filled with pom-poms
Ky: You've gotta lie down on the chair. And I gotta [unheard] on the chair. These – these

247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259	(she opens box) are really special and you're not allowed to take one home. (She picks one up) this is going to be your reward and it's gonna stay with you at home when you get better and I'll put it… it goes there and… (she touches it on each of Emily's cheeks) there we go *Kylie replaces the pom-pom and closes the box. Emily gets up from the chairs and walks around the back of Kylie's chair. Sam, who has been watching form just out of frame, stands up and goes towards Kylie* S: And now I can be poorly Ky: Yep – I need you – I needed you next *Emily goes out of frame. The doctor scenario continues with Sam and Kylie for another 3 minutes until Kylie says 'Can I be poorly now?' and runs off shouting 'doggy' to Emily. Emily has been acting as a dog, using high-pitched animal noises and returning sticks thrown for her for another 6 minutes.* *Video moves on to focus on another child in the home corner area as Emily is drawing in my notebook, with the video ending at 21:21.* END OF VIDEO

APPENDIX 6

Tuesday 10th May 2016
2.50pm – 3.14pm
Players: Claire, Emily, Ryan, Eve

Transcript of socio-dramatic play episode: focus player Claire

From field notes:
Video quiet room, school, cooking, Ryan as a cat. Emily as father, Claire as teacher.

I have to exit the game explicitly (by going home from school) but more easily said than done when 2 of them explain that they live with me…

Claire keeps taking me 'have a little talk' in the corner of the quiet room. This is to remind me to follow the rules and advice on not getting on the sad side.

Emily: I'm a dad
Claire: Come and sit here. D'you wanna come and sit over here?
M: Mrs Carter, my daddy's here
Cl: I know. Just come and sit at the front
M: At the front?
Cl: Yeah – just there
I move
Cl: I'm just gonna sort everything out, okay I'll just put this -
M: Miss
Cl: What?
Emily: Sit near daddy
Cl: What?
E: Sit near your best daddy
M: Can I sit near my daddy?
Cl: Yes.
M: Okay
Cl: Only if I just -
M: Daddy, why are you at school?
E: 'Cause I'm doing some baking
M: Oh we're doing some - oh what we baking?
E: Cakes
M: Cakes? Oh I like cakes. Did you know daddy, one time I had a cake and it was a strawberry cake and there was sponge and there was some bits of strawberry in the top and it also had some cornflakes in it and it was made of chocolate and you know when i ate it it made my mouth all like chocolate
Cl: Now let's see who's gonna be baking
M: Daddy, you baking?
Cl: Can I choose? Star of the day?
M: Am I star of the day?
Cl: Yeah!
M: Oh!
Cl: Star of the day would -
M: Daddy I'm star of the day
Cl: And with her dad as -
M: Daddy are you star of the day?
E: No! You!
M: Oh - but did I do something really clever to be star of the day
Cl: Yeah you just writed - loads of names
Claire writes on the clipboard in front of her, also holding a white board. Emily arranges metal pots on the floor, I watch Emily. She looks at me and walks out the room with her hands on her hips.
M: Mrs Carter?

43	Cl: What?
44	M: My daddy's putting out - putting some buckets on the floor
45	Cl: For baking!
46	M: For baking!
47	Cl: Yeah. I'm just writing your name and I read one - I didn't mean to do that - it can come
48	off
49	M: Don't worry
50	Cl: And I need two boys and two girls
51	M: Okay.
52	Cl: And I've done you so let me take you off - cross you off the list, cross you off the list, now
53	you don't do no more baking
54	M: (dismayed tone) no more baking
55	Cl: No 'cause you only have to when you've done one go
56	M: Oh -
57	Cl: Then when we finished all of the goes we get a new list and then I'm gonna choose you
58	M: Can I go first on the new list?
59	Cl: Yes
60	M: Can I?
61	Cl: Yes
62	M: Can I go every time for baking?
63	Cl: Yes
64	M: I can go baking every time, every week?
65	Cl: Yes
66	M: Can I go baking every day?
67	Cl: Yes
68	M: Every day?!
69	Cl: If - if you be good
70	M: How do I be good?
71	Cl: You have to have to - (fast) keep on playing - can I just choose-
72	M: Keep on playing?
73	Cl: Yes, can I just choose one more girl and two more boys? So, Elliot
74	M: Yes
75	*Claire looks up at me, I smile. She looks back down and writes on her clipboard*
76	M: Who else?
77	Cl: Let me cross every - one. And one more girl and two more boys, one more girl and two
78	more boys. One more boy.
79	*Emily enters*
80	Cl: And I need um - (looks at Emily) Sophie
81	E: I'm not Sophie
82	M: Sophie? Yes
83	E: You're not - you're not -
84	Cl: And one more boy
85	E: No girl! She's - she's going -
86	Cl: I've done two boy - I've done two girls now I just need - Lewis
87	E: Is you!
88	Cl: Isaac (writes on her clipboard)
89	M: Oh I don't want Isaac to do it
90	Cl: Okay
91	M: I don't want Isaac to do it
92	E: Say Tara
93	Cl: Tara
94	M: Tara's a girl, I thought you said a boy
95	Cl: This is boy Tara
96	M: A Tara boy? Oh boy Tara. What are we making at baking Miss?
97	Cl: Um - chocolate pie
98	

99	M: Chocolate pie! How do you make that?
100	Cl: You just get loads of buckets don't ya? Get up and plunge just -
101	M: Do you have to melt the chocolate first?
102	Cl: Yeah - the chocolate's in this red bowl int' it?
103	E: Yeah
104	M: Is that really hot or really cold?
105	Cl: Cold, 'cause you have to mush it up. I han't got a spoon
106	M: Will it melt if it's cold
107	E: Uh - this is a musher (holds up and bangs a pestle and mortar together three times)
108	M: Oh that's for mushing
109	Cl: So - so you have to flick this into it (flicks a stick onto the floor)
110	M: Okay
111	Cl: Wait - so that's what you do
112	M: Is it crunchy or smooth when you've finished making it?
113	E: (shouts from outside the room) crunchy!
114	Cl: Crunchy. And then you put it into the oven and then you looked at if it all - like - into a -
115	like a big cake int' it? And it's - it's a massive one. And then I have to cook it -
116	E: Daddy's knackered
117	M: You knackered daddy? And how long does it go in the oven for Miss?
118	Cl: Umm - twenty bits.
119	M: Twenty bits? Is it twenty minutes?
120	Cl: Yeah so you go and wash your hands, wash your hands and you're baking
121	E: Over there
122	M: I don't want to wash my hands
123	Cl: Okay
124	E: It's not washing your hands one, it's a baking one, 'cause you have to touch something,
125	you have to get tissue
126	M: I don't want to wash my hands
127	Cl: Who's got their -
128	E: You have -
129	M: Can I still do baking?
130	E: Yeah, you can't wash hands
131	M: My hands are really dirty but I don't want to wash them
132	Andrew: (entering the room) Uh - we're playing golf out there
133	M: Okay
134	E: Come on
135	M: I don't want to wash my hands
136	E: No. You're not washing your hands. (She runs across the room and picks up a blanket) I'll
137	wash your hands. Not washing hands. No.
138	M: Will I get some dirt in the food if I don't wash my hands?
139	Cl: Come 'ere. (*Takes my hand*) come over 'ere. (To Emily) I'm just gonna have a little talk to
140	'er. Over 'ere. You have to wait til I just - sit 'ere.
141	M: Yeah
142	*Claire and I sit on cushions in the corner of the room. A metal tin shifts from the cushions*
143	E: I need that (takes tin and walks towards her cooking area)
144	Cl: What if, you wait, when it's time for you to - when you wanting to go, you just tell me,
145	and put your hand up. Because you know our rules at our class. And then, and then if you
146	don't do the rules, you'll going on the sad side. If you do know the rules – (*nods her head*
147	*slowly*) you *will* go on the - 'appy side
148	M: Ah
149	Cl: So, ah - see now you can bake
150	M: Okay
151	Cl: Just - (picks up a blanket and puts it on my hands) wash your hands, put your hands on
152	that. (To Emily) I just talked her back. And we'll have another talk after dinner time
153	M: Another talk after dinner time, okay
154	

155	E: Why?
156	Cl: Because she don't know what to do in Rowan class today
157	M: I didn't know the rules in Rowan class
158	Cl: Now you can just bake
159	*Emily spreads a blanket over the floor near the buckets she has set up*
160	M: But we had a little - I - we had a little talk and now I know the rules in Rowan class
161	Cl: And then I just have to talk you after dinner
162	M: And if I know the rules, I'll go on - I'll go on the happy side, but if I don't do the rules -
163	Cl: You go on the sad side
164	M: I go on the sad side
165	Cl: I need another board for the sad side
166	M: Okay.
167	Cl: I'll just - (*picks up a whiteboard from a box near the camera*)
168	E: Come on sit down. Sit down. You need a cushion.
169	M: I need a cushion
170	Cl: Sad side and happy side
171	E: That's yours
172	M: Thank you
173	Cl: Sad side is that one and this is the 'appy side
174	M: I wanna bake ten thousand cakes
175	Cl: But you *can't*!
176	M: Can I bake thirty three million cakes?
177	E: Yeah -
178	Cl: No
179	M: Can I bake twenty five million trillion cakes
180	E: No
181	Cl: You only have to have one big cake for everyone
182	M: What do I have to do, daddy?
183	E: Err - you 'ave to *(looks at me and bashed the pestle and mortar together*)
184	M: What's that?
185	E: To [unheard]
186	M: Oh to mash it up?
187	*Emily passes it to me. I turn the pestle the wrong way and begin to stir. Emily watches.*
188	E: No! Not like that
189	M: What - can I use that end?
190	E: You're stirring with that end
191	M: Oh this end?
192	E: Yeah
193	M: It's different
194	E: Yeah
195	M: What's different?
196	E: It's flat - it's (*she takes it in her hand and bangs is against the other hand*)
197	M: Harder?
198	E: That -
199	M: Is it round
200	*Ryan enters the room*
201	Ry: Oh what are you doing here?
202	M: We're doing some baking. Mrs Carter took the register
203	Ry: Ahh! Can I join in?
204	Cl: Yes, you can bake. Cause I put yours on the list
205	E: This is like chocolate like
206	M: This is like chocolate?
207	E: Yeah
208	Cl: (to Ryan) d'you wanna buh-bake?
209	Ry: Pretend this was one of the school plays - bus
210	Cl: Do you want to just put this over 'ere, what you was playin' with

211	M: Uh – that's not chocolate, what was it?
212	Ry: Blackcurrant
213	M: What was it?
214	E: Blackcurrant
215	M: Blackcurrant. That's a very different flavour and I don't like blackcurrant
216	E: Uh – chocolate
217	M: What do I do now?
218	*Emily signals banging the pestle and mortar together*
219	M: Oh I do that? Am I mashing it?
220	E: Yeah
221	Cl: (to Ryan) you're a naughty one and you're going on the sad side
222	M: Am I mashing it and mushing it together?
223	Cl: (to Ryan) 'cause that's naughty
224	M: What am I gonna do -
225	E: (to Ryan) wash your hands!
226	*Ryan throws his arms up in the air and then*
227	M: What am I going to do with it afterwards?
228	Ry: There we go I've washed my hands
229	E: Um put it in there (points to a metal pot)
230	M: Put it in that bowl
231	Ry: Rah – what do I have to do?
232	*Emily taps one of the pots with a spade, Ryan taps another pot with a stick*
233	M: We're mashing -
234	Cl: I'm still putting you on the *sad* side
235	*Ryan takes a pot and uses his stick to stir within it, hitting the sides of the pot*
236	E: Put him on the [unheard]
237	M: I'm mashing some chocolate, what are you doing?
238	Ry: (growling) I'm mashing some [unheard]
239	Cl: 'Cause he just scribbled
240	M: Where does chocolate come from?
241	E: Lots of -
242	Ry: Em, cows
243	E: Chocolate
244	M: Cows…
245	Ry: Chocolate comes from um milk
246	M: Milk. But milk isn't brown is it?
247	Ry: No milk turns it brown
248	M: Milk turns the chocolate brown
249	Ry: Yeah milk – you mix milk -
250	E: Ryan on the sad side, not doing any baking. You're not doing any baking
251	Ry: I'm supposed to do bake-in – she told me
252	M: I want him to do the baking with me
253	Cl: Look – this is the sad side
254	E: He can!
255	M: Because Ryan is my friend
256	E: He can
257	Ry: Can I play with bussy?
258	M: We're doing baking, we're not allowed to play with bussy if we're doing baking. 'Cause
259	you've washed your hands and we're having a go at mashing the chocolate – do you want
260	to have a go at mashing the chocolate?
261	Cl: D'you want me to show you something – this is – come over here, look over here. This is
262	the sad side
263	E: I just had up some chocolate
264	Cl: D'you want me do a dot? Want me to do a dot near his name?
265	E: Put a dot near his – put a cross near his name
266	Cl: No we do a not

Ry: Ha ha
M: Do we put it in the oven now?
E: Oh yeah – we haven't made
Cl: I'm getting – I'm getting
Ry: I just – I just drank bleach
M: I think he's going to be sick
Emily laughs, Claire runs out of the room, Ryan laughs and pretends to vomit on me
M: Ugh, daddy he was sick on me
E: Get the towel now now now now now
Ryan makes vomit/barking noises as he kneels up. I try to quieten him
E: Nuh nuh nuh nuh nuh nuh (she shakes a stick in Ryan's face)
E: Car - he's in a car
M: I've got sick on my hands
E: Go get a towel
M: Oh -
Ry: Bussy!
Claire comes in the room with a plastic bowl, she hands it to Emily and looks at Ryan
M: (bringing over a blanket) I found this towel
Cl: Here, there's a bowl
Claire picks up the blanket and starts rearranging it
M: Okay, so we mush the chocolate, where do we put it now?
Cl: Can I just put this on you?
E: Just put it in this bowl
Cl: This thing
M: This is a towel for my hands
Cl: Can I just put it on you?
Eve walks into the room, holding a doll close to her
M: Yep, thank you
Cl: D'you want - I've just got some - (she leaves the room)
E: Today, I'm not going to tell you to go
M: Okay
E: Kay!
M: (to Eve) We're doing some baking. Daddy's come to school to do some baking with us. Can Evie do some baking too?
E: Yeah - she can!
Claire enters carrying two coconuts, she gives them to Emily
Cl: Two of these, two of these. I just went into the kitchen and get them
E: I need to crack them
I stand up to adjust the camera
Ry: Ga ga
E: Oh come back kid
M: I'm coming back
Cl: It's dinner time everyone
E: No, we're still baking
Cl: Okay, when you've finished baking - it's dinner time. You have to tell us when it's not baking time 'cause I have to tell you when it's in the oven, 'cause you don't know it's on
M: I'm going to make ten hundred thousand chocolate pies
Cl: (raising her voice) no you're not
Ry: Ga ga
M: I'm going to make one million trillion chocolate pies
Cl: No you're not
Ry: Ga ga
M: I don't think they'll all fit in the oven though
Ry: Ga ga

E: No. I'm not your dada.
Ry: Ga ga
E: That's not your dada, that's my kid
Ry: Dada
M: That's my dada
Ry: Dada
E: No - you're dada
Ry: No I'm not, I'm ga ga. You're dada. And dada
Eve: I'm - baby's mummy
E: He's not
M: Is it nearly ready?
E: Um - nearly
M: Do we have to give it to everybody in the class when it's cooked?
Ry: Ga ga
Emily lifts up a coconut, and begins to bash it against the other coconut
M: Do you like baking Evie?
Eve nods
Ry: Can I be a cat? I want to be a cat. (To Claire) Can I be a cat? Can I please be a cat in the - in this game?
Cl: (to me) this is a cat
M: I like when we have a cat in the classroom, it means I can stroke it's head. It helps me to feel better, if I'm feeling sad or angry or scared and then I stroke the cat, and I feel better.
Eve: Hey baby
M: Baby can't put its face in the cooker – I can smell – I can smell the baking. Can you smell it?
E: Yeah
Ry: That baby there is being naughty, (he points at the doll) she's eating my finger num num num. I'll put her on the sad side (he moves to write on the whiteboard)
Cl: (running over to Ryan) No! No!
Ry: The baby's eating my finger
Claire folds her arms and watches Ryan
Cl: I'm gonna put you *another* mark
Emily bashes the pestle and mortar together
M: Mind your finger Emily
Claire walks across the room to pick up a whiteboard marker
Ry: I'm a cat. Right, she gets a dot by her name for eating a finger
Cl: You get *another* mark. Three marks!
E: She can't get – no I'm sad 'cause he's on the sad side
Ry: Oh – poor kitty, poor kitty
Cl: Look – look – how much marks
E: (standing up and putting her hands on her hips) I'm an angry dad now (she paces across the room to Claire the whiteboards)
M: Daddy why are you - Daddy's really angry and I don't know why
E: (shouts at Claire) don't do that again or I'll tell you – I'll tell you to – I'm gonna rub that off
Emily paces across the room to get a whiteboard rubber and returns to the whiteboards, begins to rub the names off both boards
Cl: The sad side
E: No you can't
Cl: (trying to move her hands away) stop it!
E: And that (keep rubbing names off)
Cl: Stop it!
M: Daddy, you can't rub out the sad side and the happy side
E: It's the happy side too
She leans in to keep rubbing out

M: Daddy, am I on the sad side or the happy side
E: Happy side
Cl: I'm putting you on, the sad side
M: What do we have to do for the baking next?
Ryan rubs against Emily's legs
E: Ah – oh kitty you love me
Caden enters the room, looks around, leaves again
M: What do we do next?
E: I'm gonna get a blankie
M: Huh – I found some jam (shows Eve)
Emily picks up a blanket and spreads it over Ryan's face
M: Put it in the bowl
Cl: (leaning towards me) You've got such a long name 'hant ya'? Look at ya' name
M: Matilda. Yeah – it's really long
Cl: Matilda
E: You do belly rub (points to Ryan)
M: I found some butter. And I found some cocoa powder. It's chocolate flavour and I found some sugar
Cl: You know I just fell over onto the floor
M: You okay?
Ryan speaks to me in a high tone voice, words not discernible. Emily and Eve move pots around. Claire approaches Ryan who is under a blanket. There are the sounds of bells and xylophones outside the room
Cl: Come 'ere. Here's the blankie. A blankie. A blankie (covers Ryan in a blanket) there we go
Eve puts the doll into a pot
M: The baby's in the flower? That's the flower for the cake
Claire returns to the whiteboards
Cl: (to me) Can I just put a mark near your name? Like – like a tick
M: Okay
Cl: Or a cross
M: I got a tick for being good daddy
Ry: Matilda, Matilda, why you not sticking with Issabelle – why you not with Issabelle today?
Claire walks around to my side and looks into my face
Cl: Can I just have another chat – 'cause it's
M: Yeah -
Cl: Come over 'ere
M: Can we have a chat over there? In this corner?
E: Yeah – near your dad
Cl: Right. Let's sit down then. What about if you could do the thing what I have to do to show Miss Watson, the thing what you made, because then you can get a sticker and – and – if you be good and I tell you the rules later, after dinner time yeah? You promise you'll be good?
M: Yeah, promise
Cl: Because, if you don't you'll be *definitely* on the sad side
E: Time to go home
M: But I don't want to be on the sad side
Cl: But if you don't know the rules -
E: It's done
Cl: - you *will* be on the sad side
M: Okay
E: It's done – look at this big cake
M: Oh look at the cake
Eve: It's dinner time baby
E: We're sharing it
Cl: Let me put it in the [unheard] (puts the bowl on the radiator at the side of the room).

Come on, let's have another chat 'cause it's dinner time
Claire guides me to sit on the cushions in the corner
M: Can I write it down? Emily, can I write down our chat? I'll write down our chat
Cl: (looking at the notebook) our chat is because the rules are up there (points to the wall) let me just tell Claire to go home because she's got - Miss McCray is here to take her. Come on Claire, go with Miss McCray.
Claire starts putting items in a picnic basket. Issabelle enters the room followed by Kylie
Is: We're playing schools Kylie, you can be my baby
Cl: (to Issabelle) this is the happy side – this is the happy side and that's the sad side. Can I just talk - (walks towards me, turns and walks towards Kylie*)* – can I just talk to the baby, I just talked to Matilda. I finished talking to you now
Kylie: (finding a book) We've got this story at home
Cl: Come over 'ere, let me tell you something. This is a chat
Issabelle runs out the room followed Kylie. Claire watches them and bites her nails
Issabelle: (guiding Kylie who crawls on her knees) can she at the front Claire, with you?
Cl: Come 'ere
Andrew enters the room
Andrew: Hello again. There's only meant to be five in here
Claire sits on a table with her back to the camera. She can be seen holding back Kylie who is trying to move away
Cl: Sit down or you're gonna be on the sad side
Claire's action is now mostly unseen. I negotiate how many people are in the quiet room and who might need to leave the room
M: I'm going to be real me now and write in my book, but you can carry on playing. Bye teacher, bye kitty, see you tomorrow
E: See you at home
M: I'll see you at home daddy
E: No, you're at home too, this is home
Cole comes in with a large yellow ring which he waves around, Andrew sticks the large red magnet to the radiator, Eve sits grasping her doll next to me, Ryan wriggles amongst the blankets in the corner. Issabelle enters again, pulling Kylie by the wrist
Issabelle: Claire, sad side
Cl: Okay, I'll put loads of marks
Issabelle: Sad side, she ran away again
Cl: You've gots one two three four five stickers. You got five stickers! She got five stickers! You know you get five stickers? You know you get five stickers. (She looks around the room) where are the yellow stickers? She's got loads of marks 'hant she?
Kylie tries to leave the room again, but Eve holds her wrist and brings her back
Eve: Come here baby
Kylie: They're getting me 'acause I'm playing school and I'm ah children

I tell the children to leave when the TA asks for a large circle in the classroom

END OF VIDEO

APPENDIX 7

Transcript of socio-dramatic play episode: focus player Andrew

	Tuesday 24th May 2016 **9.30 - 9.45am** **Players: Andrew, Issabelle, Charlie, Hayden** From field notes: Issabelle and Andrew in the quiet room – the attack of the man eating birds. A lot of jumping onto the cushions in the corner. Charlie enters and adapts quickly. Hayden picking up on the game after watching from the entrance but he seems to be a dog… 15 mins in, Andrew gets called to do writing. Andrew has entered the quiet room prior to the video. Issabelle enters with me and the camera is set up.
1	Andrew: Ah it was just a trick (laughs). Ooh there's a bird! Why do I keep missing birds?
2	Issabelle: (points to the window) there - there's a bird
3	Andrew: (runs to the window, gazes out) ah - missed it [unheard speech]
4	Gah! Bird's coming! Get the bird off me, I do not like bad guy birds
5	*Andrew runs in a circle around the room and flails his arms. He picks up the binoculars and*
6	*looks out of the window. Issabelle stands next to him, watching him as he holds up the*
7	*binoculars. Several paper notices on the window block his view.*
8	An: That's just paper! I do not like paper either, that gets in our way.
9	*He peers through the window*
10	An: Ah a bird coming, I do not like bad guy birds
11	*Andrew runs in a circle around the room again and flails his arms*
12	M: Bird's coming?
13	An: Bad guy birds
14	M: Where's the bird coming from? (Walks over to join them at the window)
15	An: Bad guy bird
16	M: Bad guy birds
17	An: I do not like bad - birds
18	*Andrew runs across the room flailing his arms*
19	M: What do they look like?
20	An: Huh?
21	M: What do they look like?
22	An: They eat - people
23	M: They eat pe- (puts hands over face)
24	An: (runs to look out of window) they’re big
25	M: They're big. What are their feathers like?
26	An: They're like - grass so you can't see them
27	M: (gasps) they’re camouflaged?
28	An: Yes, but they can fly
29	*Issabelle moves towards Andrew and touches the binoculars*
30	M: Do you know what camouflaged is Issabelle?
31	Is: Yeah -
32	M: Yeah - what does it mean when they're -
33	An: I know -
34	Is: Camouflaged is paper [unheard] (she looks out the window)
35	M: Kind of - it's when they're the same colour as something like grass so they can hide in
36	the grass and you can't see them
37	An: Yeah and also in trees

M: And trees, yeah -
Is: Oh quick Andrew (she pushes him to face her) there's two coming toward ya'
I gasp and duck on the floor
An: Wait, its okay 'acause I have a telescope to shoot them. They do not like telescopes
M: Telescope? (Holds hands up to eyes as if holding a telescope)
An: They do **not** like telescopes
M: What do they do if they see a telescope?
An: They just go ah! (Lifts arms in air and falls onto cushions) Splat! (He stands up, says emphatically) They splat on the floor
M: (puts hands on hips) are you a bird expert?
Issabelle puts her hands on her hips
An: Yes I'm a bird-
Is: (shouts) Andrew! Quick! There's one coming 'awards you
An: Okay! (Holds up hands as if holding telescope) Pss - splat (laughs and strides across the room) splatted one again
M: Are you a bird expert Issabelle?
Is: (abrupt) No. Andrew, Andrew quick quick quick (she bounces up and down)
Andrew runs to the window and holds his hands to his eyes
An: Splat!
Andrew peers out of the window into the playground, Issabelle joins him
Is: Why did you kill a [unheard] bird?
An: Err. Oh man - there's one - uh - under the - there's one in there
Is: Where?
An: (screams) ah, he's going in my face (brings hands together and makes shooting sound). That made him - fall over -
Is: (points to camera) Oh!
An: - back to the floor
M: Hi!
An: (runs to camera and flails arms) Hi! (Runs back to the window) And also birds do not like cameras, so... (Looks at Issabelle) and they do not like girls. Ha (he falls onto the cushions) one in my face! One in my face (he scratches his face)
M: Oh no! What do they like?
An: They like (puts hand on hip) eating people remember
I pretend to cry in fear and sit down. Andrew and Issabelle laugh. Andrew points to some sticks lying on a bench
An: But they didn't like sticks though
M: They don't like - that's interesting (picks up a stick)
Issabelle approaches where I sit and stands next to Andrew
An: If you have sticks everywhere that means they won't come near you
M: Okay, so you protect yourself with sticks. Like that (holds sticks to chest)
Andrew moves back to the window
An: They spike them
Issabelle looks at me and I point a stick at her, she laughs. Andrew shouts from the window
An: Ahh one's on my face again (he hits his face repeatedly)
M: I'm not sure, where do they come from? I'm so - I'm so confused, where do they even come from these birds?
Is: Grass!
An: They come from holes, they live underground (repeatedly points to the ground with both hands)
M: Under - do they?! How did they get down there?
Is: Look (she runs to the bench at the back of the room) one under here

90	*She pulls out a green blanket from beneath the bench. I cower, Andrew dives to the floor,*
91	*Issabelle laughs as she hauls the blanket above her head. Andrew laughs. Issabelle drops the*
92	*blanket which Andrew picks up and collapses, pulling it on top of him*
93	An: On my 'ead. Get off you. Or else I'll telescope you
94	Is: Wow look - look (picks up blanket) there's one under here
95	M: Ooh -
96	An: (jumping on the floor) splat!
97	M: Did you just splat it?
98	An: Yeah
99	M: Oh no, let's pick it up
100	Is: Oh there's one (she throws the blanket over Andrew) there's one, there's one
101	M: Is that how you catch them?
102	An: There's one outside and it's coming through the window
103	Is: There's one (chasing Andrew)
104	An: It's coming through the window - ah! Window - it's coming through the window (he
105	runs and looks through the window)
106	M: How does he even get through the window?
107	*Issabelle drapes the blanket on Andrew's back but he shrugs it off*
108	An: They - they - they go through tiny holes -
109	Is: (covers herself in blanket) look there's one in here
110	An: - and do you know they also go from everywhere. They make holes everywhere
111	M: They makes holes. With what? With their feet? With their claws? With their talons?
112	With their beaks?
113	Is: I've got a mouth hole at home -
114	An: With their **wings** (lifts his arms as wings)
115	M: They make holes with their wings
116	An: To make them bigger - yes!
117	M: Do they pierce through things? Pierce through things, like that (demonstrates with
118	hands)
119	An: Yeah. (Runs to window) So that means they're coming out of **everywhere** (looks around
120	the room)
121	M: This is terrifying
122	An: Oh man
123	M: I'm not quite sure what to think
124	An: Oh no (covers mouth with his hand), the big boss - because we splatted all his friends -
125	Is: (shouts) Hey Andrew quick, the boss is behind you! (Points out of the window)
126	An: (screams and rolls across floor) I hate bosses, they - they eat big people
127	M: Quick, come and hide, come and hide behind this
128	An: (reaching out both arms towards us) No I can splat him, but only if I have a big
129	telescope. Ooh, this might work (flails arms and runs to the bench at the side of the room.
130	Picks up a stick and places it like a telescope in front of his eye. Makes a shooting noise, falls
131	to the floor with a yelp)
132	M: Did it work?
133	An: No! He shot it back at me
134	*I sigh with frustration, Issabelle laughs*
135	An: Okay, now I'll just climb on him (he leaps face first into the pillows)
136	*Issabelle and I laugh*
137	An: Eurgh (he stands up)
138	Is: You're crazy
139	An: I think he 'et my hand
140	M: Do they talk?
141	Is: Matilda -

142	An: They say (flaps his hands) 'I'm coming to eat you, squawk'
143	*Issabelle laughs*
144	M: Can we ask them not to?
145	An: No. They just say 'No, I'll just come and eat you'
146	M: (with crying tone) Oh, but - but - I don't want to
147	Is: Matilda -
148	M - I'm not very tasty -
149	Is: You know what happened this morning, um, my brother got a flannel and smacked me in
150	the face
151	M: (gasps with hands over mouth) Oh no
152	An: But - they do not like bones
153	Is: And then -
154	M: Bones?
155	An: They do not like bones
156	Is: - every time he touched his -
157	An: But they do like eating eyes
158	M: No
159	An: I'll - I'll get him (runs to the window)
160	Is: Every time we touched stuff -
161	An: Agh! There's one in my eye (he falls to the floor)
162	Is: His mum had a [unheard] -
163	An: Agh - one in my eye. One in my eye (hits face repeatedly)
164	Is: He said - oh that hurts and he throws in on the floor in the kitchen
165	M: Oh no
166	An: Agh! One in my eye - one in my eye! (He falls onto his knees)
167	M: Why do they like eating eyes so much? Help him help him (goes towards him) - is it still
168	there? Is it still there?
169	An: Yes, but they only don't like people spraying them with tomato juice
170	M: People with tomato juice?
171	An: Spraying them
172	Is: (shouts) You've got tomato juice on you
173	*I pretend to wipe my arms down in disgust*
174	An: Spray it on me, spray it on me - it will make the bad guy get it
175	*Issabelle and I stretch our hands towards Andrew*. *Andrew jumps up*
176	An: Da da da - now he's gone (places on hand on his hip)
177	M: Oh fantastic
178	Is: (pointing to window) Wait quick there's one behind you
179	*Andrew screams and falls onto the cushions*
180	Is: A big one, it's the boss, it's the boss, it's the boss *(she lies on top of Andrew's back)*
181	*They lie still and silent for 4 seconds*
182	Is: Okay - [unheard] (she gets up, laughing)
183	*Andrew stands up, making sing-song noises and hangs his arms limp, looking at Issabelle.*
184	*Issabelle points a stick at him*
185	Is: Kuzam
186	An: Now - now you -
187	*Issabelle laughs and pushes Andrew away*
188	An: Now he's 'et me, I can fly now (flaps arms) and get him with my wing - smack him
189	M: Are you a bird now?
190	An: Yes - if the birds eat us we turn into a bird -
191	Is: (grabbing Andrew and spinning him around) Quick there's one behind you
192	*Andrew screams and flaps his wings, 'shooting' at the window and falling to the floor*

193	Is: (laughing) did it work?
194	An: (getting up and nodding) Yes, but there's more - there's a queen and she's very angry
195	Is: (pointing at Andrew, shouting) Quick! It's right behind you on your back
196	An: (biting towards me) Now you're a bird, (biting towards Issabelle, point at her) now
197	you're a bird
198	*Andrew flaps his arms and jumps across the room before jumping face down into the*
199	*cushions. Charlie enters the quiet room.*
200	Charlie: What's going on in here?
201	*I make a squawking noise and begin moving my arms like a bird. Issabelle and Andrew*
202	*laugh. Andrew moves towards Charlie and bites towards him*
203	An: Now you're a bird
204	Charlie: I don't think... ducks wear clothes
205	An: (pushes me back) wait. Wait.
206	M: I'm not a duck. Maybe I am a duck
207	An: Ah! (Points to the window) The boss is coming
208	*I retreat back to my seat, Andrew flaps his arms and moves to the window*
209	Charlie: (hold his arms behind him like wings) Can I play?
210	An: Yes, you have to - if I eat you, you turn into a bird and you have to get the bad guy boss,
211	(he bites towards Charlie) now you're a bird (flaps his arms towards the window)
212	An: Ah boss! Quick! (Dives onto floor)
213	*Charlie flies across the room, squawking*
214	An: And they do not like these (holds up a baby carrier)
215	M: What, those?
216	*Charlie taps the baby carrier with his hands*
217	An: They do not like these because they do - if you just put them on their head they do not
218	like it, and they - they - they make them stink (laughs emphatically)
219	M: Stink?
220	An: Yeah
221	*Charlie squawks and points at Issabelle who is lying in the corner on the pile of cushions*
222	An: Then we can use this (picks up baby carrier and flips it over) eeep - stinked him!
223	M: Ah ha!
224	An: We win!
225	*Charlie squawks and flaps his arms. Looks at the camera.*
226	An: (jumps) we win! Oh man - there's the queen
227	Charlie: Um who's recording the camera?
228	M: Hmm?
229	Is: I'm gonna get a drink Andrew okay? (Exits)
230	M: Oh yes, the camera's, the camera's - the camera's on is that okay?
231	An: (to Charlie, holding the baby carrier up) Oh man, the queen's coming -
232	Ch: Yes
233	An: The queen! The queen bad guy's coming. Put this on his head. (Passes baby carrier to
234	Charlie. Quieter) Put this on **her** head.
235	*Charlie and Andrew walk towards the window and Charlie lowers the baby carrier through*
236	*the air*
237	An: She stinks now (puts hand over mouth and laughs)
238	M: But how? Why does it make her stink?
239	An: 'Acause the babies put poo in there
240	*Charlie lifts the baby carrier onto his shoulder*
241	M: Oh. Quack (moves around room like a large bird)
242	*Andrew laughs and takes the baby carrier off Charlie, placing it on the floor*
243	An: If you're gonna do that, the baby might poop on you
244	*Charlie squawks, Andrew points out the window*

245	An: Oh man - bird's coming, bad guy bird, fly and splat him on the head (dives face first into
246	cushions)
247	*Charlie moves around the toy hanger, which hangs from the ceiling by the window*
248	An: Oh man, he turned me into a bird, a biser bird this time
249	M: I wanna see how high I can fly (stands and flaps arms)
250	An: Now I'm turning into a bad guy bird - ah!
251	*Issabelle enters the room. Charlie places the baby carrier over Andrew's head, Andrew spins*
252	*around before dropping to the floor. They both laugh. Andrew leaps across the room*
253	*towards me, waving his arms.*
254	M: I want to be a bad guy bird as well
255	An: You have to get eaten by the bad guy bird then
256	M: Right - I'll get eaten by the bad guy bird then
257	*Charlie picks up the baby carrier and places it over my head*
258	An: (laughs) you stink
259	M: (in despair) oh it's dribbling down my hair
260	*Charlie throws the baby carrier onto the cushions and points at me and squawks*
261	M: (sadly) Dribbling down my face
262	*Charlie squawks again, Andrew laughs*
263	M: Does it smell? (Leans towards Charlie)
264	*Charlie sniffs my face*
265	Ch: (withdrawing in disgust) uh - yes
266	M: What does it smell like?
267	An: Urgh, poo
268	Ch: It smells like -
269	M: A drain
270	Ch: No, it smells like - banana skins, rotten tomatoes and baby poo
271	*Issabelle lies on the pile of cushions, watching us*
272	M: Oh no, all mingled together
273	Ch: Yeah - all mixed up
274	M: Oh dear
275	An: If the baby eats you again - if the baddie eats you again, if the baddie eats you again,
276	you'll turn back (quietly) to water
277	M: To water?
278	*Charlie picks up the baby carrier*
279	An: And water does not like being scared of birds
280	M: Yes, true - water does not like that. So, you turn into water?
281	An: Yes you -
282	M: So I'll just go (spreads hands) all over the floor?
283	An: Yes
284	M: Soak into the carpet
285	Ch: No - no
286	An: And then I'll -
287	Ch: Now - do it - (puts baby carrier on his head)
288	An: - fly in.
289	Ch: Yuck.
290	Is: Andrew there's a boss bird. A boss bird.
291	An: He's eating. Ha ha! Now I'm turning into water (he lies on the floor)
292	M: Oh you're water now. What does water look like?
293	*Andrew puts a blue sheet over his head*
294	M: It's blue. Cover you in the blue cloth. (Rearranges sheet) are you a river? Or a pond?
295	Charlie: You're a baddie (puts the baby carrier over Issabelle's head)
296	Is: No

297	Ch: I've got one now
298	M: You caught one?
299	An: I've caught one now 'cause it's in water
300	Is: (pushes Andrew over) you're a river!
301	Ch: Ew stink! (Puts the baby carrier on Andrew's head) the river needs to stink
302	*I adjust the camera and Charlie watches me*
303	An: I'm not a river, (emerges from sheet) I'm -
304	M: Where's the river?
305	An: - a man turning into water. And this - okay, put the stink in here, so the bad guy can get
306	him
307	*Charlie pushes the baby carrier into Andrew's face and presses it in, whilst watching the*
308	*camera. Issabelle watches whilst lying on the cushions in the corner*
309	Ch: Got him
310	An: No! Now time for stink men burst. I stinked them all!
311	M: Stink them all out?
312	An: Yes
313	Ch: I have the bucket
314	M: Oh
315	An: Oh man, there's a bad guy on your head
316	M: Rea-
317	Ch: Get him!
318	*Charlie puts the baby carrier on my head, Andrew and Issabelle laugh*
319	An: And he's eating you
320	M: Oh no don't eat me. Oh no, he's eating my eyes. Oh. Uh. He’s eaten my eyes.
321	Ch: Erm...
322	M: (takes baby carrier off head) that's it, got no eyes now, what am I going to do?
323	Ch: (points to Andrew) He's there...
324	M: (handing baby carrier back to Andrew) who wants this? You? You (hands to an empty
325	space) - do you want this?
326	*I walk towards Issabelle to give her the baby carrier, she laughs and backs away*
327	M: You?
328	An: (laughs) I don't want -
329	*Charlie runs behind me*
330	Ch: (shouts) over here!
331	M: You?
332	Ch: Oh yes (takes the baby carrier)
333	M: Okay - can I sit down now?
334	An: Yes
335	Ch: It's got slop all over it
336	M: I'll sit on this chair
337	*They laugh as I try to find a place to sit*
338	An: (leans towards me) the bad guy's eating you again
339	M: (sighs) really?
340	An: He 'et your head off
341	Ch: Quick, get him
342	*Charlie puts the baby carrier on my head. Issabelle is crawling on the floor, watching us*
343	M: Oh - ow ow ow
344	Ch: Sorry
345	M: That's okay, I knew it was an accident
346	An: Oh, he's 'et your eyes again
347	M: Oh gosh
348	Ch: Now, now you have to turn round

An: He 'et your eyes
M: I've lost my head, I've lost my eyes, somebody better look after that bird over there (points to Issabelle)
Andrew shouts and dives onto the blue sheet on the floor. Charlie approaches Issabelle to put the baby carrier on her head
Ch: I'll do it
Is: No (pushes it away)
An: She's not a bird, alright, I'll put this over your head
Is: I'm not a bird
Andrew waves all his limbs before ducking as Charlie tries to capture him with the baby carrier
Ch: Oh stink! You'll go for stinks soon
Andrew picks up the blue sheet and throws it at Charlie who continues to try to capture Andrew with the baby carrier. Andrew retreats to stand next to me. Hayden enters the frame on hands and knees and making a barking sound, Charlie attempts to capture him too
Is: There's doggie too
Ch: Stink!
Hayden escapes his attack
Ch: Stink!
An: Well, who is going to get eaten now?
Is: No not me
Charlie puts down the baby carrier and picks up the blanket. Andrew leaps towards him and grabs him from the back around the waist. Charlie escapes his grasp so Andrew hold on to his leg
Ch: (covering me in the blue sheet) you're going to get turned into water. Matilda needs to turn into water
Hayden crawls across the room, still barking, he leans into the baby carrier and begins rocking it
An: No! She doesn't. (He takes the blue sheet) alright I'll put it over you (flings it into Charlie's face)
Ch: No, I'm not water (he wraps the sheet across his face, muffled) please it's on my face
Andrew laughs and tries to pull the sheet off him
M: Are you a sea?
Ch: No
A: Are you an ocean, are there waves in you and whales in you?
Ch: No
M: And jellyfish
Ch: No
M: And sharks
Andrew flings the sheet over Charlie's face again
M: Oh no, you're just Charlie - you're just a bird, that's fine
Ch: Yes
M: (to Andrew) a silly idea that he might be the sea, I mean really
Ch: No - you're the sea
Charlie flings the blue sheet over my head
M: Am I the sea?
They help each other to wrap the sheet over my face
M: What else is in the sea - in me
Ch: Fish, octopus
M: Octopus, stingrays?
Ch: Sharks
Ch: Stingrays

401	M: Squid
402	Ch: Whales, stingrays
403	Is: Stingrays - I saw them at holiday
404	Ch: And most of all -
405	*Andrew jumps on Charlie's front. Issabelle exits*
406	An: (to Charlie) a bad guy - on your head. He's eating your eyes
407	Ch: Let's just have a sit down (he sits down and starts arranging a blanket)
408	An: (picking up the baby carrier) this is a chair
409	Ch: Okay
410	An: (puts it on Charlie) this is a chair
411	Ch: Okay - let's sit in it. (Pained) oh! My bottom stinks!
412	*Charlie runs around in tight circles. Andrew grabs his hand*
413	An: Sit on the this (tapping the radiator)
414	Ch: This? Oh alright
415	*Andrew laughs, Charlie climbs to sit on the radiator unit. After sitting still he falls off,*
416	*onto the pile of cushions in the corner*
417	An: Sit on - (points to rabbit toy on bench) that!
418	Ch: What this? (Sits on small l edge by window)
419	An: No that (points to rabbit toy)
420	Ch: That (sits)
421	*Andrew laughs. Charlie walks to see the images on the camera screen. Andrew pulls his arm*
422	*back towards him. Charlie presses forward to look at the camera screen*
423	An: (to Charlie) who would you like to be now? I mean, see. (To me) now - he's 'et your
424	eyes! He's 'et your eyes
425	M: Well, I'm glad I've got the camera then, 'cause if I've got no eyes then
426	*Andrew studies the camera until the end of the video when the teaching assistant asks to*
427	*borrow to do 'our writing'.*
	END OF VIDEO