

**Exploring young children's participation and motive orientation  
in the reception year classroom and at forest school**

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## **Abstract**

This doctoral study uses an interpretive ethnographic approach to explore children's motive-oriented activity in the reception year classroom and at Forest School. The research considers the experiences of a group of linguistically and culturally diverse 4- and 5-year-olds, in order to conceptualise the child's situation of development through their participation in socio-material activity settings from the child's perspective. The study's objective was to use a 'wholeness approach' (Fleer, Hedegaard and Tudge, 2009; Hedegaard, 2018) to consider the child's developing motive orientations and competencies in dialectical reciprocity with the values, expectations and demands of institutional practice. In doing so, it provides a means of considering how these may contribute to the child's perception of self as a competent learner and valued participant in relation to the demands of early childhood settings. The study is situated within Welsh Government (WG) strategies for early childhood education, which aim to ensure 'successful futures' for all (WG, 2015b).

The methodology draws upon Hedegaard and Fleer's (2008) dialectical-interactive methodology for studying children, in order to make visible the perspectives of the researcher, adults/staff and the child. Fieldwork to collect data took place in the classroom at an urban primary school and a Forest School site over an eight-month period. Participants included children, their parents, teaching staff and Forest School staff. Data were gathered using observation, audio-visual recording, still photography, interviews, informal conversations during drawing and playing, and video-stimulated interviews. The data collection process was based upon ethical principles (BERA, 2011) to encourage informed involvement of participants.

Using an environmental affordance perspective framework for analysis (Bang 2008, 2009), events chosen on the basis of conflict are explored to consider how the child negotiates, appropriates and challenges available affordances of things/artefacts, social others and self-experience as an individual within collective practices. The findings demonstrate how diverse children, including those whose behaviour is considered 'challenging', are negotiating often conflicting demands. The findings establish the importance of Forest School as an alternative, yet complementary, institution that provides pedagogical and physical space to support teachers in their observations and playful engagement with children.

The thesis presents a contribution to theoretical considerations of how young children participate in and shape their interactive experiences in dialectical relationship with the socio-material affordances of institutional practices. The findings provide empirical material to consider how children are viewed in terms of competencies, how conflicts between policy and practice shape children's participation, and how the concept of motive orientation is critical in order to support children's sustained engagement in transition between and within educational practices.





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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

The seed for this study was planted on a day in the woods while observing a Forest School session. I was running an outdoor learning and play training course for play workers, university students and teaching staff. As part of the training, we visited a Forest School site to observe a long-term Forest School project that was running as a partnership between a local primary school and an external Forest School provider. Reception year children of mixed abilities and linguistic characteristics came to the woodlands once a week, for half a school day (approximately 15 children for 2 hours) throughout the school year (36 weeks). The trainees were able to observe and reflect upon opportunities for play, engagement and interaction.

After the school group and our training group arrived, there was an opening circle time; the children and Forest School staff sat on logs in a circle for the greeting. First, the Forest School leader introduced us as observers who wanted to learn more about Forest School from the children; then, the classroom teacher came forward to tell the children about a structured activity that would precede 'free play'. She held up a selection of cut branches, which were approximately an arm's thickness, and showed the children that they were *cylinder* shapes. Then, she showed them the ends of each piece of wood cut on a diagonal, which created a *sphere* shape and the other end, cut straight across, which created a *circle* shape. The teacher pointed to the different sides of the log and asked the children to repeat the words *cylinder*, *sphere* and *circle* in response. She then told the children that she wanted them to use the bits of wood to paint the shapes onto a roll of paper that would be taken back to school to display in the classroom.

The Forest School leader had cut the wood in preparation before the class arrived, following the teacher's request from the previous week. While the teacher was giving directions, the Forest School assistant and volunteer began unrolling a large sheet of newsprint paper onto the woodland floor in a clearing. They also set out trays full of colourful poster paint and small cut logs of wood at intervals along the paper.

The teacher was looking forward to the children having a practical activity in the woods to support the lesson from the classroom in which they had learned these concepts. The aim of the activity was to connect the activity in the woodland to the lesson plans and unit of the curriculum that they were doing in the classroom and to create an experiential learning opportunity for the children. Another goal was to create a display for the classroom, which would demonstrate the learning that was taking place in the woodland.

The children moved from the seating area to the paper and the teacher showed them how the logs could be used to stamp a circle, sphere or oval onto the paper, or it could be rolled as a cylinder. The children then began to paint with the pieces of wood and the

paint. The adults, including the group of trainees and I, stood around the perimeter of the activity and observed; we also handed children logs when they asked for them or if they wanted a different length of wood or new tray of paint. The children began to undertake the activity according to the teacher's plan. However, a conflict soon arose between the intention of the teacher and the practice of the students: some children began to use their hands to paint or began to draw different shapes with the logs or nearby twigs.

As an observer, I was able to see how this might be tempting for the children. There were big pots of paint, a long expanse of paper, and the logs were getting wet with paint, which was transferring onto the children's hands. The children became engaged in the painting and the connection between their hands, fingers, paint and paper. After making some cylinders, spheres and circles, they began to find other objects nearby with which to paint and began painting other shapes, lines and patterns. Many of the children were communicating with each other in various ways, by showing each other what they were doing, some speaking softly to each other and pointing. Others were silent. All were absorbed in their painting.

The teacher, however, raised her voice to tell them they were doing it 'wrong' and to stop using their hands and painting other shapes. She reminded them to use the log cylinders to make circles, ovals and spheres, as they had been instructed. It occurred to me that her focus upon doing it 'the right way' – i.e., as she had set the task – may have been motivated by a need to have a finished product (outcome) for display and other 'top-down' pressures or motivation to demonstrate specific outcomes, rather than considering how engaged the children were with the materials and with each other. Finally, after a few minutes and once the children had produced some recognisable shapes, she said with a mix of exasperation and enthusiasm, 'OK, you can go play now!' Most of the children jumped up to find buckets and spades to play in the mud or to play on swings in the trees and other activities, with which they were familiar from previous sessions.

Some of the trainees followed them to observe those activities. A few trainees stayed behind watching the children that remained, as did I. The children who remained began to use the paint and the wood in whatever way they wanted. Some picked up sticks and leaves from the woodland floor and used them to paint; others continued using the logs and their hands. Watching the children, I noticed that these children continued to be engrossed in their activity. I bent down to try out the paint activity myself and began to make shapes with a log that was covered in paint. I then used my hand, seeing if I could make a perfect circle with my palm and an oval with my fingertip. As I touched the paint with my hand and placed it on the paper, I realised how therapeutic and relaxing it was to paint with my hands and other materials outside under the leafy trees. The other trainees and I talked about holistic development benefits of such activities. I stood up and observed the trainees and the children interacting, as well as the ways in which the children were interacting with each other – mostly silent but companionable, communicating by gestures and quiet solicitation in order to pass particular pieces of wood and trays of paint or to show what they created to each other or to admire



another's design. The activity lasted another ten minutes, until the classroom teacher returned from another part of the site to pack away the materials and move the paper away so that it could dry before they had to return to the classroom.

From my perspective as a trainer, the activity had been rich for training purposes on many levels. It supported discussion relating to the training course learning outcomes, which were focused upon different ways of observing children; the role of the adult; the differences between adult-led and child-initiated play; and, using the outdoors to support holistic outcomes, including well-being, cognitive and physical development. Additionally, the episode raised discussion about hierarchal implementation of curriculum, in which policy works its way down to the interactions between heads and teachers, teachers and children, children and materials, in attempts for standardisation and meeting objectives.

Following the session, I was unable to stop thinking about the *whole* episode: the interactions between children and paint, paper, and wood; the dappled sunlight shining down upon the children through the leaves of the oak, beech and birch trees that had framed the activity; the quiet that enveloped the activity after some adults and children left; the teacher's directives, frustration, admonishments and orchestration; the roles that the other adults played in either supporting, supervising or joining in the activity; and, the participation of the children themselves in transforming a planned activity into one that suited their needs and ideas.

Without knowledge of the theoretical frameworks that I pursue in this study, merely convinced that this event and the socio-material interactions could be unpicked and analysed in multiple ways, I began this journey of doctoral study. I was looking for an holistic approach with which to enquire about the multiple aspects of the situation – the interactions between humans – between peers and between children and adults – and inter/intra-actions between humans and the material environment that were happening on the woodland floor that day. As an environmental educator, I looked for a theoretical framework which could encompass the material and non-human surroundings and the interactive experiences between human and non-human nature from an ecological perspective. The British Ecological Society defines ecology as 'the scientific study of the distribution, abundance and dynamics of organisms, their interactions with other organisms and their physical environment' (BES, n/d). Therefore, I initially began to study Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, the conception of which was based upon his musings as a naturalist to address the macro- and micro- processes that shape children's lives lived within human communities.

Based in the field of psychology, his ecological model does not include non-human aspects of the environment. So, I investigated the affordance theory of ecological perceptual psychologist Gibson (1979/2015). Although this theory addresses human relations with non-human nature, features of the environment are considered somewhat statically as *surroundings*. Also, affordance theory, as conceived by Gibson, was not intended to address the mechanisms for mediation. Although it would have been possible

to combine the two (e.g. Kytä, 2003), during my literature review I discovered cultural-historical activity theory (CH/AT), which seemed to have space to conceptualise material encounters. Similarly based in the field of psychology, CH/AT provides an expansive framework for exploring the reciprocity between the individual and the social and material environment, while also considering the emotional experience (*perezhivanie*) of the child and recognising cultural and historical factors, including social inequalities. Corresponding to Bronfenbrenner's (1994) conceptualisation of proximal processes between individuals and the sociocultural environment over time, this theoretical framework, based upon the work of Vygotsky, Luria and Leont'iev, seeks to make visible the wholeness of children's experiences in relation to institutional practices, societal values and policies (Hedegaard, 2018). In two key texts I read (Hedegaard and Fler, 2008; Fler, Hedegaard and Tudge, 2009), the Danish psychologist Jytte Bang had contributed chapters on her environmental affordance perspective on activity theory. This resonated with me as a theoretical framework that I could shape to enable me to study all of these intra- and inter-relationships between human and non-human 'participants'. By surfacing the socio-material (Fenwick, 2015) and 'vital materiality' (Bennett, 2010) potential of Bang's (2008, 2009) environmental affordance perspective on CH/AT, I have applied an assemblage of these theoretical approaches to the study in order to provide a basis for enquiry about the individual's participation within the classroom and the Forest School, perceived as environmental *niches* within which the individual resides.

## 1.2 Overview

This study's foundations rest upon the theoretical proposition that human development is shaped by the reciprocal interactions between individuals and the socio-material environment, which is culturally and historically situated. Although development takes place in stages and periods in an individual's lifetime, relating to biological development, it is understood to be a 'revolutionary' or transformative process stimulated by the dialectical relations between child and environment (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 193). Recognising that children's lives are characterised by chronological periods in which they participate in certain cultural activities, such as childcare or school, Vygotsky asserted that the initial entry phase of each transition into a new institution, such as home to childcare or playgroup, playgroup to preschool, preschool to school, primary school to secondary school and so on, could be described as the social situation of development. During this transition period, a transformation takes place in which the child is confronted with the new expectations and values of the institution. Thus, Vygotsky (1998) describes the social situation of development as 'a system of relations between the child of a given age and social reality' (p. 199). This transformational development happens on two planes: the social (interpersonal) and then the psychological (intrapersonal), occurring in dialectical relationship with social, collective activity (Vygotsky, 1989). Thus, development occurs as a process of transformation by participating in cultural activities (Rogoff, 2003) across institutions (Hedegaard, 2009).

Consequently, the approach to the study takes the perspective that cultural traditions and values do not lie passively as a backdrop for development, referred to simply as 'context', but that the interactivity between the child and their socio-material environment is at the heart of the child's social situation of development (Vygotsky, 1933/1978, 1998). Furthermore, this dynamic reciprocity between the child and environment holds space for '*collaborative purposeful transformation of the world*' as a basis for socially just and equitable learning and development (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 474, emphasis in original). Importantly, the demands and standards within culturally and historically-based institutional practices, in which the child's activity occurs, mediate the individual's experience of participation. This mediation, according to Pedersen (2015), contributes to 'subjectification processes' in which 'specific aspects of agency are *facilitated*, whereas others are *restricted* and *constrained*' (p. 15, emphasis in original).

However, children, in dialectical relationship with the expectations of the cultural institutions, also appropriate, negotiate, and challenge these expectations, which may be observed in the child's agentic participation within and across these institutions (Hedegaard, 2012). Edwards (2018) asserts that Vygotsky's critical conceptualisation of learning as a process of externalisation – 'acting in and on the practices we inhabit' – leads to an understanding of individuals as 'agentic beings interpreting and responding to demands in practices with actions that are given shape by our motive orientations' (p. 3). The individual's motive orientations may be challenged when entering institutions in which practices have specific motive orientations and expectations, shaped by the values of the institution, which may conflict with the child's already internalised value systems. Socialisation is, therefore, understood to be a process of acquiring competencies which demonstrate an alignment of the individual's motive-orientation and that of the institution (Hedegaard, 2012). Children's participation in transition is viewed through this lens as the agentic developing of competencies as the child meets new expectations and affordances and acts upon them.

The research is framed by a children's rights perspective which 'views the child as both engaged and self-initiating, while at the same time as part of a collective cultural tradition' (Hedegaard, 2010, vii). It particularly considers the child's experience across the boundaries of more than one institution in order to find 'meaningful patterns' in relation to the aims of the study (Hedegaard, 2008b, p. 61).

The study was undertaken within two educational institutions in Wales – the reception year classroom (CR) and the Forest School (FS) woodland; these may be considered formal and informal learning environments, respectively. What both institutions have in common, however, is an early childhood synthesis of nurturing and education, and an understanding, in principle, of play as a leading activity for learning and development (e.g., Knight, 2009; Vygotsky, 1933/1978; WG, 2015a). Zittoun (2016) defines *institution* from a cultural-historical perspective as the 'temporarily solidified meanings and patterns of interactions, which are usually crystallized in different forms: materiality (as the walls

of a school), semiotic constructions (as written regulation or textbooks) or ideal or communicational constructions, such as social representations' (pp. 2-3).

Rather than suggest that the classroom is a *cultural* setting for education and the woodland is a *natural* outdoor setting into which the classroom extends, according to a culture/nature divide, this study does not differentiate between the two. From a cultural-historical perspective, all institutional settings have historical, cultural, social and material constitutions (Hviid and Zittoun, 2008). Zittoun (2016) argues that institutions are often 'transmitted across generations' (p. 3), such as the practices of the home, which may also be considered an institution, as well as school, work, and so on. This study conceives of Forest School as a relatively emergent institution for early childhood education in Wales – and across the UK. With its roots in Scandinavian early years practice, it may be considered an *imported* tradition (Leather, 2018). However, this study asserts that FS, as an intentional practice in the UK, builds upon an historical tradition of outdoor learning and environmental education as conceptualisations of informal and alternative education unique to the UK (Cree and McCree, 2012, 2013; Ogilvie, 2013).

Therefore, the Forest School practice in this study is viewed as an emerging institution in Wales and the UK, based upon Zittoun's (2016) definition, for the following reasons:

- its materiality, although fluid, is set in a specific site in local woodlands over an extended time period;
- it is delivered by a long-established (since 2001) charitable organisation run by qualified leaders, overseen by a board of trustees. Board members include individuals who work for the county council conservation team, the local education authority, cross-county play partnerships, and Natural Resources Wales (previously working within Forestry Commission Wales and Environment Wales);
- its practices are based upon a written set of principles and understandings agreed by wider governing bodies in Wales and the UK to which it belongs, such as Forest School Wales (FSW) and Forest School Association (FSA). These practices are grounded in a particular set of values, goals, activities, artefacts, interactive patterns based upon the principles of deep and social ecology (Bookchin et al., 1991).

The research takes an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating research perspectives from children's geographies, the sociology of childhood and cultural, developmental, ecological and social psychology as they relate to the child's participation in educational practice within and outside school walls. Undertaken in Wales, the study sits within the context of the Welsh Government (WG)'s 2004 commitment to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the foundation for all policy making (WG, 2011). Thus, participation is understood to be engagement; taking part in decision-making, negotiating and compromise, sharing and listening; and feeling listened to/heard, valued and empowered by respectful adult involvement (Hart, 1992).

Learning the skills to participate in ways that align with institutional demands requires the development of particular competencies. Dreier (2003) asserts that '[b]efore an individual can participate fully in a species specific life, species specific forms of activity have to be learned. This involves a learned modifiability of cognitive, emotional and motivational processes as well as of their functional links in life activities' (p. 2). Different institutions may demand different competencies as they relate to the values of the institution; children's negotiation and appropriation of the demands of institutions demonstrate developing competencies *across* institutions as they transition throughout the day, as well as over time, from one to another (Hedegaard, 2008a; 2012).

However, the concept of participation is expansively explored in this study by reflecting on types of participation that may be considered oppositional or negative in respect of institutional objectives and the tension that exists between individual agency and participation in collective activity. These tensions can highlight how the child is participating as motive development in alignment – or not - with the motive orientation of the institution. Indeed, the competencies being developed and learned in one institution may not be valued competencies in another, or the individual may challenge, appropriate, negotiate or reject the values of an institution. Dreier (2009) argues that 'individual participation in a context of social practice is always a particular one. People configure their participation in a social context in partial and particular, personal ways. They orient themselves and develop their abilities and understandings by being particular participants in a context of social practice' (p. 195). In whatever way participation is expressed, it is shaped in the reciprocal relationships between the individual and the socio-material environment.

This chapter, therefore, begins the study by examining the context and background of the reception year classroom, including the provision of weekly trips to the Forest School in local woodland, which are shaped by the curriculum for three- to seven-year-olds in Wales, the Foundation Phase Framework (WG, 2015a). The (adult) agendas for children's participation, made visible in the aims of governmental policies, frame the positioning of the participants in the study within a Welsh cultural construction of early childhood settings. This chapter also considers the location of the study within a geographical, social-demographic area of multiple deprivation, thus situating the study within wider political discourse in Wales about educational achievement and life trajectories (Dreier, 2008).

### **1.3 Discourse of disadvantage**

Ontologically, this study conceptualises disadvantage from a cultural-historical perspective in which socio-economic disadvantages are reinforced in systems which are based upon the privileging of the cultural and social capital of particular groups of participants (Bernstein, 1996; Bourdieu, 1997; Reed, 2017). This study is situated within The Foundation Phase Framework in Wales, which is guided by articulations for social equity and a vision that 'all children in Wales [may] have a bright future' and not be

'disadvantaged by poverty and inequality' (WG, 2013, p. 2). Drawing upon Marxist and post-Marxist principles of equity, inclusion and social justice (Daniels, 2008), the heritage of cultural-historical theory rests in the work of Vygotsky and his colleagues, who were undertaking research during a period of social transformation. Thus, they drew upon Marx's and Hegel's theories of social inequality to develop pedagogies that included learners of all abilities in meaningful education activity (Daniels, 2008, 2012; Vygotsky, 1994b). By looking at individual agency in dialectical reciprocity with cultural, social and historical structures, Stetsenko (2008) argues that a cultural-historical perspective is based upon socially-just 'visions for the future' (p. 474).

The school chosen for the study is located in the centre of a local authority-maintained housing estate in an urban, post-industrial town. The school provided an opportunity to study reception year children's participatory and interactive experiences across both indoor and outdoor education provision, with long-term Forest School provision delivered by a registered charity. The funding for the Forest School programme was provided by external non-statutory bodies, due to the provider's charitable status and the school being located in an area of disadvantage or 'multiple deprivation' (Estyn, 2009). Funding was awarded by charitable organisations which recognise the school as set in a Communities First<sup>1</sup> area and former Objective 1<sup>2</sup> area, which covers areas in which the capita per gross domestic product (GDP) is less than 75 per cent of the European Union average.

The children in the study's reception year class are a developmentally, culturally and linguistically diverse group of 4- and 5-year-olds, from Welsh, English, Polish, Syrian, Chinese and Hungarian backgrounds. Of thirty-six children, ten are from homes in which English is not the first language; seven are currently learning English as an Additional Language (EAL). None of the children in class are native Welsh speakers. The significant number of pupils with additional learning needs and/or speaking English as an additional language (Estyn, 2009) increases the challenges for ensuring equity in education and education outcomes (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009b). According to the 2009 Estyn Report, 76 per cent of the pupils at the study school have attainment levels on entry which are below local and national averages and are entitled to free school meals (eFSM). Entitlement to free school meals is used as an indicator of childhood poverty in Wales (Egan, 2018).

Closing the attainment gap for children from low income households has been prioritised by Welsh Government, concerned that those from poorer backgrounds are more likely to not only start school less advantaged in communication skills and social and emotional

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<sup>1</sup> Communities First was a flagship programme initiated by Welsh Government in 2001 to tackle poverty in the most disadvantaged areas in Wales (EC, n.d.). Communities First Cluster areas are those which are among the 10% most deprived in Wales according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2011. The programme is currently being phased out.

<sup>2</sup> Areas of deprivation that received European Union funding during 2000-2006 for the development of skills and employability, economic regeneration and development, and sustainable use of natural resources (EC, n.d.)

development (Chicken et al., 2015; Grigg et al., 2014), but to continue to be at a disadvantage throughout the early years. Welsh Government studies show that at the end of the Foundation Phase (FP), 'the gap in Foundation Phase indicator achievement between [those children who receive free school meals (e-FSM), based on income] and non-FSM children was 18.3 percentage points' (WG, 2013, p.15), indicating that challenges remain to reduce inequalities and support pupils' academic achievement throughout the early years.

The Welsh Government's *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* recognises that high quality early years' education has a vital role to play in helping children achieve their potential and in reducing inequalities and supporting children's well-being (WG, 2013). According to the document, Government policy for the early years has been based upon research suggesting that 'poor cognitive performance, as early as ages three and five, has been linked to an increased chance of unemployment, low qualifications and low income in adulthood' (WG, 2013, p. 9). Concerns about the links between 'cognitive performance' (WG, 2013, p. 9) and life trajectories are reflected the formal expectations that policymakers have for children within the early years, and the ways in which school staff are expected to meet developmental targets for the children (Egan, 2012a, 2012b). These expectations can assume 'a rational, logical trajectory for development' (Stephen, 2010, p. 19), which may lack understanding of the multiple impacts that poverty has on children, parents, communities who may be 'historically marginalised' (Gannon, Hattam and Sawyer, 2018, p. 1). Additionally, there are expectations to deliver aims for well-being; which, ironically, may be affected adversely by the pressures associated with measuring for cognitive performance (Banerjee et al., 2016).

This study considers expectations and values of the institutions from the child's perspective. Hedegaard (2014) asserts that do this, it is necessary to 'follow how the child's orientation in the world interacts with the demands that the child meet in the different institutional settings' (p. 192). The demands and expectations of institutions are conceptualised by Hedegaard (Ibid.) as 'forces from the surrounding world on the child that guide the child's activities'; yet, the child also is understood to be an active agential being who shapes her/his own activity within institutions by appropriating the affordances of the socio-material environment (Bang, 2009). Within institutions, socio-cultural values and beliefs mediate the affordances of social interactions between children and adults as well as between peers (Adams, 2016; Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

There is a tension in how the values of school, which relate to measurable learning outcomes and meeting a wide range of needs of the pupils so that they realise their potential to participate as members of mainstream society, also provide 'room' for children to be themselves in the present. Hedegaard (2010) observes that 'in the field of early childhood education, one is presented with a dilemma – whether to guide and educate young children in relation to already established [institutional] values or whether to give children room to become people in their own right' (*introduction to Fleer, 2010, p.*

vii). This conceptualisation of ‘already established values’ presents a homogenous picture of what these expectations might look like in practice; who the child already *is*, is shaped by the cultural practices from home or other institutions in which the children participate. These may conflict with the values of the classroom as a societal institution.

Culture is not necessarily synonymous with society. Within a society, there may be many cultures, based upon their own ‘values, beliefs, activities, and practices that continue from generation to generation’, in a state of continuous development (Tudge, et al., 1999, p. 68). Cultural groups are often identified based on lifestyles, resources and opportunities (Ibid.). Government policy for education, on the other hand, is based upon the ‘values, beliefs, activities and practices’ (Ibid.) of wider mainstream society, which attempts to unify a diverse population (Hedegaard, 2012). This, in turn, influences perceptions of learners’ competencies (Mahn and John-Steiner, 2002; Waite et al., 2013; Aasen et al., 2009) and significantly affects children for whom educational equity is most essential (Wood, 2007, 2009). Perceptions of competencies are an important consideration when studying the interactivity between adults and children, as Whitebread (1996) argues that ‘[c]hildren’s views about themselves develop as a reflection of the views transmitted to them by others in social interaction’ (p. 7).

Perceptions of students as not starting school with the ‘right’ skills, impacts upon how classroom practice is shaped. Increasingly, the conversation around disadvantaged communities and students’ learning outcomes is criticised for ‘neoliberal<sup>3</sup>’ tendencies, in which the individual is considered responsible for their situation, without joined up thinking between the macro- and micro-processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) which characterise everyday lives and the individual’s agency and participation – or perceived lack of - within and across institutional settings (Walkerdine, 2013, 2015, 2016). For instance, Sims (2017) argues that neoliberal focus on standardisation has an effect of teaching for conformity and job-readiness; in early childhood, this translates as *school-readiness*. It is also argued that concerns for school-readiness may be equated with specific styles of parenting or values and attitudes in the home (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2014), which can put a neoliberal spin on how participation is perceived.

According to a cultural-historical framework, upon which this study is based, cultures are dynamic and continually transforming, as are the members therein. Therefore, in order to address issues of inequity and inclusion, understandings of diversity need to include within-culture variation, as well as across-culture variation (Tudge et al., 1999; Flear, Hedegaard and Tudge, 2009). Stetsenko (2008) argues that education in this century is undergoing a period of conflict and tension in which sociocultural approaches, ‘underwritten by a common commitment to social justice and equity’ are in juxtaposition

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Neoliberalism is a political ideology that presumes the best way forward socially and economically is one of individual choice and a deregulated self-governing economic market, where there are as few constraints upon free trading as possible. This position recognises merit and individual choice as drivers for action and economic gain, but also places blame on “wrong choices” whilst failing to acknowledge the implications of social conditions (poverty, class, ill health)’ (Jarvis and Georgeson, 2018, p. 30).



with ‘starkly mechanistic views that reduce human development... to processes in the brain’, tested for standardisation (p. 473). From a whole child perspective, however, cognitive performance is in itself related to the child’s experience of participating in everyday activities within multiple institutions (Hedegaard, 2012a). Thus, a theoretically-informed study of children’s participation in early years settings needs to take into account the experience of the child, conceptualised as the *child’s perspective*, as an individual actively engaging in collective practices across institutions.

## **1.4 The aims of the study and the research questions**

This research is set within a transitional moment in Wales as the Foundation Phase curriculum for children aged three to seven has been revised (WG, 2015a). This revised framework has influenced the changes to the new curriculum currently being explored for children up to the age of sixteen. Welsh Government (2016) states that there are four purposes of the new curriculum proposed in *Successful Futures*, which are ‘already reflected’ (p. 7) in existing Foundation Phase best practice:

Learners should become: ambitious, capable learners; enterprising, creative contributors; ethical, informed citizens; [and] healthy, confident individuals. The plan outlines that all settings and schools should strengthen their Foundation Phase practice and pedagogy in relation to these four purposes (WG, 2016, p. 7).

Such expectations – defined by WG above as ‘purposes’ for education – represent the values of society, as visualised by Welsh Government in policy. The aims of the Foundation Phase address the complexities of children’s development as individuals within the contextual practices of the early years’ curriculum, as they transition from the play-based childcare institution of home and/or pre-school provision to the more formal learning environment of school.

In this study, some of the children in the class – and their parents – are also transitioning between cultures, having moved to Wales from abroad. Margetts (2003) asserts that ‘[c]hildren from minority ethnic groups, those with English as an additional language, and children with special educational needs find transition more difficult’ (cited in Siraj-Blatchford, 2009b, p. 10). Being at a point of transition to a new institution requires the meeting of a new set of standards explicated through practices and expectations. Transition, therefore, ‘is not merely a matter of biological maturation or adaptation to societal values, rather, it is about navigation through – and negotiation of – myriad invitations and possible self-understanding and self-realization options in concrete practices’ (Pedersen and Bang, 2016, p.732). Practices are motivated by values and enacted as standards, expectations and demands. The individual participates in institutions by negotiating and appropriating these standards, which can be observed in everyday activity.

Therefore, this study explores the socio-material situation of development in the classroom and Forest School for children with diverse characteristics, in order to analyse

the child's participation in reciprocity with the affordances (Bang, 2009; Gibson, 1979/2015; Kyttä, 2003) of institutional socio-material activity. Institutional activities are shaped by socio-cultural values and directed by institutional demands; they are intended to shape children's development by directing children toward the skills and competencies valued by the institution as essential for future success (Hedegaard, 2008a; Rogoff et al., 1993). According to a cultural-historical perspective, children become part of cultural institutions by engaging in the everyday activities therein; this activity is mediated by the use of cultural objects (artefacts), tools and social others. Perceptions of competence are based upon the child's engagement and motive orientation aligning with those of the institution. The study takes an environmental affordance perspective (Bang, 2008, 2009) to analyse the affordances for participation that are promoted by the institutional practice and how they are actualised by the child, in order to consider the child's motive orientation and goal directed behaviour in relation to the motives and goals of the institutions. The findings are used to consider how this socio-material situation of development may contribute to the child's experience of self as a participant in institutional practice.

The research questions guiding the study are as follows:

1. What are the expectations and values of the institutions, as characterised by the socio-material affordances of practice?
2. How do developmentally, linguistically and culturally diverse children participate in activities in and across institutions?
3. How does the child experience their participation and their developing motive orientation in relation to the demands of institutional practice? How does this interpretation of the child's perspective contribute to the child's potential alignment with educational values and expectations?

In order to answer these questions, this study follows Hedegaard's (2008a) 'wholeness approach' to cultural-historical theory to consider the following:

- the value systems of institutions as articulated in policy and principles (explored in Chapter 2);
- how these value systems relate to motive orientation of the institutions in everyday socio-material practice and activities (explored in Chapter 5);
- how the child participates within these institutions (explored in Chapter 6);
- how the child's participation reflects their developing motive orientations and the child's perspective (explored in Chapter 6);
- how the child's participation demonstrates developing competencies and skills in dialectical relationship with institutional practice (explored in Chapter 6).

The theoretical and methodological approach developed by Hedegaard (2008a, 2012a, 2014) is based upon understanding how children develop in relationship with cultural,

historical and societal demands as practiced in everyday activities in institutions, such as the family, childcare and school. Hedegaard (2014) argues that the demand practices of institutions have been neglected in research studying children's development, as has studying those demands from the child's perspective. These demands are value-driven, thus illuminating individual perceptions as well as societal and historical influences (Hedegaard, 2012a). As an interpretive ethnography, this study is set within this theoretical framework in order to consider the dialectical relationship between these demands and their driving force in everyday routines and practices, and the motive-orientation development of children as they come to understand what is expected of them, and develop competencies within those institutional practices (Hedegaard, 2014).

## **1.5 The shape of the study**

Having set out the backdrop of the study here in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 reviews the research and literature exploring The Foundation Phase classroom and the Forest School and their values, which guide practice.

Chapter 3 discusses further the theoretical foundations of cultural-historical, activity-based theory and ecological affordance theory, upon which the methodological and analytical approaches are based.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology and methods used to undertake an interpretive ethnography based upon Hedegaard's (2008a) wholeness approach and Hedegaard and Fleer's (2008) dialectical-interactive approach to studying children.

Chapter 5 describes the findings related to the institutional practices and principles of the reception year classroom and the Forest School. Values, standards and expectations are discussed in relation to their enactment in constrained and promoted engagement, activities, structure, routine and the roles of the adults.

Chapter 6 provides examples of individual children and their participation across practice traditions of the CR and FS. In this chapter, descriptions of the findings centre upon episodes of conflict to explore motive orientations of individuals within collective practices, using Bang's (2008, 2009) environmental affordance perspective.

In Chapter 7, the findings of both Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 are discussed, in relation to each other, to consider how children's experience of their participation and their developing motive orientation and competencies may be seen in dialectical reciprocity with the available socio-material affordances of the Foundation Phase classroom and Forest School provision.

Chapter 8 concludes the study by considering the key findings of the study and their contribution to theoretical and methodological conversations. The chapter also reflects on the limitations of the study and the impacts of those limitations upon my analysis and

interpretations. Finally, the implications of the study for future research and current practice are presented.

## Chapter 2 Literature review

The aim of this chapter is to review the literature that underpins the study's focus on the institutions within which the children participate. The first section will consider the theoretical and political underpinnings of Foundation Phase (FP) Framework that shape practice in the reception year. The second section considers the role of Forest School as a provider of the Foundation Phase commitments to outdoor learning. The chapter concludes by considering how children's participation is conceptualised in the Foundation Phase.

### 2.1 The Foundation Phase in Wales

In Wales, the statutory curriculum for children between the ages of three and seven in both maintained and funded non-maintained settings is the Foundation Phase (FP) Framework (WG, 2015a; Taylor et al., 2015). Welsh Government states its objectives for Foundation Phase practitioners as follows:

to promote the use of approaches...known to be particularly effective for children from disadvantaged backgrounds including a focus on developing early speech, language and communication skills; listening to and acting upon "learner voice"; small group work that puts the best practitioners with groups that are underachieving; effective deployment of practitioners – teachers and teaching assistants; early literacy and numeracy interventions; developing children's self-regulation; and, a focus on social and emotional learning (WG, 2016, pp. 16-17).

However, Maynard et al. (2013) argue that the FP draws upon many influences and documents: there is not a 'single clear explanation for the approach and pedagogy of the Foundation Phase that practitioners could use' (p. vii). This literature review considers the literature and research which influenced the FP implementation, and subsequent reviews and revisions in order to establish a sense of pedagogical purpose.

The Foundation Phase originated in the Welsh Assembly Government (2003) document *The Learning Country: Foundation Phase 3-7* (Aasen and Waters, 2006). This document responded to goals conceptualised during devolution at the turn of the century, focused upon Wales meeting the challenges of the future in a global economy. To reach these goals, aims included increasing levels of basic skills and education to overcome social and economic disadvantage, and embracing cultural diversity while also encouraging Welsh language development (Maynard et al., 2013; Wincott, 2006). During devolution, early childhood education and care (ECEC) enjoyed targeted attention by the Welsh Assembly Government, which Wincott (2006) attributes to three significant events: the creation of the Children's Commissioner, the first in the UK, whose role is to defend children's rights; Wales's 'bilingual character', which contributed to funding for Welsh language

playgroups; and the impact of the Welsh Affairs Select Committee's report on the delivery of ECEC as a space for both care and education (p. 284).

This new approach to the early years, with specifically Welsh cultural values, thus linked skills-based education with nurturing child-centred and play-oriented provision. Introduced in 2004 using a phased roll-out with forty-two pilot/early start schools, the Foundation Phase was (nearly) fully implemented across Wales by 2010 (Morris et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 2015; WG, 2016). With a focus upon well-being, child development, experiential education and learning through play, the FP marked 'a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum' (Maynard et al., 2013, p. ii; Taylor et al., 2015, p. 1).

### **2.1.1 'Effective' provision**

The Foundation Phase was also influenced largely by the findings of the Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) project (1996-2003) (Aasen and Waters, 2006). The EPPE project was a longitudinal, cross-country study that examined the effects of pre-school education for three- to four-year-olds on children's later social/behavioural and cognitive development (Sylva et al., 2004; Siraj-Blatchford *et al.*, 2002). Child development outcomes were used to judge 'effectiveness' (Sylva et al. 2004, p. 34). With the use of a (revised) standard Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R was originally developed in the United States; ECERS-E is the English extension), researchers were able to assess the quality of preschool provision in categories such as 'personal care practices', 'language and reasoning', 'social interaction' and 'organisation and routines' (Sylva et al., 2004). The study also looked at other influences on children's development such as the home learning environment and parental employment, thus taking a sociocultural glimpse into the context within which children's everyday lives are situated.

Subsequently, the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) multiple case study was undertaken to investigate the pedagogic strategies employed in twelve of the most effective settings identified in the EPPE project (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002). The study reflected upon techniques that enable smooth transitions, particularly between the home and care setting, and between the preschool and school setting. This focus upon transitions supports Hedegaard's (2008a) assertion that children develop across institutions and provides evidence for a sociocultural approach to early childhood education. While the EPPE project used research instruments such as ECERS-E to distinguish 'good practice' settings and what made them effective, the REPEY study had a qualitative focus, using child observational scales and interviews with teaching staff, parents, and childminders in order 'to identify the most effective pedagogical strategies' used in these settings to support the learning, attitudes and skills of young children (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002, p. 10).

Both reports provided practical as well as pedagogical support for the development of the Foundation Phase. Of the findings concerning verbal interactions, including support in

talking through conflicts, those considered the most effective were interactions which supported co-construction for understanding and joint involvement episodes (Bruner, 1986), or sustained shared thinking (SST), in which 'two or more individuals work together in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate an activity, extend a narrative, etc.' (Sylva et al., 2003, p. 3). These findings demonstrate social-constructivist approaches in the reception year classroom, which is most often recognised in the role of the adult within the developmental process, particularly in strategies based upon Vygotsky's theoretical concept 'the zone of proximal development' (1978, p. 102). This Vygotskian conceptualisation of social interaction as a learning tool has contributed to teaching strategies such as 'scaffolding' (Wood et al., 1976 cited in Tharp and Gallimore, 1998), 'guided participation' (Rogoff et al., 1993), and 'sustained shared thinking' (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002), which require mutually interactive relationships between adult and child (Daniels, 2001). Such collaborative methods of interaction and educative talk support children's outcomes socially, emotionally and cognitively (Siraj et al., 2015; Mahn and John-Steiner, 2002). Such outcomes are considered essential for the FP in Wales in which educational disadvantage is considered to be a prime obstacle to economic and social inequality.

However, open questioning and sustained shared thinking require a sensitivity on the part of the educator, in which the child's funds of knowledge (Hedges, 2007; Chesworth, 2016) and established competencies (Bae, 2001) are recognised and respected (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Although SST was observed more frequently in the most effective settings, the REPEY researchers asserted that it was most prevalent in middle class case study settings in which this kind of interaction typifies the kinds of interactions that happen in the home 'more frequently' than in the childcare setting (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2002, p.10). The reports do not analyse whether this stems from the possibility, however, that children may be able to communicate more effectively when there is less conflict between communication styles in the home and those in the school, or whether adults respond more positively to children from similar backgrounds to them, with whom they may share existing interests and competencies.

Yet, Siraj-Blatchford et al., (2002) argue that the specific types of interactive communication which facilitate improved social/behavioural and cognitive outcomes is particularly essential to effective pedagogy in settings in disadvantaged areas where staff had to be 'proactive in influencing and supporting parents' role in developing the home education environment to support children's learning' (p. 12). This drawing of attention to links between poverty and educational achievement influences funding for interventions to increase equitable opportunities for life trajectories, for example, Flying Start in Wales, a government-funded, part-time childcare provision for children ages two to three in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. Flying Start provides enhanced health visitor support; speech, language and communication support; and formal parenting support for families (WG, 2017a). Such programmes intend that an early education approach can link the home with the school environment to promote a more seamless

transition between home and school by activating relationships between parents and school, and identifying potential communication and learning difficulties early (WG, 2017a; Moen, Elder and Luscher, 1995; Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1995).

However, discourse which focuses on the home as skills-deficient raises concern that a supportive approach can easily become a neoliberal one (Iverson, 2012; TACTYC, 2016; Jarvis and Georgeson, 2018). In neoliberal approaches, there is a focus on the individual as deficient, rather than a wider lens on the social, cultural and historical situatedness. Furthermore, children's background cultures (Fleer and Hedegaard, 2010; Tudge and Doucet, 2004) and existing funds of knowledge (Hedges, 2007) may not be sufficiently recognised and drawn upon in the classroom. Rather than understanding the development which is taking place within the conflicts which may arise as children meet the demands of the classroom, or considering diverse perspectives as an invitation to draw upon diversity for learning, a neoliberal approach – or simply an insufficiently understanding one – can impact upon the interactions and participatory experiences of the child in the classroom (Groenke and Hatch, 2009).

A CH/AT perspective argues that during transition children are meeting the expectations of new institutions, during which time they begin to identify as a participating member of the collective practice (Pedersen and Bang, 2016). In a collective 'community of learners', collaboration and equitable opportunities for participation characterise the interactive relationships, in which both adults and children are perceived as contributing to the learning environment (Rogoff, Matusov, and White, 1996). In fact, the EPPE project demonstrated that it is the expectations of success, as well as ways of communicating and resources, that impact on children's educational attainment through primary school (Siraj-Blatchford et al., 2011). Pupils who achieved academic success from low social-economic homes had the same characteristics as those from higher socio-economic families: they had positive perceptions of their own competencies, perceived cognitive ability, self-regulation skills and positive attitudes toward school and homework (Ibid.). These characteristics were initiated in the home environment and reinforced at school. While there have been some studies considering the interactions between adults and children in the early years classroom (e.g., Bae, 2012) and in the outdoors (e.g., Waters, 2011), there are limited studies which include the conceptualisations of expectations as mediating forces. Therefore, in this study, institutional values, expectations and demands are made visible and the child's participation in reciprocity with these is analysed.

### **2.1.2 Review of the Foundation Phase**

Evaluations and reviews of The Foundation Phase reflected upon the positive outcomes in which practice aligned with intentions, as well as potential gaps between the articulated values in the Framework and the initial phase of practice. One report, *An independent stocktake of the implementation of the Foundation Phase* (WG, 2014a), recommended that teaching quality needed to be addressed in order that staff understood more fully



the effects of disadvantage on learning. The report also found gaps in teaching staff's understanding of key concepts related to experiential and play-based learning, and made recommendations that this understanding of the importance of the early years should be recognised throughout the school (WG, 2014a).

A three-year independent evaluation (2011 - 2014) for the Welsh Government (Taylor et al., 2015), undertaken in schools at different stages of their implementation of the Foundation Phase, gave researchers the opportunity to evaluate educational achievements of pupils whose experience was *primarily* of the Key Stage 1 National Curriculum *or* the Foundation Phase. While positive outcomes in behaviour, wellbeing, attitudes to learning, literacy and numeracy were reported by the majority of FP practitioners and stakeholders who were interviewed and who responded to surveys, the research team recommended more emphasis and training on observation and assessment, the roles of teachers and additional practitioners, effective use of the outdoors, and child development topics as well as Foundation Phase pedagogies (Taylor et al., 2015).

By utilising the extensive findings from evaluations, The Foundation Phase was revised in 2015. Although statutory Areas of Learning in the Foundation Phase remain faithful to the initial 2003/2008 documents, the Areas of Learning and outcome statements for Language, Literacy and Communication Skills and Mathematical Development have been adjusted, from their 2008 versions, to incorporate the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (LNF). The implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (WG, 2019) and its integration, along with subsequent assessments in the early years, has created tensions within the delivery of early years' practice as play (and outdoor learning) become susceptible to the developmental targets (Wood 2008; Stephen, 2010; Theobald and Kültti, 2012; Waller, 2014). When social pedagogic goals of play, social development and agency become seconded, the effect is a return to earlier cognitive developmental outcome goals and for school readiness (Dahlberg, 2009). This can be translated as a pressure for measurable results, which can impact upon how the values of the Foundation Phase are being implemented in practice. Certainly, in the review of the FP in 2015, researchers found that 'teachers misunderstood the balance between structure and play' and over-structured the day in order to avoid a perceived potential 'drop in literacy and numeracy standards' (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 69).

However, the revised FP framework still retains the emphasis on the importance of play for participation, holistic development and experiential learning:

Children learn through first-hand experiential activities with the serious business of "play" providing the vehicle. Through their play, children practise and consolidate their learning, play with ideas, experiment, take risks, solve problems, and make decisions individually, in small and in large groups. First-hand experiences allow children to develop an understanding of themselves and the world in which they

live. The development of children's self-image and feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are at the core (WG, 2015a, p. 3).

While asserting that play is the 'vehicle' by which children undertake experiential learning, there is still an ambiguity surrounding understandings of play, implementation of play and the adult role in play. Critics argue that understandings of play become diluted in order for early years' pedagogues to frame play within an assessment-compliant learning context (Gill, 2007; Waite 2010).

### **2.1.3 Play in the Foundation Phase**

Stetsenko and Ho (2015) argue that play's key contribution is its opportunity for children to 'sort out' what they consider 'one of the most complex paradoxes of human existence': how to be 'a unique individual in an essentially communal world shared with others' (p. 224). The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* Article 31 (UN, 1989/2010) states that the child has the right to engage in play, thus encouraging the provision of play for all ages and abilities across institutions. There are no stipulations on this right; however, particularly in formal contexts, play is most often valued for contributing to learning outcomes and cognitive development, as well as emotional, social, and physical development (Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva, 2004; Broadhead 2004, 2009; Wood, 2007; Pellegrini, 2009). Research on play also asserts its potential for ascertaining children's interests and cultural knowledge (Broadhead and Chesworth 2015; Hedges 2007; Fler, 2009), developing opportunities for enhanced communication and participation (Craig-Unkefer and Kaiser, 2002; Bae 2010) and enhancing the well-being of the child, as an individual and as belonging to a group (Aasen and Waters, 2006; Sandseter and Seland, 2016).

In an editorial of the *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, Hännikainen, Singer and van Oers (2013) assert that play is a vehicle to deliver nearly *all* the aims of early childhood education:

The UNESCO definition of ECCE [early childhood care and education] emphasises that high quality early childhood education should not only concentrate on economic outcomes and the strengthening of the future workforce through the transition of foundational cultural knowledge, abilities and attitudes, but should also focus on social outcomes (in the sense of conviviality and social cohesion) and democratic outcomes, such as joint responsibility, democratic values, equality, and human dignity (see also Bennet 2010). No doubt, these high ambitions with ECCE immediately also raise questions of approach: how to achieve these aims? As suggested above, play seems to be a valuable medium for children to participate in cultural life, to learn how to live together, to learn how to deal with authority, conflicts and power, and to appropriate basic cultural values, attitudes, abilities and knowledge (p. 165).

This expansive definition of play places it within a participatory framework, and reflects a cultural-historical understanding of play, in which play activities may be seen as a dialectical social situation of development for individuals in relation to the cultures and communities in which they live and participate (Aasen and Waters, 2006; van Oers, 2013). Yet, Hännikainen, Singer and van Oers (2013) also acknowledge the ambiguity which arises from a notion of ‘approach’ (p. 165), which reflects Maynard et al.’s (2013) criticism of the FP documents’ lack of specific direction.

This ambiguity stems from the problematic notion of child-led activity, which is perceived as the opposite of adult-led instruction (Rogoff, Matusov and White, 1996). For instance, The Playwork Principles (PPSG, 2015) that define play as ‘a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons’ (Ibid.). In a play setting, this may be more easily accepted – although Russell (2013) argues that it is still troubled in play work. However, in a school setting, a child-led play approach may appear incongruous, particularly for students who seem to start school with developmental delays and low baseline assessment scores. While the Playwork Principles definition of play is echoed in Foundation Phase literature, the FP is also centred upon *learning through play*, which may be interpreted as learning *outcomes* rather than learning *processes*. Thus, children playing ‘in their own way for their own reasons’ does not sit easily within traditional, cultural conceptualisations of early childhood education as outcome-focused, in preparation for the demands of school. The influence of play pedagogy with its emphasis on freely chosen play is often at odds with a curriculum driven approach to play, in which play is adult-led or utilised to deliver specific learning activity (Wood, 2007; Wood, 2009).

The Foundation Phase is intended, however, to present an *alternative* to the traditional school model, in which education is considered to be a process of ‘transmission’ or adult-directed activity in order that learning develops along a linear path, and children are required to demonstrate that information has been learned and retained (Rogoff, Matusov and White, 1996, p. 390). Yet, outcomes-based requirements of the FP contributes to a ‘top-down’ pressure for results, contributing to practitioners’ reluctance to embrace child-directed play (Siraj, 2014).

According to Rogoff, Matusov and White (1996), misunderstandings of child-directed play may arise from an association of the term ‘child-directed’ with the ‘free schools’ movement of the 1960s and 1970s, in which adult intervention was considered interference in the child’s natural progression of acquiring knowledge. They describe this either/or notion as a ‘pendulum swing between adult-run and child-run models’ (Ibid., p. 395). Certainly, from a sociocultural perspective, the concept of freely chosen play itself is troubled: locations, play partners, resources, adult involvement or lack of involvement, plus cultural-historical constraints and affordances all contribute to the argument that play may not be as ‘free’ as adults claim (King and Howard, 2016; Grindheim and

Ødegaard, 2013; Wood, 2013). Even in playwork settings, Russell (2013) found that adults were still controlling play based on their interpretations of what they felt both they, as play leaders, *and* the children *should* or *should not* be doing, which supports King and Howard's (2016) argument that definitions of play are dependent 'on the adult perception of children's activities rather than the views of children about their activities (King and Howard, 2014a)' (p.57).

In fact, King and Howard (2016) argue that 'free' play may not exist; instead, they suggest the term 'adaptable choice', since 'children's perception of choice can fluctuate between having little (or no) choice to having full' or autonomous choice (p. 59). This lens on children's perceptions of play and choice, rather than adult interpretations, shifts the focus to the child's perspective. What children consider when *asked* about their play and their play choices, is the 'combination of play space, resources, and participation by other children and adults' (King and Howard, 2016, p. 60). Within many different configurations of the above, key findings suggest that children enjoyed some autonomy and control as well as adaptability, which led King and Howard (*Ibid.*) to assert that since children's perceptions of choice were fluid, they were also influenced by socio-material environments. This suggests that the concept of 'free play' or even 'freely chosen play' contributes to the ambiguity in how play might be defined and conceptualised, let alone how it may affect provision of play in early childhood settings (Bodrova and Leong, 1996; Bodrova and Leong, 2015; Boyd, 2014; Hedges, 2007; Maynard and Waters, 2007; van Oers, 2013; Chown, 2014; Chen and Fler, 2016).

Additionally, provision for play needs to be supported by pedagogical understandings and awareness by adults. Wood (2013) points out that:

If spontaneous and responsive pedagogies are to be sustained, then educators need to be aware of children's repertoires of choice, specifically the ways in which the freedom to choose may advantage some, but disadvantage others. This is not an argument for limiting children's choices and exerting more adult control. However it is an argument for critical engagement with established discourses about free choice and free play, and the underpinning knowledge bases for practice (p. 16).

The adult's role in play, considered from a cultural-historical perspective, is similar to that in structured learning: the adult supports and observes, recognising play as an opportunity to consider the child's motive development, goals and challenges and build conceptual knowledge (Fler, 2010; Vadeboncouer, 2017). In this way, the concept of the zone of proximal development may be applied in playful activity, whether child-directed or adult-directed. Hedges (2007) argues that the child's individual inquiries in regard to emotional, social or material interests can be observed in play, which is 'rich with possibility *for* the educational setting if teachers recognise and respond to it' (p. 12, emphasis in original). This is supported by Aasen and Waters' (2006) argument that it is not simply a matter of what teachers do, but *how* they do it, ultimately by responding to

the child's interests with interest to support a classroom culture of well-being and learning.

Certainly, Vygotsky viewed play as 'a mechanism propelling development forward' (Bodrova, 2008, p. 359), which aligns with the institutional values of school. Vygotsky (1933/1978) argued that in play, the child 'learns to act in a cognitive, rather than an externally visual, realm by relying on internal tendencies and motives and not on incentives supplied by external things' (p. 96). This suggestion of play echoes Playwork Principles that assert play is that which is 'intrinsically motivated' (PPSG, 2015); however, Vygotsky (1933/1978) also considered play as socially situated. This approach does not negate the biological and neurological functions of play, but also considers play through a sociocultural lens:

By conceiving of play as mode of activity, play becomes a cultural problem rather than a developmental one....A Cultural-Historical theory of play basically rejects the assumption that play as a psychological phenomenon is determined by developmental dynamics or maturation (the developmentalism assumption), but sees play as an outcome of cultural processes, human decisions and cultural values and understandings (van Oers 2013, p. 191).

These 'cultural values and understandings' shape children's play, thereby situating children's play within institutional constructs. Rather than nullifying the role of the adult, this sociocultural conceptualisation of play creates an expansive space within which adults may play a variety of roles, rather than there being a dichotomy of child-led v. adult-led understandings of play. The tensions between child-led and adult-led play activities in the classroom are explored in the Foundation Phase document, in the context of 'focused tasks' and 'continuous provision' (Maynard et al., 2013, p. 43). Focused tasks are adult-directed and continuous provision is intended to be child-initiated. Within this child-initiated continuous provision are expectations that children will "'spontaneously" play with (structured) resources that have planned learning objectives – while 'structured play opportunities' (structured educational play), planned in response to cues from children may relate to "enhanced provision"' (Maynard et al., 2013, p. 43-44). There are some guidelines about the adult's role in allowing a child to pursue their own interests and not discouraging them. Even so, the language of the FP document includes the word 'structured' in the same line as 'spontaneous', which makes it understandable that teaching staff may find the balance between 'interacting and interfering' (Fisher, 2016), challenging to conceptualise, let alone achieve.

Rogoff, Matusov and White (1996) assert that the problem is not in adult-led or child-led notions, but in the perceived dichotomy between them. They argue that a 'community of learners' model is guided by an alternative philosophical approach: adults and children collaborate, children take an active role in learning, and when the situation requires, the more knowledgeable teaches the other (which may be the child guiding the adult). Rather than 'piecemeal incorporation of innovative techniques into an otherwise conflicting fabric of the instructional model', this is an underlying philosophy of the whole school day and school practice (Rogoff, Matusov and White, 1996, p. 395). This framing of learning

within a community may also be extended to conceptualising a community of playing, in which 'playful pedagogies' (Goouch, 2008; Irvine, 2016) include both adults and children learning through play together.

Another complexity within the FP Framework relates to the 'expectations that children will "spontaneously" play with (structured) resources that have planned learning objectives' (Maynard et al., 2013, p. 43-44). This, in practice, has contributed to how classrooms are arranged and what resources are available, often as 'closed spaces for predetermined, objectives-led practice' with work stations arranged around the classroom (Goouch, 2008, p. 98). One pedagogical approach from play work which challenges this predetermination is the theory of loose parts (Nicholson, 1971) to support creative learning. Nicholson (1971) argued that children 'find the world incredibly restricted - a world where they cannot play with building and making things, or play with fluids, water, fire or living objects, and all the things that satisfy one's curiosity and give us the pleasure that results from discovery and invention' (p. 5). Considering both the current notions of past childhoods being less restricted and more nature-rich (e.g., Louv, 2004), as well as empirical support which demonstrates that children's activities are increasingly restricted (Kyttä, 2004; Kyttä et al., 2015), Nicholson's arguments from the 1970s are just as, if not more, relevant today, nearly fifty years later.

Nicholson's plea for freedom from controlled spaces was written in support of adventure playgrounds, a movement begun in Denmark in the 1930s as 'junk playgrounds'. These were later developed in urban areas in Britain in response to children's lack of creative and spontaneously resourced play areas and as an alternative to formally designed playgrounds (Kozlovsky, 2007). Crucial to the initial idea was the notion that children *could* be destructive, so why not offer resources for such exploration of materials, as opposed to their activity being curbed by expensive and precious play equipment? In addition, children's exploratory play could be supported rather than hindered by a lack of 'predetermined agenda' (Kozlovsky, 2007, p. 2).

Kozlovsky (2007) argues that the tension between adult-driven agendas for play and the biologically-informed notion of play as spontaneous and unrestricted is 'embedded' in the 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which, while arguing for children's rights to play, also framed that right within the parameters of directed play 'to the same purpose as education' (p. 1). In Foundation Phase documents, it is asserted that both indoor and outdoor early years settings should be designed to support children's play as well as designed for learning, and that children should be given the opportunity to contribute to this design. Reception year classrooms and outdoor play areas are designed to support children's playful activities, usually reflecting types of play, such as creative play and dramatic (Hughes, 2012). Hughes (1966) created *A Playworker's Taxonomy of PlayTypes* in order to help playworkers categorise the types of play they were observing and to contribute to how play is framed and provided for (Hughes, 2012). Updated in 2002 to include recapitulative play (i.e., ritual and story based upon ancestral origins), the categories are as follows: communication, creative, deep, dramatic, exploratory, fantasy, imaginative, locomotor, mastery, object, recapitulative, role, rough and tumble, social, socio-dramatic and symbolic. In considering this wide range of play types, it is evident

that some are better suited to the outdoors than to an indoor classroom, particularly that which falls into the category of recapitulative or rough and tumble.

A growing discourse of outdoor play has also contributed to another type of play fitting into any number of Hughes' taxonomy – risky play. Risky play is categorised by Sandseter (2007) as that which involves great heights, high speed, dangerous tools, dangerous elements, rough and tumble, and disappear/get lost (Sandseter, 2007; Sandseter and Kennair, 2011). These, too, may be available affordances in both the indoors and outdoors, but may be better supported – as well as promoted and accepted – in outdoor spaces in which adults have sufficient understanding of the benefits of such play.

The design of play spaces, available resources and participation by other children and adults all contribute to how play is not only conceptualised by adults, but also how it is perceived by children (Wood, 2013; King and Howard, 2016). Indeed, Wood (2013) asserts that 'play is a distinctive form of activity, in which children's motivation to play reflects their need to develop mastery of play, and to enact forms of agency that are often denied to them in other contexts' (Wood, 2013, p. 6), which echoes Vygotsky's (1933/1976; 1978) conceptualisation of fantasy play as an opportunity for children to subvert adult constraints. Similarly, the outdoors is more likely to support play affordances away from adults' intervention or simply just apart from adults – or anyone, as outdoor play is also noted for its affordances for choosing to be social or retreating from the social (Korpela et al., 2002; Clark and Uzzell, 2002; Kyttä, 2003).

## **2.2 Outdoor learning, Forest School and the Foundation Phase**

The growth of outdoor play in the Foundation Phase builds upon links between the outdoors and both developmental outcomes and well-being (Faber Taylor and Kuo, 2006; Pellegrini and Bohn, 2005; Chawla, 2015). Additionally, it addresses growing concerns that the opportunities for outdoor play out of school hours are increasingly limited (Gill, 2007; Tovey, 2007), in order to provide experiences that may be unlikely without school-based intervention.

The theoretical and research base underpinning the Foundation Phase, including the findings of the EPPE study in regards to resources and settings, the influence of Scandinavian early years practice, and the role of play for learning outcomes, have all contributed to the value placed on outdoor learning in the Early Years and the Foundation Phase curriculum (Aasen and Waters, 2006; Knight, 2009; Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2012; Gooch, 2008; McInnes et al., 2011). Indeed, *The Foundation Phase Outdoor Learning Handbook* asserts that '[t]he outdoors is not an extra to the Foundation Phase: the Foundation Phase and the outdoors are inseparable' (DCELLS, 2009, p. 3).

Just as adventure playgrounds were introduced to the UK following a visit to Denmark by an Englishwoman (Koslovsky, 2007), the development of Forest School was influenced by a visit to Denmark by college lecturers based in England. Lecturers from Bridgwater and Taunton College (then Bridgwater College) arranged a trip for students studying for early

years qualifications to visit spaces for early years practice in Denmark in 1993 (Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2012). In Denmark, as in other Scandinavian countries, there is an established pre-school education practice of using the outdoors every day throughout the year, as well as *skovbørnehaver*, nature kindergartens (Norðdahl and Einarsdóttir, 2014; Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2012). It is not uncommon for children in pre-school to have ‘free flow’ play provision (Bruce, 2006, p. 82), in which children are enabled to move freely between activities and between the building to the outdoor setting (see Figure 2.1).



Figure 2.1 A Free-flow preschool in urban Copenhagen (photo by author)

Denmark’s early years pedagogical practice is not only influenced by theorists, e.g., Rousseau, Fröebel and Dewey, but by a Scandinavian cultural perspective that is conversant with the benefits of a free, open air life, *friluftsliv* (Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2012; Knight 2009). *Friluftsliv* is conceptualised as a ‘philosophical lifestyle based on experiences of the freedom in nature and the spiritual connectedness with the landscape’ (Gelter, 2000, p. 78). The importance of *nature* as a cultural philosophy is apparent in the Danish curriculum for early childhood settings, which has six major themes: personal development; social competence; language, body and movement; nature and nature phenomenon; and cultural expression and values (Sandseter, 2014). Play is regarded as a means to learn in all areas, with outdoor play providing a vehicle to especially cover all aspects (Sandseter, 2014).

The lecturers from Bridgwater and Taunton College, especially impressed by the forest kindergartens where the children engaged in risky play, set up their own practice within the college crèche in Somerset and called it *Forest School* (Williams-Sieghfredsen, 2012). The lecturers then began creating a suite of practical and theoretical units in order to



deliver Further Education (FE) qualifications (Business and Technology Education Council/BTEC) in Forest School for their students. This adaptation of forest kindergarten for early childhood and education care provision has become uniquely British as it has had to adapt to physical restrictions and cultural understandings of health and safety, and has been expanded into provision beyond the early years. This is important to contextualise the Forest School movement in Wales, as it is conceptualised in this study, in which the training has been reciprocally influenced by play workers, youth workers, and environmental educators, as well as early childhood education and care providers. While forest kindergarten in Scandinavia is understood as an informal pre-school provision, with formal schooling not commencing until age seven, Forest School in the UK is a programme utilised for all ages and abilities as bespoke provision aiming to meet the needs of individual client groups and individual learners.

This is largely due to the influence of one of the first trainers to bring Forest School training to South Wales in 2000, Gordon Woodall, a former lecturer at Bridgwater College, who worked with young people at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) (Knight, 2016). He and his colleagues asserted that the Forest School approach to experiential education and holistic development, as well as the focus on practical skills in the outdoors, could benefit learners of all ages and abilities, particularly those who had become disengaged with formal classroom learning. Their work with young people led to an optional unit being added to the FS Leader training: *Managing Challenging Behaviour*, aimed at those working with learners over the age of eight, which included training in emotional literacy, empathy and self-regulation (for the facilitator as well as the learner). This has subsequently been assimilated into the core training as it has become better understood to be applicable for all ages.

This focus on learners who had become disengaged with formal education contributed to the ethos of the growing Forest School as a means of bringing the benefits of alternative and informal education to the formal learning setting of schools and also a conceptualisation of Forest School as an approach to address pupils' educational and life trajectories. Subsequently, research from early programmes focused upon self-esteem and self-confidence, ability to work cooperatively and awareness of others, motivation and attitudes toward learning, ownership and pride in local environment, relationships with the outdoors and key skills (e.g., Murray, 2003), reflecting the 'alternative' values for children's and young people's experiences, rather than curricular outcomes. Alternative and informal learning are characterised by learner-centred approaches, including self-directed learning, mentoring, trial and error experimentation, and reflective evaluation (Ogilvie, 2013).

In 1992, the Forestry Commission had set up its education branch, the Forest Education Initiative (FEI), based in England (OLW, n.d.). In 2000, the first FEI coordinator was appointed in Wales, and Forest School Leader BTEC training was funded by the Forestry Commission. It was taken up by environmental educators, outdoor educators, craftspeople, conservation teams, play workers, youth workers and teaching staff in

Wales in 2000 and 2001 and the Open College Network Level 3 training commenced in 2003, prior to the Foundation Phase. This diversity of trainee backgrounds has contributed to how FS in Wales has been appropriated from preschool forest kindergarten model as practiced in Scandinavia, to a bespoke programme for all ages and abilities, using Forest School as an approach to meet the needs of the learners. However, with the introduction of the Foundation Phase in Wales, the skills of these early Forest School leaders and FEI members contributed to delivery of training for early childhood practitioners across several education authorities in Wales (Fearn, et al., 2018).

The FS leader training covers a range of skillsets from practical skills, conservation, play and pedagogy, reflecting the UK-specific approach. Inspired by educational theorists in the same vein as the Foundation Phase curriculum, Forest School training refers to Montessori, Vygotsky, Fröebel, Piaget, the MacMillan sisters, Steiner and Isaacs as models of child-centred pedagogy upon which to base practice (Knight, 2009; OLW, 2015). Additionally, the training also covers woodland management and conservation, practical skills, policies and procedures. These elements blend practice with pedagogy; for example, the application of learning theories such as the Zone of Proximal Development in order to support and extend the child's competencies and skills and Montessori's approach to child-size, but real, woodworking tools (Knight, 2009; 2011b). The training also includes theories of exploratory play and use of loose parts, which has been shaped by the adventure play and play scheme provision (Dowdell, et al., 2011).

The range of units in the training and the range of learners for whom it is aimed has contributed to Forest School being widely regarded as a philosophy or 'ethos' (FSA, 2018; FSW, n.d.). The ethos is expressed within the Principles of Forest School (FS), which have been articulated as follows:

1. FS is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session. [This is to differentiate its provision from other outdoor learning experiences which may be one-off].
2. FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
3. FS uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
4. FS aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
5. FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.

6. FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners<sup>4</sup> who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice (FSA, 2018).

The qualification is not a teaching certificate, nor does it require a teaching certificate to train, although increasingly teachers and teaching assistants are undertaking the training (Leather, 2018). The prerequisite for undertaking the leader training is either a teaching qualification, outdoor education, play or youth work qualification or *similar* experience of working with children beyond Level 2 (NRW, 2015). Certainly, even as FS could provide an appropriate alternative environment for learners disempowered and disaffected by formal education, the same was true for leaders who had had such experiences of formal education. As McCree's (2014) study of Forest School practitioners found, some Forest School leaders may have had negative experiences of school themselves, which they describe as prompting their interest in alternative forms of education. Many claim what McCree (2014) calls 'eco-social identities' (p. 158), working as environmental activists or conservationists, and the Forest School ethos resonated with how they want to engage co-constructively with children in the outdoors.

In addition to teaching professionals and the Forestry Commission Wales education team, many of the first Forest School leaders trained in Wales were those with 'eco-social identities' (Fearn, et al., 2018). These trainees, who lived in intentional, ecological communities or on smallholdings practicing permaculture, already had practical skills from living on the land with ecological intentions and the philosophical approach of *friluftsliv* (Gelter, 2000), and/or more radical ecocentric values and social movements e.g., Norwegian ecophilosopher Arne Naess's Deep Ecology, spiritual ecology, ecoanarchism and Bookchin's social ecology (see Pepper, 1999; Rekers-Power, 2007; Sutton, 2004). These ecosophies may have shaped delivery and the development of Forest School by independent practitioners in particular (Fearn, et al., 2018). Similarly, trainees and trustees who had play work backgrounds also contributed to the early practice and training delivered in Wales (ibid.). A membership organisation, Forest School Wales (FSW), was established in 2000, which recognised and promoted the diverse backgrounds of its members (FSW, n.d.)

In Wales, the Foundation Phase Framework was rolled out simultaneously with the launch of the Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) Framework, which was intended 'to become an overarching theme for education in Wales' (DCELLS, 2008, p. 5). With the introduction of these Frameworks, Forest School leaders were well-placed to work with local education authorities by providing Forest School sessions, as well as delivering in-set training to 'upskill' teaching staff in both sustainability education and outdoor learning and play. Additionally, due to the inclusion of the concept of emotional intelligence to address challenging behaviour in the leader training and early studies claiming that Forest School impacted positively on children's self-esteem and self-confidence (O'Brien and Murray, 2006, 2007), using FS to support

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<sup>4</sup> The Level 3 qualification was initially entitled Forest School Practitioner, and is now Forest School Leader; the labels often are used interchangeably.

learners' emotional literacy and well-being was delivered as an integral part of outdoor learning training for teaching staff by many training organisations (Fearn et al., 2018).

Several studies and evaluations, often funded by the Forestry Commission, centred on these initial projects in Wales within the context of the Foundation Phase; they have been influential in linking Forest Schools to the early years curriculum, leading to an increasing number of early years teaching staff undertaking the training. Key evaluations of the practice in relation to the early years support its alignment with early years pedagogy, although its provision is not driven solely by early years curriculum (Davis and Waite, 2005; Hughes and Jenner, 2006; Murray, 2003; O'Brien and Murray, 2006, 2007; Maynard, 2007; Davis and Waite, 2005; Lovell, 2009; Massey, 2004; Cook, Velmans and Haughton, 2012). Studies which considered play opportunities for children in Forest School suggest that child-initiated, imaginative, and appropriately risky play is a critical feature of Forest School contributing to its benefits for children (Ridgers, Knowles and Sayers, 2012; Davis and Waite, 2005).

Crucially, Waite et al. (2009) note that in their comparative observations of both the classroom and outdoor setting that 'being outdoors seems to interrupt the usual power relationships to encourage less adult-directed activity' (p. 9). This has been attributed more recently, by Waite et al. (2013), to the 'ambiguity surrounding discourses of teaching' in the outdoors, which 'allows for more playful child-initiated learning' (p. 256). This study contributes to this theoretical conversation about teacher/learner relationships influenced by holistic pedagogical approaches, which Waite et al. (2013) argue creates a valuable learning space 'less dense with the culture and power of schooling' (p. 256). Research by Waters (2011) also demonstrates that being in a non-teacher directed outdoor setting, in which 'children's activity was valued over any pre-planned teacher-led activity', contributed to an increased number of child-initiated interactions between children and adults (Waters and Bateman, 2015, p. 265). As Waters' (2011) work and that of Coates and Pimlott-Wilson (2019) demonstrates, Forest School provision guided by an approach of play-pedagogy provides meaningful learning experiences, thus supporting the Foundation Phase's expectations of learning through playful activity.

However, Bilton and Waters (2016) assert that while much research has considered the benefits of outdoor learning provision, there has been less inquiry into the aims and values underpinning outdoor educational opportunities, in regard to practitioners' responding to theoretical discourse or curricular aims. Although Forest School has grown in the UK as a response to demands of early years practice (Cree and McCree, 2013), the FS principles do not have specific obligations to the curriculum, except in the sense of holistic development and related concepts, such as well-being. Yet, teachers and teaching staff with the FS qualification may utilise Forest School as a way to support the curricular demands of the classroom, or they may be pressured by their school to deliver the curriculum through or at Forest School, thus impacting upon the nature of provision (Waite, 2013). While teaching staff who undertake the training are encouraged to focus

on child-initiated activity rather than curricular outcomes, McCree (2014) argues that FS is susceptible to an ambiguous 'identity' as it is 'adapted by the inherent subjectivities, values and attitudes within the context of practice' (p. 18). The crux of the ambiguity may stem from the potential juxtaposition of values between those employed in mainstream education working toward specific outcomes and those who focus only on Forest School provision, as an alternative approach to mainstream education (Kraftl, 2015; Harris, 2017).

Kraftl (2015) suggests that the 'positioning of "alternatives" relative to the "mainstream" varies' (p. 223). Forest School is a programme that was intended to be alternative to mainstream provision even whilst supporting mainstream expectations; yet, how alternative it is in practice is constrained by both the practitioner's understanding, previous experience of outdoor leadership and the context within which it is practiced, including the features of the site and the pedagogical approach. With its broad requirements for undertaking the training, there may be more diverse influences shaping practice than in a traditional early childhood institution, e.g., therapeutic play, bushcraft orientation, or environmental education. According to a study undertaken by Waite, Bølling and Bentsen (2016) the four principal aims for Forest School practice, according to the practitioners who responded to their inquiry, are the development of the following:

1. Self-confidence and self-esteem;
2. Behavioural, social, emotional wellbeing;
3. Physical health;
4. Awareness and respect for the natural environment.

These aims, guiding practice rather than specific curricular outcomes, contributed to Waite, Bølling and Bentsen's (2016) conclusion that opportunities for child-led and child-initiated exploration were predominant characteristics of Forest School. These aims are more reflective of the Danish approach to early years provision (Sandseter, 2014) than those in the UK that still have a focus on 'key skills' or academic foundations. Without a focus on developing specific academic skills, in practice FS may reflect what Kraftl (2015) calls a 'reconfiguring' (p. 227) of the socio-material institution and the agency of the actors therein. A shift of power relations from top down to bottom up occurs, in which the formal hierarchal relationships inherent in schools is turned upside down, particularly when practiced away from school grounds.

Additionally, although Forest School does not always take place in a woodland, the Six Principles (FSA) assert that it – perhaps idealistically – 'takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world'. In practice, this can be reflective of an early years approach that considers the environment as the 'third teacher' (Strong-Wilson and Ellis, 2009), in addition to parents and teachers. While a conceptualisation of FS as an 'ethos' (Knight, 2011a; O'Brien and Murray, 2007) suggests the intention of practice may be more important than the physical setting, Forest School taking place in a wooded environment

with more affordances for 'retreating' and 'hiding', 'rough and tumble' and other forms of play (Dowdell, et al., 2011) may shape the nature of provision. Several studies demonstrate the importance of the outdoor environment, yet also assert that it is critical that the leaders also subvert some of the constraints upon their practice in order to both enable and engage in playful pedagogies in order to make the most of the opportunities provided by the outdoor space (Leather, 2018; Waite, et al., 2013).

Therefore, the fluidity of Forest School as an institution may afford similar or dissimilar affordances for participation than the classroom, depending upon the practitioner's understanding of outdoor play (Maynard and Waters, 2007). Certainly, while research has demonstrated that outdoor learning can have positive impact on children's participation (e.g., Waller, 2014; Waite et al., 2013), it can be dependent upon the understandings and agenda of the adult (Maynard and Waters, 2007) or the institutional practice tradition. 'Institutional activities and projects carry values embedded in the historical traditions of the institutional practices which translate into social expectations that persons orient themselves towards and are evaluated against by others' (Winther-Lindqvist, 2012, p. 129).

While this may not be dissimilar to the indoor classroom, Forest School is not regulated by inspections nor are there outcomes to be assessed which would alert a leader to a problem in delivery. Of course, adult agendas may be either individually-based (attitudes toward or understanding of the outdoors) or culturally perceived or realised (policy and curricular constraints). Literature exploring the cultural perceptions of using the outdoors demonstrate that curriculum, government agendas and other external pressures, or perceived pressures, can impact upon provision, as well as the attitudes and lack of training and confidence of individuals (Mackinder, 2015; Bilton and Waters, 2017).

While findings assert that the outdoor space gives children more freedom to explore, to be loud, to be less controlled by adults, and able to play for longer periods without adult interference (Tovey, 2007; Waite and Davis, 2007), Waller (2014) found that when staff ratios were lowered due to funding cuts children were less likely to be allowed to have free play and activities became more structured. Importantly, Waller's (2014) research also highlights the conflict between policy and its intentions and actual funding streams, which can impact on pedagogy and practice, both inside the classroom and in outdoor provision. As budgets become increasingly tighter, Forest School provision off site may become increasingly less likely and ratios affected, which may impact upon pedagogical practice, in particular the notions of playful exploration and 'adaptable choice' (King and Howard, 2016). This lends a new perspective to research which argues that teaching staff's fearfulness toward risk can result in more control in the outdoor setting (e.g., Gill, 2007); in fact, increased control may be related to a pragmatic, rather than fearful, approach toward risk and children's welfare when child-adult ratios do not support children's choices of outdoor activities or play types. Therefore, although, Waite et al., (2013) assert that 'outdoor spaces lend themselves to the study of how children naturally interact as they are less dominated by adult agendas' (p. 260), Maynard and Waters

(2007) found that adult agendas continue to inform outdoor learning, thus missing ‘an opportunity’ for children to fully experience the outdoor setting *on their own terms*.

While a Forest School programme may be considered in some settings as a supportive tool providing an outdoor extension of the classroom for delivering Foundation Phase aims, in this study Forest School is considered an institution in its own right, especially as it is delivered by an external organisation, which allows scrutiny into its potential to be a pedagogical space independent of classroom demands. The aim of the study is to consider the children’s participation in and across each institution in order to explore the affordances of each for children’s participation and children’s developing motive orientation in relationship with the values and expectations observed in both settings. This objective contributes to the body of Forest School literature by undertaking research grounded in cultural-historical theory to critically address increasingly taken-for-granted benefits or Romantic notions of outdoor provision (Goodenough et al., 2015).

Values typified by Forest School, according to research findings, include opportunities for physical exploration and risky play (Austin, et al., 2013; Kyttä 2003; Tovey, 2007; Waite and Davis, 2007; Waller, 2014); democratic principles, including the rights of the child and participatory opportunities (Waters, 2014; Waite, et.al. 2013; Norðdahl and Einarsdóttir, 2014; Aasen et al., 2009); and inclusion (Pavey, 2006; Knight, 2011a). While it may be expected that these values would permeate all Forest School practice, Leather (2018) argues that ‘the rapid growth of Forest School in the UK is cause for concern’ (p.3). He argues that the qualification does not necessarily equate to practitioners understanding deeply the concepts surrounding working with children in the outdoors, let alone the Scandinavian philosophy of *friluftsliv*, which he argues is ‘lost in translation’ to the UK (Ibid., p. 2). In this study, the participants include leaders who are immersed in Forest School as their only employment; therefore, it provides less likelihood of juxtaposed value systems as may be the case for Forest School leaders whose practice may be shaped by the expectations of their employment in formal school settings.

### **2.3 Participation: terms of engagement**

By exploring the children’s interactivity with the socio-material ‘space’ (Massey 2005), this study considers the artefacts, modes of communication and social interactions that are ‘legitimated in different spaces, and what is enabled to flow and move across these spaces’ (Jewitt, 2008, p. 262). Such inquiry focuses upon meaning making as participatory in social situations, in which opportunities may be promoted and constrained (Kono 2009; Shotter and Lock, 2012). Also, Shotter and Lock (2012) argue that ‘people are attuned to their environments differently’ (p. 69), which affects how they perceive the affordances, or potential opportunities, of the world around them and which shapes their action. Thus, individuals ‘act transformatively’ on the affordances using multiple modes of participation (Kress, 1997, p. 19; Martin and Evaldsson, 2012).

Participation is central to the values of The Foundation Phase Framework, which sits within Welsh Government's overarching approach to education and lifelong learning, articulated in the *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* (WG, 2013). This approach is influenced by the international agreement to protect the human rights of children from birth to age 18, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989/2010). *Building a Brighter Future: Early Years and Childcare Plan* emphasises the aims to put the rights of child at the heart of policy and practice and to reduce inequalities (WG, 2013).

The rights of the child extends to provision for education, play, and opportunities to voice their opinions (UN, 1989/2010). This conceptualises participation as being inclusive, both physically and vocally. While understanding how physical spaces may be inclusive, vocal spaces are less conceptualised and therefore may be less supported (e.g., Flewitt, 2003, 2005) with bodily expressions of communication even less so (e.g., Åmot and Ytterhus, 2014).

This data collection in this study was informed by an understanding of the multiple ways in which individuals and institutions express themselves. Multimodality recognises the process inherent in communication, whereby socio-material institutions use conceptual, material and symbolic tools to shape practice; these in turn shape the child's experience of the classroom. Jewitt (2008) argues that '[s]tudents (as they are socially situated and constrained) make meanings by selecting from, adapting, and remaking the range of representational and communicational resources (including physical, cognitive, and social resources) available to them in the classroom' (p. 263). For example, in the Multimodal Production of School English project, Kress et al., (2005) undertook ethnographic case studies of English classrooms in three inner London schools. Using interviews, observations and video recordings, as well as text produced and used in the classroom by pupils and teachers, the researchers found that written text, verbal language, body language, gaze, intonation, as well as the way in which the room was designed and 'decorated', all shaped the ways in which students participate in the classroom.

Using an ecological affordance perspective for analysis, as will be discussed further in Chapter 3, the study considers both the affordances for participation in the institutions and the ways in which children appropriate these affordances. Affordances of the environment are defined by Gibson (1979/2015) as 'what [the environment] *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill...' (p. 127). In addition to material or physical affordances, Gibson also refers to the 'rich and complex' affordances of social interactions, e.g., 'predatory, nurturing, fighting, playing cooperating and communicating' (Ibid., p. 128). These social affordances are perceived in different ways by individuals, and their affordances also promoted or constrained within institutional practice, depending on the value systems therein (e.g., Pellegrini, 2008; Golemiec et al., 2016).



Ensuring each child has a voice using a tool or mode of their choice and is included in interactive contexts contributes to democratic participation which is genuinely inclusive (Flewitt, 2005; Payler, 2005; Nind, Flewitt and Payler, 2011). The Foundation Phase has intentions within its commitment to children's rights, well-being, and active learning to provide a pedagogical space for children's active participation. Maynard, et al. (2010) argue that participatory practice which meet Foundation Phase aims results in greater pupil engagement at school and more respectful pupil-teacher relations. Yet, the discourse surrounding early years' education includes conceptualisations of children's and adults' relationships in terms of agency, rights and power suggests that, in practice, affordances for participation may be limited by staff perceptions of *control* (Bae, 2012; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 2007). Sandseter and Seland (2016) argue that participation in early childhood settings should include being allowed to have a say with peers *and* with adults. Such conceptualisation of participation in relation to adult-child interactions may be at odds with aims for socialising behaviour in the classroom, which potentially places responsibility for *keeping-self-control* with the child and *keeping control* with the adult.

A Vygotskian perspective views play as an opportunity for children to exert control and negotiate established power relationships and hierarchies by utilising the cultural resources available in play as tools for meaning making. Vygotsky (1967/2004) considered play to be the child's means of exploring herself in relation to others and to the environment by creatively appropriating the use of signs and tools, using the imagination to transform 'elements taken from reality' (p. 18). Wood (2013) also asserts that when children play, the agency enacted by children differs from forms of agency enacted in activities which are 'sanctioned by adults, or advocated within child-centred discourses' (p. 7). This troubles the notion of accepted participation in the classroom, which may be understood as a formal or structured practice.

Participation within an institutional context such as school may be promoted in order to practice democratic participation within an adult-supported space, such as student councils in which children's opinions are actively sought and in which children engage in listening to others' points of view. However, the early years may be excluded from these primary school opportunities (Merriman et al., 2014); and, even if opportunities exist, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) argue that within early years pedagogy, participation must go beyond this formal and controlled practice. Within the pedagogic traditions upon which the FP draws, such as those practiced by Reggio Emilia preschools (Maynard et al., 2013), children's voices are recognised as integral to provision and the way in which children are supported and assessed (Ibid.). In the Reggio Emilia context, for example, participation is so central to the pedagogy that the phrase 'child-centred' is rarely used, according to Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999, p. 59); indeed, the child is included in a socio-material community which is comprised of resources, parents, teaching staff and children, who are actively and equally participating and engaged. In doing so, children's views are taken seriously, acted upon and genuinely considered (Rinaldi, 2012).

Children's engagement and participation in reciprocity with institutional practice is an ongoing dialectical process (Fleer and Hedegaard, 2010; Hedegaard, 2009, 2014). In order to study a child's participation, an understanding of the perspective of the institution and its demands, values and traditions, as well as an understanding of the child's perspective and what motivates and engages them in their activities is necessary to form a whole picture of the social situation (Hedegaard, 2009).

## 2.4 Conclusion

The Foundation Phase Framework in Wales calls for experiential learning and opportunities for play. It also acknowledges the importance of opportunities for children to learn and play in the outdoors as part of the reception year experience. Both the Foundation Phase classroom and the Forest School as institutions are guided by principles that aim to support children's participation in a range of learning and play activities, both adult-led and child-initiated. Socio-material practices, values and demands, however, shape children's participation in both the classroom and at Forest School. This study addresses a gap in the literature by considering not only what activities children participate in, but how they participate and how that participation is shaped by the institutional practices of the classroom and Forest School. Waters (2017) argues that 'the act of perceiving an affordance of an object (or a space for interaction) is always socio-culturally mediated' (p. 48); this study questions the mechanisms whereby this mediation occurs and what that means for the individual's self-experiencing of educational spaces.

In order to do so, the study highlights moments of conflict, in which the child's means of participation may be arguing, negotiating, denying the participation of others, and other forms of participation which may be considered oppositional, disputational (Wegerif and Mercer, 1996) or negative (Reed, 2017). The study of conflict between children's participation and the expectations for participation in classroom and Forest School activities provides an opportunity to interpret activity from the child's perspective in relation to the organisational practices of institutions (e.g., Maynard, 1985; Hedegaard, 2008a). Institutional values, expectations and demands create different social situations of development for children. The study also addresses a gap in the literature, by exploring children's participation across institutional practices of *both* school and Forest School. This creates an opportunity to 'ground' (Waite, 2013, p. 413) the study in a theoretical and analytical framing of children's socio-material activity across early years institutions, in order to be critical rather than 'evangelical' (Ibid.) in studying the outdoor provision particularly. The theoretical and analytical approaches are presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical underpinnings, which have informed the study, the articulation of the research questions and the analytical approach. Cultural historical, activity theory (hereafter referred to as CH/AT) provides a theoretical space for analysing the child's participation in collective activities, motivated by shared or individual purpose, mediated by multimodal tools and artefacts toward a goal or outcome. These activities take place in relationship with socio-cultural values, demands and expectations, including customs for social organisation and roles. As a theoretical framework, it allows the researcher to explore the child's experience of engaging in activities in reciprocity with social others and the material and physical environment.

The roots of CH/AT lie in the work of Vygotsky, Luria and Leontiev, whose work was shaped by intellectual and Cultural Revolution in Russia (Engeström, 1999). As a theoretical tradition, it has been developed and refined through a current lineage of international theorists exploring the concepts in relation to their own cultural histories and social situations in workplace and educational organisations (Engeström, 1999; Arievidtch and Stetsenko, 2010). While there are many strands and theorists working within CH/AT, this study's foundations rest primarily on the work of Hedegaard (2008, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2018) and Bang (2008, 2009). Hedegaard (2018) has developed a *whole child approach* to consider how institutional practices and demands mediate children's learning and development, focusing upon the child's motive development as a function of the individual's active integrating of cultural value systems.

Hedegaard (2014) states that in CH/AT 'the relation between the subject's motives as she engages in an activity and the demands and the objectives of the practice in which the activity is located is seen as a mediated relation. This mediation is usually conceptualized as an educational process where tools, artifacts<sup>5</sup> and procedures in all their variations are important mediators' (p. 189). The institution is considered herein as the assemblage of material artefacts, established tools, physical features, social others and the ethos/values and objectives which comprise organised sociocultural practice, located within specific cultural spaces, such as the family, the school, childcare. In English, the term 'institution' is less commonly used to refer to less formal, and seemingly less regulated, organisations, such as family life or an outdoor play provision; however, Hedegaard's use of the term creates a critical lens through which to view the socio-material environment, taking into account the significance of established – and expected – practices therein that are culturally and historically shaped. Similarly, the word 'environment' when used in this

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<sup>5</sup> The dissertation uses the British spelling of *artefact* throughout, unless the word is used in quotations by someone using the North American spelling, *artifact*. I have chosen to leave these spellings as they are in the original reference, rather than use [sic].

study is not intended to only mean an external place outdoors, but rather the social and material space of activity.

This study addresses the gap in CH/AT research in the UK, by introducing Forest School practice as an *institution*, albeit a relatively new and establishing one. It also addresses a gap in the literature, explored in Chapter 2, by using a CH/AT approach to study the socio-material affordances of the reception year classroom or outdoor learning, and Forest School in particular. Additionally, existing research that has used affordance theory has not been used to consider both social and material affordances and their connections to the experience of the child from the child's perspective. Thus, theoretical understandings from the fields of CH/AT, as well as ecological and environmental psychology, have been used by Bang (2008, 2009) to create an analytical framework of environmental affordances. This is further developed in this study to consider the child's everyday activity in relationship with the outdoor spaces, as well indoor spaces, available to children in institutional practice in order to interpret the child's participation in collective practices.

Therefore, the first section of this chapter focuses upon the study's CH/AT foundations to discuss conceptualisations of activity, conflict and motive development. Section 3.2 introduces theoretical concepts from ecological perceptual psychology, including affordance theory, which is increasingly used in research in outdoor play and learning in particular (eg. Sandseter, 2009; Waters, 2011). Section 3.3 considers how affordance theory and the concept of activity settings are layered to inform the analytical frameworks, as suggested by Bang (2008, 2009), in order to consider the child's participation and developing sense of self in relation to the institutional practices of the classroom and the Forest School.

### **3.2 A cultural-historical, activity-based perspective of children's learning and development**

Theoretical perspectives influenced by Piaget and Vygotsky have contributed to an understanding of how children 'arrive at knowledge of the world through activity' (Tudge and Rogoff, 1989, p. 33). The influence of both biological, constructivist (most often attributed to Piaget) and sociocultural (commonly associated with Vygotsky) theories have influenced early years pedagogy, including the provision for play as a learning activity for young children (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009a). These two theoretical streams are reflected in both the Foundation Phase Framework and Forest School ethos (Knight, 2009). These theorists recognised that the individual both actively engages with the world and is impacted upon by the world in a continuous reciprocal relationship. However, Vygotsky asserted that while stages of development may be biologically informed, the *origins* of cognitive development are found in the social processes and dialectical relationships situated in institutional practice (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch and Tulviste, 1998; Fler and Veresov, 2018). Vygotsky (1978) argued that the individual actively moves from primary biological functions to cognitive ones, as developmental progression is co-

constructed with the use of culturally acquired artefacts and tools, such as language (Vygotsky and Luria, 1994), within object and goal-oriented activities (Leontiev, 1978). Therefore, even when it is asserted that children are *self*-directed in their playful activity, there is still social construction shaping the physical and pedagogical spaces within which they are playing, the interaction and *intra*-action (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) of resources, artefacts, tools and social others within those spaces. From this perspective, the social situation of development is not just a *factor* of development, but an interactive *force*, in which tools, artefacts and relationships are all socially, culturally and historically situated (Rogoff et al., 1993; Vadeboncouer, 2017). Chaiklin (2012) argues that activity as a concept 'can explain the process by which psychological capabilities are formed', in contrast to a mechanist or behaviourist view in which environmental features are regarded as stimuli which cause a reaction, thus being the 'source of action' (p. 214).

Fleer (2010) points out that Vygotsky (1998) contributes greatly to our understandings of learning and development by presenting a theory that 'focused on a holistic model of development that include the dialectical relations between psychological, biological and cultural dimensions as noted through motives, cognitions and the social situation of development' (p. 165). This dialectical approach studies the contradictions, 'connections, movement and development' between 'complex interrelationships' rather than reducing analysis to 'isolated elements' (Dafermos, 2015, p. 17). As such, social and material interactions are viewed as dynamic and dialectical joint activities, leading to an intersubjectivity between actors and socio-material environments in which all are transformed (Fenwick et al., 2011; Fleer and Veresov, 2018; Mahn and John-Steiner 2002; Stetsenko, 2004).

The role of mediation through use of tools, both physical and technological, symbolic and psychological is critical in empowering the individual to move toward self-regulation and self-control in activity (Daniels, 2005; Engeström, 1999). This mediation for changing and directing activity is considered to be the primary resource for humans to transform their world and the world around them, as individuals within collective cultural and historical practices (Vygotsky 1978). Leontiev (1978, 1981) built upon Vygotsky's work by developing further the concept of motive-oriented and goal-directed collective activity. In doing so, Leontiev expanded the unit of psychological analysis from the individual to the cultural activity (Engeström, 1999), to include operations, specific actions, conditions and features of the environment, which contribute to motive-directed behaviour (object) oriented toward a goal or outcome.

Individuals take part or 'engage in activity in order to satisfy a need' (Göncü et al., 1999, p. 154); these needs are transformed into motives when the need is met, thus transferring the object of activity into that which begins to drive the activity. The object of activity incorporates both purpose and focus for the subject (individual) and may be both subjective and objective; tool use enables the subject to fulfil the object in order to reach particular outcomes. The individual is also part of a collective social world; part of the socialisation process is taking on or developing the motive orientations of the institution

activity system and cultural practices that support goal-directed and motive-oriented activity. Göncü et al. (1999) write: 'Participation enables the individual to learn how to use the tools of the culture, which is necessary to accomplish an activity as well as to appropriate the skills necessary to function in the society' (p. 155). Collective activities, such as *circle time* in the reception year classroom and at Forest School, are activities which have become institutionalised, transforming the activity into a cultural tool itself for meeting the object of the activity system (Cole and Engeström, 1993 cited in Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). The classroom is a 'classic example' of activity theory 'at work', suggests Reed (2008, p. 188).

Thus, every activity is culturally and historically situated as well. Leontiev (1978) stated that 'society produces the activity of the individuals forming it' (p. 7), referring to this dialectical relationship between the individual, motive-driven behaviour and the socio-material environment. This conceptualisation of activity as a developmental process thereby asserts that the individual develops as an active participant in socially-constructed circumstances.

Therefore, institutions, culturally and historically formed, have particular values which guide their activity and correspond with demands, goals and motive orientations. In order to meet these demands, the child is expected to learn how to use the tools which guide activity and develop correlating motive-orientations. For instance, in school, there is an expectation that a child will begin to learn strategies to be able to read, and eventually use books to be able to access information. When the child begins to experience success looking at books and begins learning her letters and sounds and putting words together, thus realising the object or goal of the institutional activity, her emotional experience and her motive orientation develop in accordance with the motive orientation of institutional practice. She may begin to experience herself as a competent reader and receive positive feedback for doing/being so (Bang, 2009).

### **3.2.1 Practices, demands and motive orientation across institutions**

Hedegaard's cultural-historical wholeness theory of development model (Hedegaard, 2009a, 2009b) draws the researcher's attention to how the child develops across institutional practices, for example, going to school from home, then to after school club, all of which will have different structures, routines and activities (Figure 3.1). Significantly, each will also have specific values, expectations and demands. This is in keeping with Dreier's (2008) argument that learning within a social context, or *situated* learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), 'does not mean staying in the same place. Indeed, in social practice learners are moving, and these moves play a key role in their accomplishment of learning. The very course of learning processes is grounded in learners' movements in social practice' (p. 2). The everyday social practices of the institution, thus reflect as well as shape its values; over time these practices become cultural traditions.

For example, for some families, reading at bedtime together or watching cartoons on television may be usual bedtime practice while for others having a special bedtime routine may not be possible or valued. Thus, while the conceptual understanding of *bedtime*, as a time period (and as an activity setting, discussed in section 2.3) during which certain activities are undertaken prior to sleep, may be held in common in homes, specific routines and expectations will vary. For the child, the motive orientations of the family are learned as they participate in the activity of bedtime together over time, and as the parent and child come to an understanding of how bedtime will be practiced. The child's conceptualisation of what makes *bedtime* may then be challenged if she spends the night elsewhere, in a home with a different routine and different values. This challenge creates a learning opportunity to understand how to fit into other social routines and practices. Similarly, going from home to school may present challenges and conflicts as cultural expectations may vary. As an individual within a collective experience the child develops motive orientations in relation to their perspective of these practices (Hedegaard, 2012).

### 3.2.2 The role of crisis and conflict for transformative change

Together, conflicts as 'contradictions' and motives as 'internal movements' contribute to the child's development as they 'meet demands from different institutional practices in their everyday life, and these create different social situations' (Hedegaard, 2018, p.6). The child is continually meeting demands from the institutional practices encountered in everyday life, e.g., home, school, afterschool care. For Hedegaard, it is this point of contact between the child and the demands of the institutional practice that creates a dynamic social situation of development (Figure 3.1).

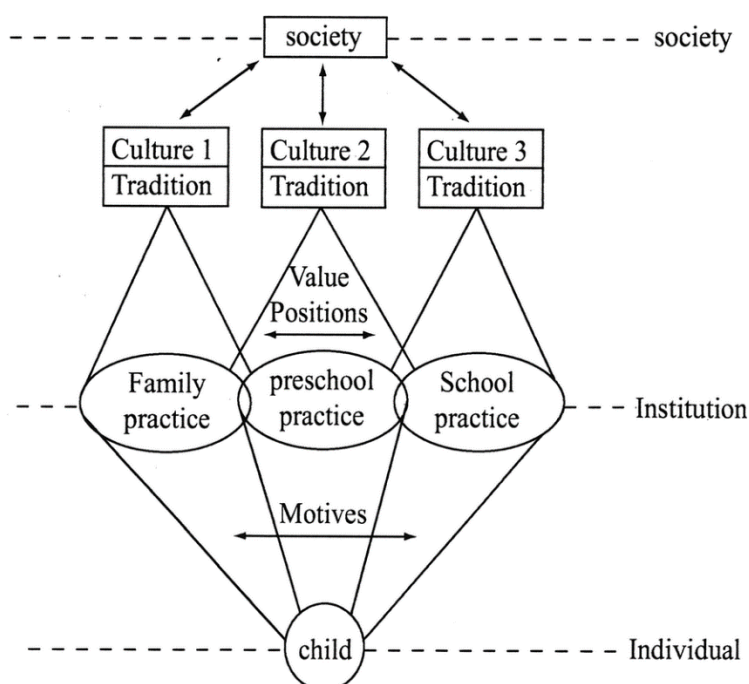


Figure 3.1 A model of children's learning and development through participation in institutional practice: societal, institutional, and individual perspectives' (Hedegaard, 2004; 2008a).

Hedegaard suggests that tensions, conflict and crises arise in transitions particularly, as children move between the demands of home and school, preschool to primary school, primary school and secondary school, and so on (Figure 3.1). She argues that transitions might be 'vertical', such as moving up a year in school according to age, or 'horizontal', such as the child going from home to school to afterschool care.

Transitions, crisis and conflict are all considered pivotal to the social situation of development as the individual participates in collective activities, as Vygotsky (1998) states:

Critical periods alternate with stable periods and are turning points in development, once again confirming that the development of the child is a dialectical process in which a transition from one state to another is accomplished not along an evolutionary, but along a revolutionary, path (Vygotsky, 1998, p. 193).

Vygotsky here is referring to how conflicts between the individual and the social environment in which the individual is participating can trigger changes within the individual as s/he meets new demands. The individual's existing motive orientation may be observed in the moments of conflict as the individual meets the cultural practices and demands of institutions (Hedegaard, 2012, 2018; Medina and Martinez, 2012). Over time the individual develops new motive orientations by participating in activities and accepting, appropriating, negotiating or challenging those expectations which characterise the institutional practice.

Dafermos (2015) asserts that Vygotsky considered such challenges to the individual within their environment as the basis for creativity and transformation:

Challenging the concept of adaptation, Vygotsky proposed the idea of creative, future oriented activity, that "...makes the human being a creature oriented toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his own present" (Vygostky, 1978, p. 9). The concept of adaptation is oriented to actual, present forms of human being, while dialectical understanding of development emphasizes human potentialities, creating the future and transforming the present forms of human being. The development of the range of human potentialities through co-creation of meanings within social practice may be considered as an essential dimension of cultural historical theory (Dafermos, 2015, p. 21).

This conceptualisation of conflict as a moment of intersection between individuals' motive orientations and between an individual and an institution demonstrates two central tenants of cultural historical theory relevant to this study: one, that the child is an active agent, experiencing and participating in institutional practice on multiple levels in the moment, and two, that these moments of intersection have the potential to contribute to the child's life trajectory. Bang (2009) offers the terms *small novelty* and *great novelty* to conceptualise 'the relations between potentials for development embedded into the activity setting and the developmental movements going on over a



longer span of time' (p. 163). Small novelty refers to the child's participation in 'the ongoing flow of everyday activities' in which they may 'find new ways of viewing things or of appropriating new environmental properties and things (artefacts)' and in which they may interact with social others in novel ways (Ibid.). Great novelty refers to how the patterns of these moments of small novelty develop over time as the child's 'activities across different settings in her ongoing life' unfold (Bang, 2009, p. 163).

Within this study, events that have been identified by conflict either between peers, between child and practice or adult, are considered trigger events for analysis. In doing so, the aim is to consider how the child participates as an agentic individual in relation to the motive-orientation and demands of social others and the institutional expectations.

Winther-Lindqvist (2009) has adapted Kindermann and Skinner's (1992) developmental transition model between individuals and institutions with developmental goals to demonstrate how the individual develops in reciprocity with the practices of the institution (Figure 3.2).

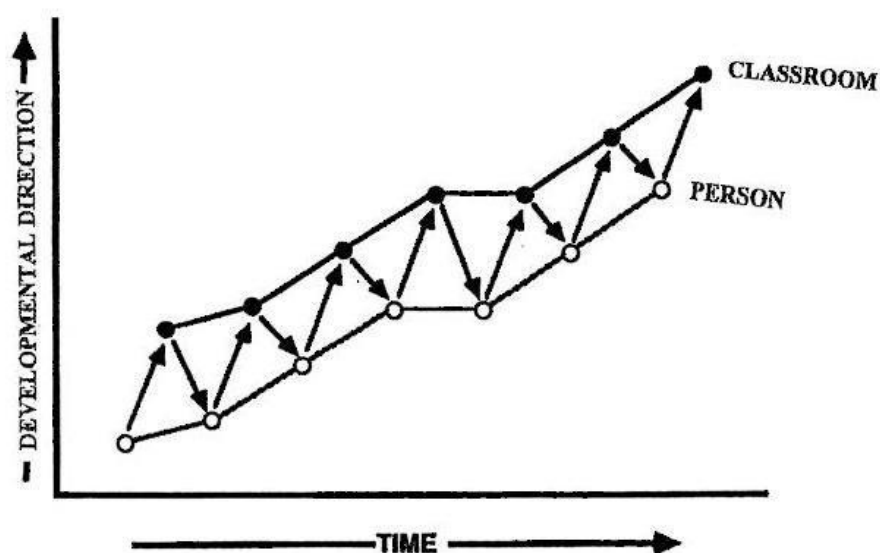


Figure 3.2 Transactional developmental model (Winther-Lindqvist, 2009)

Kindermann and Skinner (1992) initially developed their model in response to incomplete interpretations of an ecological perspective which do not allow for proximal processes of reciprocity, i.e., models in which the child is shown developing within contextual systems which are not *also* influenced by the individual. Instead, they argue that the individual is changed *as is* the environment within reciprocal relationships, and the environment is oriented toward the mutual developmental goals. Thus, this model may be used to demonstrate how the developmental goals of institutions that have nurturing agendas are attuned to life trajectory outcomes of the persons therein.

However, Winther-Lindqvist (2009) argues that this is an 'idealised' model in which it appears that there is a relationship of equitable influence between the child and the

classroom practice, where both appear oriented toward the same developmental goal(s) (p. 20). In reality, the child is expected to conform to the standard of practice much more so than the practice is expected to adapt to the child, and the child may not always be focused on the goals of the classroom practice. In such instances, the graph might be adjusted to display wider gaps between the child and classroom, or less pronounced arrows, indicating a decreased proximity of relationship if, for instance, the child may be less focused on the goals of the classroom or the object of activity and more focused on activities outside of school. Or, the classroom may be less oriented toward the individual needs of the pupil. This apparent misalignment of motive orientation of the student and the institutional practice can result in conflict, which shapes the child's participation, experiences, developmental pathways and life trajectories (Hedgaard, 2008a).

### **3.2.3 Children's agency, participation and subjectivity**

How the child participates within institutional practice provides a glimpse into the mechanisms of the child-environment reciprocity and dialectical connections which contribute to the child's experience. Considering means and multiple modes of participation is critical in that it demonstrates the individual's experience from their perspective within collective practice and how an individual remains individualistic even within cultural, collective activity. Participating in practices within the same institution(s) will be unique for each child. Vygotsky (1994) asserted that even children within the same family will perceive the same experiences differently, which he attributed to *perezhevanie*, the emotional experience or the direct perceptual, dialectical intersubjective experience within the child in relation to the unfolding events in which they participate. He defines this as 'how a child becomes aware of, interprets, [and] emotionally relates to a certain event' (Vygotsky, 1994, p. 341). This experiencing of events, particularly recurring activities with specific demands and expectations, such as those within institutions such as the home or the school, become the child's 'subjective experience' (Zittoun, 2016, p. 3), the 'culmination' of individual participation in purposeful, collective, culturally-mediated, social activity (Arievitch and Stetsenko, 2010, p. 70).

The concept of subjectivity provides an understanding of how the individual may develop over time in relation to their perception of meeting institutional demands and expectations:

'the experienced first-person-givenness of a person (Zahavi, 2008); it has to do with the experience of the self as a source of experiences, intentions, orientations, actions and change. During the life-course, subjectivity, as a feeling of "me" as a person, may change over time in accordance with the person's life narratives. In subjectivity, there is the freedom to make choices, to resist, and to make changes; in other words, "subjectivity" grasps the principle autonomy in any living organism' (Pedersen, 2015, p. 93).

Pedersen and Bang (2015) assert that subjectivity is impacted upon by 'subjectification' or 'the process through which a person meets', negotiates and appropriates standards (p. 4). These actions, or ways of meeting institutional standards, are how the individual demonstrates agency and individual freedom in the face of institutional constraints and possibilities. Pedersen and Bang (2015), in order to conceptualise the dialectical relationship between the demands and standards of institutional practice and the individual, acting with agency, propose the term 'subjectified subjectivity' (p. 5). They argue that standards are enculturated to the extent that they often 'go unnoticed (as invitations or constraints)' (Ibid.). In this study, to further explore how standards of institutional practice may be perceived, as well as how the child participates in relation to these, a consideration of affordance theory is applied to activity theory, following Bang (2008, 2009).

### **3.3 Environmental affordance perspective**

From the fields of ecological and environmental psychology, the concepts of *behaviour settings* and *affordance theory* are drawn, and are 'historicized' (Pedersen and Bang, 2016) by Hedegaard (2012) and Bang (2008, 2009) in order to analyse children's activity and participation as developing motive orientation and self-experience in relation to the affordances of institutions.

#### **3.3.1 Behaviour settings**

The concepts of behaviour settings and affordance theory stem from Lewin's field theory, in which the child's activities relate directly to the interactivity between the child and their social and physical environment (Hedegaard 2008a). Lewin's descriptions of the individual's engagement with their surroundings included concepts such as an object's *valences* - its functions and attractions. Lewin's focus was on the individual's personality development in relationship to these social and material structures, while his student Barker began to focus upon the activities in which children were engaged in institutional settings and looking for patterns in relationships between those settings and the behaviour that individuals exhibit in particular situations (Popov and Chompalov, 2012).

Barker and his colleague Wright (1951) theorised that the child participates in dynamic relationship with social and material encounters in their everyday activities, in patterns described as a psychological habitat or an ecological niche. '[A] niche refers more to how an animal lives than to where it lives. I suggest that a niche is a set of affordances' (Gibson, 2015, p. 120). For children in the study, the reception year classroom is an everyday *niche*. The provision of Forest School off-site in a local woodland expands that niche to encompass a larger community of human and non-human species, local woodland and Forest School staff, with a new set of social, material and elemental affordances not necessarily found in the classroom.

### 3.3.2 Affordance theory

Building on Gibson and Gibson's 1955 paper that considered the role of perception in learning within information- and resource- rich environments (Gibson and Pick, 2000), Gibson wrote *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems* (1966) to present a reconceptualization of 'stimulus' as 'obtained information' (Gibson, 1979/2015, p. 47). Rather than an object *stimulating* the animal into merely *responsive* action, as behaviourism proposed, the concept of obtaining information introduced the notion of the animal orienting itself, with its whole body and entire sensory system, toward the detection of information that is both specific to itself and to the environment that surrounds it. Gibson (1979/2015) proposed that stimulus-response mechanism applies only to receptors, such as the eye's retina; the eye itself is an organ which is activated by stimulus information. Plus, the eye is an organ that is 'set in a head that can turn, attached to a body that can move' (p. 47).

This shift in emphasis from stimulus-response to intentional activity introduces the conceptualisation of *field of view* as the animal orients itself to detecting information that it may perceive first with one sense organ, but soon uses the whole body to orient itself toward or away from (Gibson, 1979/2015, p. 104). The whole being becomes engaged when the animal begins locomotion toward or away from an object, continually perceiving and adjusting perception in response to it. Gibson and Pick (2000) write: 'Perceiving is our means of keeping in touch with the world, of obtaining information about the world and where we are in it' (p. 3).

In *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979/2015), Gibson analysed further what there is in the animal's environment to perceive: 'The medium, substances, surfaces, objects, places, and other animals have affordances for a given animal. They offer benefit or injury, life or death. This is why they need to be perceived' (p. 134). Thus, an affordance is 'located at the interface' between the environment and the animal (Gibson, 1979/2015, p. 129), in reference to both the properties of the object and the capabilities of the perceiver.

Heft (1988) states that affordance theory shifts our descriptive focus from *forms* (e.g., a tree) in the environment to *function* (e.g., climb-able): 'it attempts to describe environmental features in terms of their functional significance for an individual' (p. 29). These functions may be multiple in a way that form-based descriptions are not: a tree is always a tree, but its functions are multiple in relation to the perceiver. For example, it provides shade, shelter, climbing, and so on. Thus, affordances are not only perceptual but also relational between the individual and the environment.

From an affordance perspective, '[t]he possibilities of the environment and the way of life of the animal go together inseparably. The environment constrains what the animal can do, and the concept of a niche in ecology reflects this fact. Within limits, the human animal can alter the affordances of the environment but is still the creature of his or her situation' (Gibson, 1979/2015, p. 135). The work of Vygotsky, and others in the cultural-

historical tradition, contributes to conceptualising how an individual transforms affordances by using tools to mediate activity. So from an affordance perspective, a tree may not afford climbing for every child in a group, depending upon the child's size and/or capabilities. In order to be perceived as *climbable*, it needs to have branches that a child can reach (*reachable*) and grasp (*graspable*) as tools to help them accomplish their goal of *climbing*.

Also, the child who cannot reach a branch for help, thus limiting the affordance of the tree for climbing, may utilise mediation to differentially *create* that affordance. For instance, if the child asks for an adult to help them up, or drags a log over to stand upon to help reach the lowest branch, the child has negotiated the affordances of the tree climbing activity; mediated action in relation to the functional properties of the tree, and the child's motivated behaviour, create new possibilities for activity. This consideration of intentionality is critical for understanding why and how a child takes up an affordance; Heft (1989) asserts that the 'the affordances of an object are realized in relation to some intentional act in the individual's behavior<sup>6</sup> repertoire' (Heft, 1989, p. 21). This 'behavior repertoire' is reflective of the individual being a 'creature of his or her situation' (Gibson, 1979/2015, p. 135), or 'keeping-in-touch with the world' as a self-experience of perception:

Perceiving is an achievement of the individual, not an appearance in the theatre of his consciousness. It is a keeping-in-touch with the world, an experiencing of things rather than a having of experiences. It involves awareness-of instead of just awareness. It may be awareness of something in the environment or something in the observer or both at once, but there is no content of awareness independent of that of which one is aware.... Perceiving is a psychosomatic act, not of the mind or of the body but of a living observer...The continuous act of perceiving involves the co-perceiving of the self. At least, that is one way to put it (Gibson, 1979/2015, pp. 228-229).

### 3.3.3 Activity setting

The problem with viewing activity from solely a perspective of behaviour settings and sets of affordances, from a cultural-historical point of view, is that theorisation of the socio-material mediation which *drive* the activity therein is absent. '[P]eople respond to what they find in the environment [*affordances*] in the context of a historical, socially and culturally constructed form of social (inter)action' (Holland et al., 1998, p. 39). The application of activity theory to the concept of behaviour setting builds upon this conceptualisation of patterns of behaviour by trying to understand the mechanisms behind participation in socio-material environments: the motive and the mediation through which the individual participates.

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<sup>6</sup> The word *behaviour* is spelled within citations as used in the text, i.e., American English spelling *behavior* is kept if originally used.

Therefore, the concept of an activity setting (Bang, 2009; Farver, 1999) is a theoretical approach grounded in both cultural-historical, activity theory (Leontiev, 1981; Wersch, 1985) and ecological psychology, specifically the notion of behaviour settings (Barker and Wright, 1951; Barker, 1968; Heft, 1988) and affordance theory (Gibson, 1979/2015). Using activity setting as an approach to analysis creates the potential for studying the 'child-in-context' (Farver, 1999, p. 100). Bang (2009) uses the term activity setting to refer to 'that which is *immediately present* (the present present) and directly available to a perceiving agent with that which is historically and culturally present (the absent present) to a perceiving agent' (p. 161, emphasis in original). Within an activity setting the dialectical relationship between the information perceived directly by the individual and the mediation of that information by individual in reciprocity with the socio-material environment may be observed.

An activity setting is not the institution in which the activity takes place (a physical/material understanding of setting as *place*), but the ongoing *event* itself that is reoccurring within institutions, such as bedtime in the home, or the circle time or assembly that starts a school day. The activity setting includes the physical structures and artefacts of the space as well as the social actors and their participation in the activity. Participation by individuals is central to the concept, in order to understand the dialectical relationship between the individual and collective practices, and ways in which that reciprocity shapes both institution and the individual.

Chawla and Heft (2002) argue that the physical and social affordances available to children contribute to their development of competencies. Gibson's affordance theory has been used to explore children's interactive experiences in the outdoors, concerning child-initiated communication (Waters, 2011); qualities, such as loose parts, that stimulate playful experiences (Fjørtoft, 2004; Waters and Maynard, 2010); characteristics of physical features that support appropriate risky play (Sandseter, 2009); and physical activity (Bjørngen, 2016; Storli and Hagen, 2010). However, recent research calls upon sociocultural understandings of affordances and behaviour settings (Heft, 2018; Waters, 2017), in order to consider affordances for participation from the child's perspective. Bang's (2008, 2009) environmental affordance perspective, which draws upon Heft's and Gibson's work, provides a much-needed activity-based framework for explicating how to do so methodologically and analytically.

### **3.4 An environmental affordance perspective**

Gibson (1979/2015) presents the child's experience in the following way:

The child becomes aware of the world by looking around and looking at, by listening, feeling, smelling, and tasting, but then she begins to be made aware of the world as well. She is shown things, and told things, and given models and pictures of things, and then instruments and tools and books, and finally rules and short cuts for finding out more things. Toys, pictures, and words are aids to

perceiving, provided by parents and teachers. They transmit to the next generation the tricks of the human trade... [However] they are not in themselves knowledge... all they can do is facilitate knowing by the young (p. 246).

Gibson (1979/2015) states that he has not developed this consideration of mediated activity, but argues that there are 'three obvious ways to facilitate knowing, to aid perceiving, or to extend the limits of comprehension: the use of instruments, the use of verbal descriptions, and the use of pictures' (p. 247). First, the perception; then, the mediation.

Bang (2008, 2009), expands upon this by applying CH/AT to affordance theory in order to consider the motive orientations of both the individual and the institutions within which affordances are perceived. To do so, she suggests exploring 'what kind of artefacts are available and utilized in the classroom, when they are pulled into activities and with what purpose, how that contributes to the ongoing activities, the child's participation, their experiences, etc.' (Bang, 2009, p. 169). Significantly, this framework looks at how the individual *experiences* the act of participating in activity settings as developing motive orientation in relationship with that of others in collective practice. For example, Bang (2009) suggests that reading itself is not a 'neutral cognitive skill' (p. 169); instead, the act of reading is a means of appropriating 'more of his or her world with the help of the book as an artefact and herself as an interested and exploring reader' (Ibid.). The act of reading allows the reader 'to experience the affordance of books. In this sense, reading expands the child's world and self-perception. These generals are always embedded into particular activities and serve as examples of the immediate-mediate dialectics' (Bang, 2009, p. 169).

Bang (2009), therefore, calls for a perspective which embraces the mediated or 'the absent present', along with the immediate or 'the present present' in activity settings (p. 166). In this way, Bang's use of affordances may be viewed through Kytta's (2003) conceptualisation of affordances as socioculturally afforded, constrained and/or promoted (Figure 3.3)

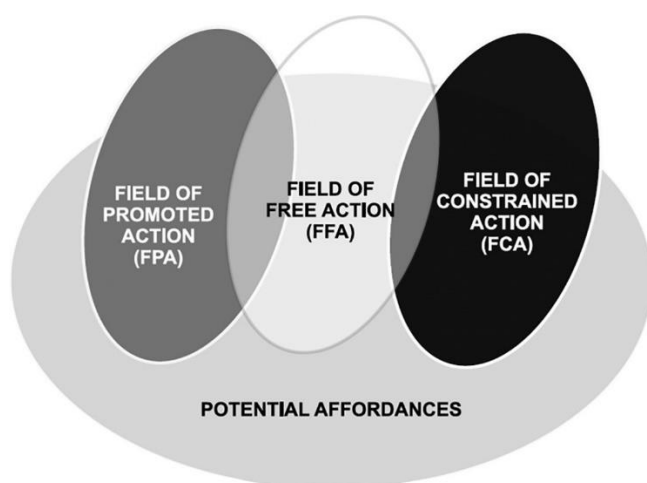


Figure 3.3 A schematic of the environment as potential affordances (Kytta, 2003)

Drawing upon work by Loveland (1991) on socioculturally preferred affordances and Reed's (1993) field of promoted action, Kyttä (2003) presents a model of how social and cultural regulations can impact upon the affordances which are actualised, whilst recognising that 'the actualization and non-actualization of affordances are connected to the intentional activity of an agent' (p. 51). She argues 'the utilisation of affordances can be promoted [Field of Promoted Action] or restricted [Field of Constrained Action], or the individual may utilise affordances regardless of social rules [Field of Free Action]' (Kyttä, 2003, p. 81). Potential affordances are those which exist for the individual in relation to the individual's ability to access it, e.g., size, skills. The Field of Free Action (FFA) consists of affordances that have not only been perceived, but have also been utilised and shaped by the participants themselves (Kyttä, 2003, p. 55). In this sense, the FFA may be considered a space in which an individual's own motive orientation leads her to reject, negotiate or challenge the motive orientation of the institution or social others.

Bang (2009)'s framework contributes to interpreting how and why the child might actualise certain affordances by considering what the affordances are, not only of artefacts, but social others and, importantly, the *self*-affordances:

From a cultural-historical perspective, availability and affordances transcend the immediately perceived physical properties of an object... cultural artefacts, social others, and the child herself affords activities, only those affordances are historically, culturally and personally developed and include the reified intentions of other people (who are not present in a particular activity setting) as well as the personal history of the child herself (Bang, 2009, p. 166).

By considering the actualised affordances that include the self-experience of the child, the framework I develop in this study, based upon Bang's work, enables the researcher to consider the individual in activity in relation to the actualisation of affordances that Kyttä suggests. In particular, it allows consideration of the child's perspective and developing motives in relation to the standards of the practice within which the activity sits. Rietveld et al. (2013) claim that individuals are selectively responsive to one affordance rather than another; they are motivated by the situation. This transcends a dualism between non-mediated perception and sociocultural selection; it implies that both are at work in the notion of activity setting. The conceptual framework I have developed to use in this study, therefore, seeks to surface the affording of things, social others and self-experience in the child's activity in relation to the intentions of institutions (Figure 3.4).



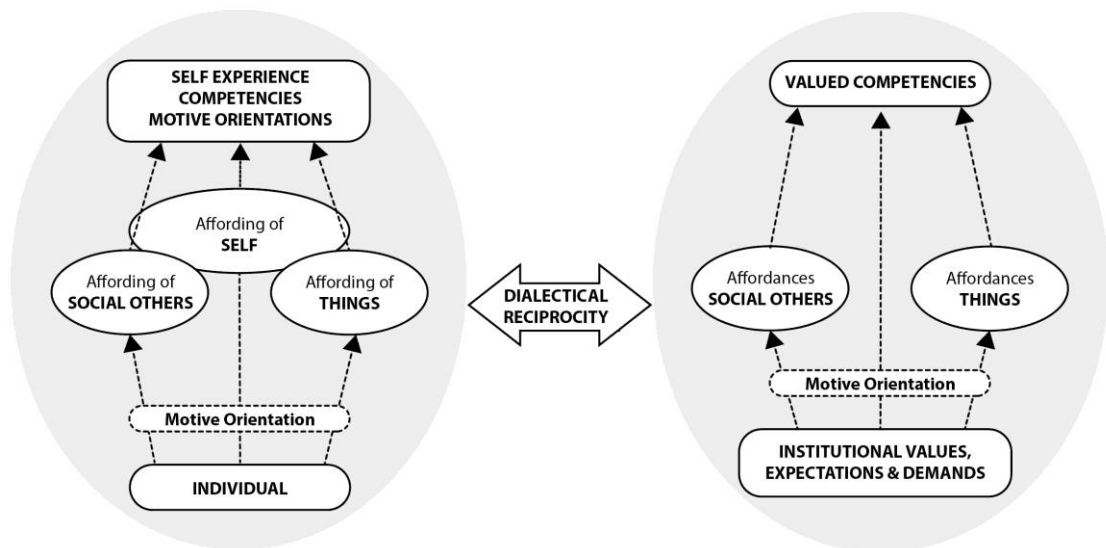


Figure 3.4 An environmental affordance perspective of children's participation in activity settings within institutions

### 3.4.1 Affordances of artefacts and things

The following section considers the terminology of the affordances of artefacts and its ontology in the analytical framework. Gibson (1979/2015) uses the term *features* to describe those things in the physical environment such as slopes and banks, *substances* include mud and water, and *objects* for loose materials, such as sticks, which may be transformed into *tools* once the affordance of grasping has been actualised. However, Gibson asserts that a tool becomes an extension of the human body when it is in use and 'thus no longer a part of the environment of the user' (Gibson, 1979/2015, p. 35). This directs our attention to the socio-material assemblage of objects and subjects.

In their study of a boy's daily activity, Barker and Wright (1955) described the boy's interactions with both things and people as: "crate-as-attractive-place-to-play, Stewart-as-possible-playmate-in-crate, crate-as-moveable-with-great-effort" (cited in Heft, 1988, p. 31). Heft (1988) draws from Barker and Wright, as well as Hart's *Children's Experience of Place* (1979) and Moore's *Childhood's Domain* (1986), all of which analysed children's outdoor exploration and play, to create a 'functional taxonomy of children's outdoor environments' (p. 36). This taxonomy described the relationship between the surface and feature and the affordances that are possible if one's abilities correspond to the affordance, i.e., 'a flat, relatively smooth surface: affords walking, running; affords cycling, skating, skateboarding' (Heft, 1988, p. 36).

Bang (2008, 2009) has adopted this taxonomy of surfaces and features, using the term *things* (2008) as Heft does; however, in 2009 she uses the term *artefacts*, to indicate the cultural-historical significance of *things* appropriated by institutions as *artefacts*. In doing so, the researcher may consider how culturally reified objects are appropriated by

children in their everyday activities in institutions. This echoes Stetsenko and Arievitch (2002) who agree that ‘cultural tools are not merely static “things” but embodiments of certain ways of acting in human communities’ (p. 87). Similarly, Cole (1999) describes an artefact as:

a material object that has been modified by human beings as a means of regulating their interactions with the world and each other. Artifacts carry within them successful adaptations of an earlier time (in the life of the individual who made them or in earlier generations) and, in this sense, combine the ideal and the material, such that in coming to adopt the artifacts provided by their culture, human beings simultaneously adopt the symbolic resources they embody (p. 90).

However, Ingold (2012) argues for an understanding of materials that are not just incomplete objects ‘awaiting the mark of an external force like culture or history for their completion’ (pp. 434-435). In other words, *things* are not the same as *artefacts*, although a thing may be an artefact and an artefact is also a thing. Stetsenko (2009) believes that Vygotsky was attempting to formulate a unified theory of human development in which the whole of the individual cannot be separated from the whole of his/her environment in any aspect. However, the material aspects of the environment traditionally have been viewed in CH/AT as the means by which humans transform environments. Vygotskian and Post-Vygotskian understandings are grounded in Marxist historical materialism (Daniels, 2008). In this perspective, there are two natures: the first is material or non-human nature untouched by humans and the second is human nature. The first nature, through capitalist production, becomes perceptively transformed into resources, thus viewing nature from a human-centred perspective.

Recently, however, post-humanist theories, including ‘common worlds’ pedagogy (Taylor, 2013; Taylor and Pacini-Ketabaw 2015), are challenging sociocultural perspectives as excluding the ‘more-than-human’ relations in the world. Proponents argue that in light of planetary crisis in the Anthropocene, early years research requires understandings of how human and non-human nature intra-act in a material turn (Lenz Taguchi, 2010). These theoretical positions are informed by feminist poststructuralist science, e.g., Haraway (1988) and Barad (2003). They differ from more mainstream sustainability and environmental education discourse by focusing upon the learning that takes place within the encounters between human and non-human nature through a lens that looks beyond human production and consumption to human/non-human inter/intra-activity. Similarly, Hultman and Lenz Taguchi (2010) argue that even post-structuralist perspectives centre around the human and discourse dominated by language as tool use, which fails to articulate the way in which children *intra*-act with materials and communication. They argue for a theoretical and methodological perspective which views the child from a perspective in which non-human ‘forces’ are recognised as ‘constitutive factors in children’s learning and becomings’ (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010, p. 537).

A material turn includes the assemblage (Fenwick and Landri, 2012) of bodies, space and materials. Tools, according to Gibson (2015), become an extension of the human body. A conceptualisation of assemblages extends this understanding to all affordances and their intraactivity. This study considers material interactions between bodies, objects, surfaces and space as potentialities for participation and transformative activity (Stetsenko, 2017). By using a CH/AT approach to study how children actively and creatively, rather than passively, participate in institutions, thereby transforming the social situation of development, it is possible to consider human-material inter-/intra-actions, even though the focus is upon the child's perspective. Fenwick et al., (2011) argue that in the process of education, 'people constantly influence and adjust to each other's emerging behaviours, ideas and intentions, as well as with objects, furniture, technologies, etc. through myriad complex interactions and fluctuations' (p. 7). Cultural-historical activity theory can be used to unpick the diverse threads of such assemblages.

Although perhaps limiting in its own way from a material turn perspective, in this study, I use Bang's 2008 term *things* (despite its imperfections and although using the word 'stuff' is tempting!) in order to create an analytical space to consider the elements, objects, features, surfaces and substances available both indoors and out, and to discuss their relationship to the child's participation.

### 3.4.2 Affordances of social others

In the same vein, use of the word *others* when discussing social intraactions is troubled from a materialism perspective. The assemblage of self and others is the intraaction that is analysed here; yet, use of the word *others* is an attempt to present what is perceived in the environment. So, too, is the *socio*-material environment is expanded if non-human nature as living things in the environment are conceptualised to have social affordances. For instance, trees and animals may have social properties, which may be actualised by children in the woodland or classroom. They, therefore, trouble the boundaries of *things* and *social others*. Humans also cross boundaries. Clark and Uzzell (2002) suggest that while humans directly perceive affordances in the physical environment, it is unclear whether Gibson saw other people as 'objects' or as 'mediators in the perceptual process' (p. 107). However, Gibson (1979/2015) says that he conceptualises humans as *both* objects and mediators: 'the other animal and the other person provide mutual and reciprocal affordances at extremely high levels of behavioral complexity. At the highest level, when vocalization becomes speech and manufactured displays become images, pictures, and writing, the affordances of human behaviour are staggering' (p 129).

Bang's (2008, 2009) analytical framework introduces the notion of the 'affording of social others', thus responding to this apparent tension queried by Clark and Uzzell (2002) by eliminating an either/or conceptualisation. In Bang's framework, *other* people are dialectically engaged with the individual, in intentional activity. Therefore, to interpret the 'interpersonal relations' in the activity setting, Bang (2009) suggests a '*double-perspective* on what social others afford relative to the child' (p. 172). Social others are both

perceived as objects in the sense of what they afford to the perceiver in relation to the perceiver, and in doing so, mediate the affordances of the institutional practice as 'representatives of the specific cultural practice' (Ibid., p. 173). So, the teacher might afford *being listened to/listening to*, simultaneously expressing the demands of the institution practice (a phenomenal affordance) and the agency of the child (Ibid.). A peer or an adult may also afford *hitting/being hit, hugging/being hugged* and other properties relative to the perceiver. Bang's approach to the affordance of self/self-experience enables consideration of how these properties may become 'subjective values' by introducing an affordance of self-experience, described below.

### 3.4.3 Affordances of self-experience

Vygotsky (1994b) states that the personal characteristics of the individual and the characteristics of the environment are 'represented in an emotional experience', and the emotional experience is 'unity of environmental and personal features' (pp. 342-343). He asserts that what is being experienced by/within the individual in the moment is related to what is happening outside the individual and

*on the other hand, what is represented is how I, myself, am experiencing this, i.e., all the personal characteristics and all the environmental characteristics are represented in an emotional experience [perzhivanie]; everything selected from the environment and all the factors which are related to our personality and are selected from the personality, all the features of its character, its constitutional elements, which are related to the event in question (p. 342, emphasis in original).*

Russell (2013) suggests that this theoretical perspective allows for a conceptualisation of the "self" as a process, a continual production arising from the interrelationship of body, mind and environment through collective, collaborative and contradictory activity. In this way, the self is something that subjects perform, rather than have' (p.87).

Bang's (2009) conceptualisation of the *affording of self-experience* contributes to how it is possible to explore the potential developmental and learning properties of an activity setting:

By arguing that potentials for developmental novelty are embedded into the child-environment reciprocity of the activity setting it also is argued that those potentials might be studied directly when interpreting the observational data. Studying potentials for development in an activity setting means studying forwards by focusing on potentialities rather than studying in retrospect by filling out gaps between sequences of micro-genetic studies (p. 163).

Applying cultural-historical theory to Gibson's affordance theory addresses how to utilise affordance theory to explore 'what characterizes human life' in particular, rather than the animal 'in general' as Gibson does (Pedersen and Bang, 2016, p. 732). In gathering together the threads of biological development and organism/environment functions

with historical and cultural formation, Pedersen and Bang (2016) propose that a dialectical-ecological understanding demonstrates how an ‘historicized’ affordance theory can be used to ‘offer a view of the variation in standards and expectations that persons encounter in their everyday lives’ (p. 734).

The demands and expectations of an activity setting contribute to the standardisation process, in which individuals come to know who they are in relation to the institutions within which they participate (Hedegaard, 2014; Pedersen and Bang, 2015; 2016). Standards, for Pedersen and Bang (2015) are a ‘hybrid between societally negotiated values and individual activity. It is socially shared and negotiated and social in the way that humans are social, namely in produced institutionalized, organized, and negotiated manners’ (p. 4). Bang’s framework provides a way to explore how the individual might participate in collective activity by rejecting, assimilating, challenging standards, thus demonstrating how the child experiences an idea of self in relation to the collective. The affordance of self-experience, for Bang (2009), is a ‘phenomenological double-ness of participation’, in which the child experiences her agency from a first person perspective as well as possible/available cultural positions from a third-person perspective (p. 176).

This conceptualisation of intention, motive orientation and agency allows for a dynamic way of observing children in their everyday activities, inclusive of the whole environment and activity. Importantly, this theoretical and analytical framework, although complex, allows for the exploration of complex inter/intrarelations. It also creates an opportunity to interpret how the child participates in relation to the functional properties of an environment, as well as the standards and expectations of the environment and to see what choices a child makes in relation to what choices are actively promoted or constrained in practice.

The environmental affordance perspective, thus, provides a way to conceptualise and interpret the dialectical relations between the individual and the socio-material environment as individual participation within collective activity comprised of social and material affordances. This perspective echoes the view of Marxist dialectical materialist view of human activity that Vygotsky proposed, as articulated by Stetsenko (2009):

According to this view, the evolutionary origins of humans have to do with an emergence of a unique relation to the world realized not through adaptation but through the social practice of human labor – the collaborative (and therefore sociocultural), transformative practice unfolding and expanding in history. Through this collaborative process (involving development and passing on, from generation to generation, the collective experiences reified in cultural tools, including language, people not only constantly transform and create their environment, they also create and constantly transform their very life, consequently changing themselves in fundamental ways while, in and through this process, becoming human and gaining self-knowledge and knowledge about the world. Therefore, human activity – material, practical, and always by necessity social, collaborative

processes aimed at transforming the world – is taken in CHAT [cultural historical activity theory] to be the basic form of human life, that is of human relation to the world (p. 137).

### 3.5 Conclusion

The framework of this study thus follows in a cultural-historical tradition of considering the child's active participation in socio-material, collective, activity-based practices. It also incorporates ecological and environmental affordance theory in order to create space within cultural-historical activity theory for what Hart (1977 cited in Moore and Young, 1978, p. 83) describes as the 'phenomenal landscape'. It is here, assert Moore and Young (1978), that:

A person lives simultaneously in three interdependent realms of experience: the physiological-psychological environment of body/mind; the sociological environment of interpersonal relations and cultural values; and physiographic landscape of spaces, objects, persons, and natural and built elements' (p. 83).

By basing the study upon such theoretical foundations, the reciprocity between the individual and the environment may be analysed by conceptualising the environment as a 'dynamic unit' (Bang, 2009, p. 161) of *things*, *social others*, and *self*. The analysis, thus layers activity theory with affordance theory to observe with what, with whom and how the child engages in activity settings. I have expanded upon Bang's articulation of institutional affordances, which only considers those affordances *promoted* by the institution, in order to present affordances that children actualise, regardless of their promotion or constraint (Kyttä, 2003), in order to expand the discussion to include what's *intended* to be available and what is *perceived* to be available from the child's perspective. Viewing actualised affordances that may not be in alignment with the intentions of the institution allows the observer to interpret the child's motive orientation and provides further insight into children's participation from their perspective, as the observation of conflict is a way in which to begin consideration of children's perspectives (Hedegaard, 2008a). By applying this to an alternative pedagogical space, such as Forest School, as well as the mainstream classroom, there is the potential to observe children's participation with a wide range of socio-material affordances.

The study, therefore, analyses how the child's engagement with the social and material environment contributes to the child's self-experience, as a participant in collective activity, mediated by the affordances and expectations of the institutions, thus shaping the situation of development. Bang (2008) argues that an environmental affordance approach allows an interpretation of how the child participates in the present (*being*) as well as potentialities for who the child is *becoming* as an individual participating in collective practice. This approach aligns with a 'whole child' approach to studying children, which, asserts Hedegaard (2009), considers the diverse conditions for children's development and their everyday activities by making visible societal perspectives and

traditions, institutional perspectives and practices, and the child's 'perspectives that include their engagements and motivations' (pp. 65). The following chapter presents the methodology, based upon this 'wholeness' approach to studying children (Hedegaard and Fler, 2008; Hedegaard, 2018).





## Chapter 4 Conducting the Study

### 4.1 Introduction

My doctoral study was funded by the Wales Centre for Equity in Education, the focus of which was the promotion of research and practice to reduce educational inequality (Egan and Swaffield, 2014). Two of its research and development interests included community partnerships in education and monitoring interventions. There was an existing interest in this particular school due to its demographic characteristics of multiple deprivations and it had been included in earlier research undertaken by the Centre.

Additionally, although there are other schools across Wales who run Forest School sessions, this study's focus school was in a unique position in that an external provider, a Forest School charity, had been running year-long, weekly Forest School sessions with the reception year class(es) for three years prior to the commencement of the study. The charity itself had been delivering long-term Forest School sessions consistently since its launch in 2001 and had a stable workforce of salaried employees. Therefore, the level of professional practice was quite established in the charity contributing to its potential for exploration as an institution (as previously discussed in Chapter 1). These factors influenced my decision to focus upon this community partnership, which was made possible due to charitable funding for schools with pupils considered disadvantaged. This situation enabled me to use a cultural-historical approach to explore activity within and across the classroom and the woodland settings as two institutions. Concentrating on one school and one Forest School in practice in an ethnographic approach presents a small sample size. However, the methodology chosen aims to collect, transcribe and interpret the fine details of everyday situations according to theoretical framing, which requires intense focus and scrutiny.

The study draws upon the cultural-historical tradition of making visible the 'dynamic layering' (Vianna and Stetsenko, 2006, p. 82) of sociocultural practices and individual participation which shapes the child's experience within an educational setting. Hedegaard and Fler (2008) argue that it is only by exploring the perspectives and practices of both the teacher and the child that the researcher is able to understand the social situation of a child's development (p. 3). Furthermore, the researcher's own motives and goals are an integral aspect of the qualitative fieldwork and research process (ibid.). This dialectical-interactive view of research is the foundation of the methodology used in this study, based upon Hedegaard and Fler (2008). This study was also guided by a belief in children's inherent competence as human beings with participatory rights (UNCRC, United Nations, 1989; Mashford-Scott and Church, 2011; Dockett et al., 2012; Alderson, 2014). The methodological approach I used started from an understanding of Article 12 in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: *Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.* These perspectives necessitate methodology and methods which capture the complexity

and context of interactions in the school and Forest School settings, within which meaning is co-created (Mercer, 2010; Silverman, 2001; Emond, 2005). Understandings of human rights also underpinned my commitment to ensuring that the children, their parents and the adult staff were as informed as possible about the nature of the study and what I was doing methodologically.

The study was exploratory in that the research questions which guided the study sought to explore both phenomena and possible interpretations of the data. A discussion of credibility commences the chapter, in order to introduce the relationships between the study's ontological and epistemological stance, my choice of methodological design, and the objective to undertake credible, authentic and ethical research. Following this, I discuss more fully the methodology, research design, methods used to gather data, data analysis procedures, and the ethical principles and procedures which underpin the study.

## 4.2 Credibility

This study is situated within an interpretive paradigm, in which the ontological perspective is that of 'relativism – local and specific constructed and co-constructed realities', the epistemological stance is transactional and subjectivist, and the methodology is dialectical and naturalistic (Guba and Lincoln, 2008, p. 257). Within such a paradigm, there are particular points of reference that characterise a study's quality. The conventional terms that are benchmarks of positivist and post positivist *rigour* such as internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity are replaced within a constructivist paradigm by concepts of trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity in relation to judging the quality of a study (Guba and Lincoln, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

Silverman (2001) supplies a checklist of 'critical questions' for evaluating research which is adapted from the British Sociological Association Medical Sociological Group and include explicit articulation of links between researcher's choices, the data collected and theoretical framework upon which the study is based (p. 222). These criteria are not in opposition to notions of validity, but define how validity is conceptualised in relation to the interpretive study. Kyale (1995, 1996) argues that while constructivism may 'reject the notion of a universal, objective truth', the concept of validity need not be rejected as well (cited in Sparkes, 2001, p. 543). Therefore, within this study, validity is conceptualised as a socially constructed notion in relation to specific discourses, localised cases, and for particular purpose (Sparkes, 2001; Guba and Lincoln, 2008). The criteria for credibility is no less rigorous than a quantitative study based upon positivist studies of prediction, control and measurable findings (Guba and Lincoln, 2008). Silverman (2001) argues that 'If qualitative research is to be judged by whether it produces valid knowledge, then we should properly ask highly critical questions about any piece of research...no less probing and critical than we ask about any quantitative research study' (p. 221). As this study is exploratory in nature with no hypothesis to systematically test, I conceptualise internal validity in terms of accuracy and credible representation of the

findings and particular episodes I describe and the interpretations of participant perspectives in relation to the theoretical and analytical frameworks presented in Chapter 3.

Maxwell (2002) argues that within qualitative research, the essence of validity is that there is an explicated relationship between the descriptive account and 'something outside of that account', e.g., the 'constructions of actors, or a variety of other possible interpretations' (p. 41). He states that rather than there being only one truth or even an objective account, as there may be in quantitative designs which aim to achieve consistent, comparative and 'valid' results, in qualitative studies there will always be a variety of perspectives, accounts, and interpretations (Ibid., pp. 41 – 43). In this study's analytical stages, findings are presented in such a way as to make the researcher's purpose and interpretations visible, following theoretical concepts. This is possible by utilising a methodological research design with specific articulated stages of interpretation, as well as an analytical approach, which documents interpretations in line with the theoretical framework. I have adopted Hedegaard and Fler's (2008) dialectical-interpretive methodological approach in order to gather data and present the findings in ways that 'distinguish between the researcher's project and motives and the motives and intentions of the participants' (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 44). My decision to utilise Hedegaard and Fler's (2008) dialectical-interpretive methodological design, which is discussed fully in the following section, is based upon its clarity and purpose in linking theoretical foundations with methodology, methods of data collection and interpretive analysis.

### **4.3 Methodology**

The study of a child 'over time in their everyday settings' can reveal the societal and institutional influences on development as well as how the child participates in their everyday world (Hedegaard, 2008a, p.46). In order to consider these and the pedagogical and theoretical underpinnings of the study as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, I sought to use a methodology that was naturalistic, exploratory, and took place over several months in order to gather as much contextual data as possible and to establish a 'research relationship' with the participants (Harcourt and Conroy, 2011, p. 41). The methodology I used also enabled me to consider both the affordances of the social and material world of the child's experience and the perspectives of the participants themselves. An ethnographic approach to methodology and method allowed for the complex layers of both children's and adults' actions and perspectives to be considered.

Traditionally, ethnography presents or describes the beliefs, values and practices people undertake in their daily lives 'to provide a description and interpretation of the culture and social structure of a group' (Robson, 2011a, p. 142). While ethnography is most often associated with the researcher living within a foreign or 'other' culture or subculture (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), its most distinguishing feature is 'the active role assigned to the cognitive modes of observing, watching, seeing' (Silverman, 2001, p. 111). The ethnographer necessarily becomes a participant observer in order to more fully describe

the 'shared cultural meanings' of a group (Robson, 2011a, p. 144). Although the goal is to try to understand the perspectives of others, Silverman (2001) warns that 'if ethnography reduces social life to the definitions of the participants, it becomes a purely "subjectivist" social science which loses sight of *social* phenomena. Instead the point is to narrow the focus to what people are *doing*' (p. 76, emphasis in original). Therefore, this study aims to provide descriptive, yet interpretative, analysis based upon the theoretical intersection of cultural-historical, activity theory and affordance theory, as discussed in Chapter 3.

### **Dialectical-interactive approach to ethnography**

Devised to investigate the interactions between the 'whole child' and her environment, as well as articulating and clarifying the researcher's position in the gathering and interpreting the data, Hedegaard and Fleer's (2008) approach builds upon the reflexivity of ethnography by articulating the interactive means of gathering data and the interpretive aspect of analysis. Qualitative methods were used to engage with the participants, clarify and describe the pedagogical practices of the settings, and observe the nature of multiple interactions in order to gather data.

Hedegaard and Fleer (2008) argue that a methodology designed to study 'children's development in everyday settings' must utilise methods which will capture 'children's motives, projects, intentional actions and interpretations' (p. 5). This method of inquiry allows the researcher to articulate a more complete or whole picture of a child's interactions with peers and adults in the institutional, cultural and social practices which shape the child's development (Winther-Lindqvist, 2012). Ødegaard (2015) argues that such a methodology 'can shed light on relationships between text and context, analytic work, transcription based on video analysis and field notes, the process of transcription and coding, and the researcher's understanding of this process; and, finally, on writing the account' (p. 2).

## **4.4 Research design**

The study was comprised of two stages: the pilot study (stage 1) and the main study (stage 2). The main study had 3 different phases. These components are explained here and detailed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

### **4.4.1 Stage 1: Pilot Study**

Stage 1 took place over four weeks in the summer term of 2016, following full ethical approval by the university. Its aims were to make contact with the gatekeepers, develop a working relationship with the teaching and Forest School staff, pilot the consent and assent procedures, and trial data collection methods, such as audio-visual recording and the use of GoPro cameras to gain access to a child's perspective. During this time, initial information about the pedagogy and practices of the settings was gathered.

Stage 1 consisted of the following:

- Meetings with school head teacher, director and board of trustees of the Forest School charity; introductory emails; Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate recorded with both institutions
- Observation of classroom practice, including the writing of field notes and audio-video recording of structured sessions and play time
- Observation of Forest School practice, field notes and audio-video recording
- Semi-structured interviews with teaching and Forest School staff
- Informal interviews with teaching and Forest School staff
- GoPro, iPhone and iPad use by children to record their play
- Piloting transcription of audio-visual recording
- Informal interviews with children including participatory methods
- Presentation of photos and video recordings to staff and children
- Presentation of video recording to Forest School staff
- Piloting transcription

Table 4-1 Corpus of data Stage 1 (Pilot Study)

Stage 1	# informal interviews with teaching and Forest School staff, <i>recorded in field notes afterwards</i>	# hours observation video/audio recording in the classroom and at Forest School. Including conversations with children while they worked/played, while we drew together, to pilot multiple-method data collection	# audio and audio/visual recorded semi-structured interviews with classroom and Forest School staff. <i>Transcribed afterwards</i>	# contact hours in each setting <i>observations recorded in field notes</i>	GoPro and iPad audio/visual recordings by children
	5	5 hours	3	18 hours classroom 18 hours in Forest School setting	2 hours FS 2 hours CR

Stage 1 contributed to my awareness of the potential vulnerability of the parents/carers and the children and the power relationships between the school and home. The consent forms for the pilot were handed out to the parents/guardians of the children by the teacher; those who did not return them were greeted at the classroom door at 'pick-up time' and asked to sign a new form which had their child's name already filled in by the teacher. The teacher introduced me and I spoke with some of the parents to tell them who I was and explain the research. I was grateful to the teacher for doing this; however, it made me aware that, in the main study, I would need to do more to ensure *informed* consent and to ensure that this was an ongoing process.

In the pilot, I trialled the use of GoPros and iPads by the children in order to enable the children's perspectives to be recorded and for the children to participate more fully in the research process (Christensen and James, 2017; Clark and Moss, 2001/2011; Einarsdottir, 2005). However, the resulting film footage that I obtained to transcribe did not generate data that would contribute to answering my research questions. While the footage from their filming provided me with a vantage point in some instances, it was an unreliable method in this case. Two primary factors prevented this method from working well for my particular study: first, the children played with the buttons on the cameras or took it off and gave it to someone else randomly, so that when I came to view the filming after the fieldwork each day, it was not always clear who had been filming or what was being filmed. Secondly, it provoked arguments over who got to use it and whose turn was next, and so on, which seemed an antithesis; because I had introduced the artefact that was instigating conflict, I felt I needed to stop observing and intervene. The use of iPads and iPhones by the children also changed the nature of the interactions: while it provided an interesting glimpse into what and whom the children filmed, this did not contribute to data in line with my research questions. Therefore, in the main study, I did not introduce cameras, iPhones or iPads for the children to use for data collection.

The pilot study also alerted me to the diversity of linguistic and cultural characteristics in the class. There were families who were learning English as an Additional Language, which shaped the sampling of the study and my understanding of context and the cultural complexities within the class. My interest began to focus more specifically on how social and cultural practices are reflected in children's activity across institutions; this impacted upon my purposeful sampling for the main study.

#### **4.4.2 Stage 2: Main Study**

Stage 2, the main study, commenced in December 2016, with fieldwork beginning in January 2017 and finishing at the end of summer term in July 2017, a time period of 7 months. The main study focused on the children within a single reception year class, comprised of thirty-six 4- and 5-year old children, with one teacher specifically trained in Early Years and three additional staff members. Stage 2 was comprised of the following:

- Meetings with parents

- Presentation to children and parents (beginning)
- Informal interviews
- Observations of classroom setting, including informal discussions with participants, audio-video recording, field notes
- Observations of Forest School setting, including informal discussions with participants, audio-video recording, field notes
- Semi-structured interviews
- Video-stimulated account interviews with children and adult staff members
- Presentation to parents and children and recorded interviews (end of term)
- Journey stick presentation and treats with children following MPhil transfer panel success

Stage 2 consisted of three phases. In the first phase, processes were undertaken for gathering informed consent from the adults and assent from the children. PowerPoint presentations were held: one with parents and one with children in class. The second phase focused on data collection by observation, interview and audio-visual recording, which lead to the gathering of the children's and the adults' perceptions of the activity and interaction. The final phase consisted of showing parents/carers, staff members and children a selection of the photographs and videos which had been taken over the course of the fieldwork as slide presentations and during interviews. This contributed to continuing the informed consent and assent process, the gathering of video-stimulated accounts as interviews, and provided feedback on the research process for me (Table 4.2). The methods used for data collection, the principles that guided the data collection, and the procedures that preceded and followed data collection, are discussed in the following two sections (Sections 4.4 and 4.5).

Table 4-2 Corpus of data for Stage 2 (Main Study)

# informal interviews <i>Fieldnotes taken immediately afterwards</i>	# formal interviews <i>Audio-recorded and transcribed afterwards</i>	# video-stimulated interviews <i>Audio or Audio-visually recorded and transcribed afterwards</i>	# hours of audio-visual recording from observations	# days of observation, producing photographs and written field notes as required
<p>7 informal interviews with classroom (CR) staff</p> <p>5 with Forest School (FS) staff</p> <p><i>2 with both FS and CR staff at Forest School sessions that were captured on audio-visual recording while we watched children playing at FS</i></p>	<p>3 formal, semi-structured interviews with CRT</p> <p>3 formal, semi-structured interviews with FS staff</p>	<p>2 with the classroom teacher</p> <p>10 with children</p> <p>3 with children and their parents</p> <p>1 with a parent of target child, without child being there</p> <p>2 with Forest School Leaders</p>	<p>3 hours of video-recorded observations in the classroom</p> <p>10 hours of video-recorded observations at Forest School</p> <p><i>(this difference is due to discrepancy in continuous activity between settings).</i></p>	<p>8 x ½ days in CR</p> <p>6 x full days in CR</p> <p>7 x ½ days in FS</p> <p>5 x full days in FS</p>



## **4.5 Gathering the data**

### **4.5.1 Research settings**

The study was undertaken in a primary school, in which over half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals, indicating challenging socio-economic circumstances (WG, 2015c). Nearly three-quarters of the pupils in the school have been identified as having additional learning needs (ALN), and more than half of the children in the reception year class have below expected baseline assessment scores for their age (Estyn, 2009). Based upon these indicators of multiple disadvantage, the Forest School programme, delivered by an external, local charity, had been funded for three years by several charitable organisations. The primary school is centrally located within an urban housing estate; however, a large 7600- acre woodland is located nearby. This is where the Forest School sessions take place one day a week over the course of the school year.

Half of the thirty-six children in the class attended Forest School on Wednesday mornings and the other half of the class stayed behind. Those who had Forest School in the morning returned to the school in time for lunch, the whole class had lunch together, then the other half of the class attended Forest School in the afternoon. I conducted fieldwork on a regular basis – usually 1.5 days/week – throughout the spring and summer terms (January to July). The Forest School days were especially useful as I was able to either stay at Forest School the whole day, or do a half a day there and half a day in the school. If I stayed the whole day at Forest School, I would attend either half a day or a whole day in the classroom the following day. This mixture of opportunity enabled me to observe children working as part of a whole class and in smaller, half of the class grouping. During the last months of term and of the field work, I spent more time in the school in order to undertake focused interviews and the video-stimulated interviews that were more easily conducted in the indoor space.

### **4.5.2 Ethical considerations and choosing participants**

The approach toward data collection that I used was based upon building respectful relationships with the participants, ensuring informed consent and assent, conducting extended fieldwork overtly, and seeking the perspectives of participants during all the stages of fieldwork. The head of the school, the director and trustees of the Forest School charity were the gatekeepers with whom I met to discuss the study, prior to the pilot study, again before the main study and following completion of fieldwork. They were interested in the idea of research being undertaken on their long-term project and offered their support and written consent without reservations, following my ethical approval from the university.

Conducting research with young children, however, raises critical ethical concern, even when gatekeepers give consent on behalf of the child. While adults may give consent following assurances that all participants have the right to privacy, confidentiality,

protection from harm, and the choice to withdraw at any time, children also have the right to decide *moment by moment* if they wish to participate and to be protected in their vulnerability to future impact. Alderson (2014) points out that ‘young children are most vulnerable to being exploited or labelled, and least able to defend themselves or to correct misreports’ (p. 94). The methodology that I used to undertake the study is based upon an approach that explicitly details the researcher’s participative and interpretive roles, is based upon the rights of the child, and is grounded in social and ethical responsibilities (Hedegaard and Fler, 2008, Fine et al., 2003).

Ethical guidelines as proposed by British Education Research Association (BERA) were considered at each stage of the study: ‘The underpinning aim of the guidelines is to enable educational researchers to weigh up all aspects of the process of conducting educational research within any given context ... and to reach an ethically acceptable position in which their actions are considered justifiable and sound’ (BERA, 2011, p. 4). Formal application for ethical approval was sought from the university at both the pilot study and the main study stages, and full ethical approval granted. Certainly, a primary aim of the pilot study was to determine in advance of the main study how to use a variety of methods ethically with young children, i.e., audio-visual recording; how to best ensure assent; and, how to gain informed consent from gatekeepers, including parents who may have limited literacy and/or English language reading/oracy skills. Consequently, the main study was underpinned by a commitment to ensuring voluntary participation and informed consent and assent.

### **Informed and on-going consent and assent**

Coady (2001) stresses: ‘The idea of informed consent is based on the ethical view that all humans have the right to autonomy, that is, the right to determine what is in their best interests’ (p. 65). ‘Best interests’ is significant here as participants need to be aware of potential risks and issues, some of which may not be anticipated by participants in the present moment, in order to agree in an informed manner. For instance, when participants agree to being filmed, do they really understand how often I would be combing through a recorded moment and picking out every word and gesture for months – and perhaps years – in the future? To begin with, I undertook an ethical risk assessment in order to apply for permission to do the study from my university. Following identification of risks, the controls of the risk assessment included safe storage of data and anonymity in potential publications and presentations. Christians (2003) argues that informed consent within social science research means participants ‘have the right to be informed of the nature and consequences of’ the research and that participation must be voluntary (p. 217).

Holding this ethical principle in mind, I approached participants with very clear intentions. I stated that I was a postgraduate student and explained what my aims were in carrying out the study. I tried to ensure that participants were aware that they were helping me to find out more about their experiences and ways of participating. Because I was a student,

the children in the classroom soon came to understand that they were helping me do my own schoolwork, contributing to our shared community of learning. One child even practiced writing the name of my 'teacher', *J-A-N-E*, at the top of my notebook, as well my name. Without their contributions, volunteering their play time to sit with me, and allowing me to film, watch and photograph them, I would not have been able to undertake the kind of study that I did. In the case of the parents, some said that they wanted to learn more about the Forest School project themselves, which the invitation to watch visual recordings offered them.

My viewpoints regarding consent and assent were influenced by my previous personal and professional experience, including child and vulnerable persons safeguarding training. Not only do children need to be allowed and supported in saying no to adults in positions of potential 'power over', but adults need to be able to do so as well, and feel safe and respected in doing so. Some of the parents may not have the capability or time to read the information and consent forms and fully understand what is being asked of them. Some adults may feel angered, intimidated or threatened by a researcher (even a student one) asking to study their or their children's lives, as if they are specimens or objects of interest. I was acutely aware that this school is often targeted by researchers due to its situation within an area of multiple deprivation. This can lead to what Fine (1994) refers to as 'the colonizing discourse of the "Other"' (Fine, 1994, p. 70 cited in Fine et al., 2003, p. 168). Fine et al. (2003) warn that the researcher needs to be reflexively aware, not only of their own subjectivities, but of the power inherent in their position to present, and to 're-present', the participants within their studies (p. 170). They explain that even ethical procedures can compromise the power relations between the researcher and the researched: 'Although the aim of informed consent is presumably to protect respondents, informing them of the possibility of harm in advance and inviting them to withdraw if they so desire, it also effectively releases the institution or funding agency from any liability and gives control of the research process to the researcher' (Fine et al., 2003, p. 177). This awareness of potential ethical shadows contributed to my providing participants and gatekeepers with timely, differentiated and multimodal opportunities to discuss the research with me.

To ensure ongoing informed consent from adults, my procedures were as follows:

*Gatekeeper consent:*

- Meetings held with Head Teacher, formal email with information letter sent, signed letter acquired
- Meeting held with Forest School charity's Director and Board of Trustees, formal email with information sent, signed letter acquired
- Follow up meetings in autumn term after fieldwork was completed
- Email address supplied

*Participant consent:*

- Meeting held with Classroom teacher/teaching staff, information letter given, signed letters of consent, email address supplied
- Meeting held with Forest School leaders / volunteers, information letter given, signed letters of consent
- Powerpoint slideshow at the beginning and end of spring term and at the end of summer term for children, parents and teaching staff of photos and videos taken during the fieldwork

*Parental consent:*

- Meeting at school pick up and drop off time, information letter given along with letters of consent
- Invitation to view film footage of Forest School sessions and classroom activities and ask questions
- University email address supplied; mobile phone number (only used for research) supplied.

In order to articulate my methodological approach to the study and how I would safeguard against any potential harm or vulnerability, such as identity being disclosed or any discomfort in the research process, I invited parents to an information meeting where I showed some videotaped episodes of Forest School that the teacher had taken.

The parents of five children came to the presentation prior to the commencement of fieldwork. Therefore, I chose these children to follow with the most focus, although I also was making wide-ranging observations during the fieldwork and did not narrow down the children who would provide the sample until the end of the first month of the fieldwork. Due to the nature of the class demographics, this sample of children had diverse characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, and first language. Additionally, some of the children in the sample group were labelled 'well-behaved' and others with 'challenging behaviour'. This variation allowed for a theoretically-specific interpretation of the concept of *conflict*, which was the criteria that I used to choose specific episodes for analysis. The children whose analytic episodes appear in this dissertation all have late winter/early spring birthdays in common, however. During the summer term, I communicated again with the parents as a group, via text messages and letters home, to remind them that they could withdraw their consent at any time. I also sent invitations to visit me, with or without their children, in the school on the observation days or after school and see the videos and the photographs that I had taken of their children. Five parents did so, and three returned at the end of the fieldwork period to be interviewed using videotaped episodes of their children at play in the forest and in the classroom.

All adults signed written consent forms for their own participation or for that of their children prior to the start of the study. Classroom and Forest School staff were also communicated with at regular intervals to ensure ongoing consent. I wanted to confirm

as much as possible that teaching assistants within the school setting and volunteers within the woodland setting all gave their consent without feeling pressure to do so.

When I initially approached the children, some declined without hesitation or conferring with friends: they reacted instantly with a yes or no response. Later, two children who had initially said no to being filmed changed their minds and asked to be filmed. I attribute this to two possibilities: they got to know me better, and they soon realised that if I was observing and filming they had attention from an audience, which was valuable in a class of thirty-six children. Also, giving ongoing assent allows for the children to change their minds or make a decision in the moment. Initial assent was undertaken by ticking the space next to their name on a poster board that I brought into the classroom; ongoing assent was indicated verbally or nonverbally using a thumbs up/thumbs down method or shaking/nodding of the head.

During the course of the study, the children seemed to become more aware of the research data collection methods and what role they were playing in contributing to my data collection, by allowing themselves to be filmed or interviewed. In order to contribute to their understanding of what I was doing, I showed them the filmed sequences and asked them questions about it. I then asked if I could use it in my study, thus giving them another opportunity for assent. This process occurred repeatedly, as the children would look at photos and videos on the screen of the camera in situ, and then again later in the photo and video dialogue sessions. Certainly, it is arguable whether or not any participant in a research project can really understand how the data might be used at a future time by the researcher; therefore, the responsibility of ethics of the data collection, analysis and presentation lies heavily with the researcher in both the present moment of the study and in the future. Below, I outline how I ensured assent at each stage of the research process.

#### **Assent:**

Legally, children are unable to give consent, although their legal guardians may offer consent on their behalf (Coady, 2001; Pellegrini, 2004). Therefore, following the gatekeeper's consent, the child's agreement to take part in the research is considered assent rather than legal consent. Seeking the child's assent is in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child, as well as the educational research community's codes of ethics (BERA, 2011). In order to ensure that the child had a voice within the research (Danby and Farrell, 2004) and to recognise the potential for inequality in power (Silverman, 2001; Bae, 2005) between the researcher and the children, several steps were taken to gain assent, particularly for the filming and photography. Although taking field notes and observations are just as intrusive and potentially unethical, using audio-visual equipment 'captures' participants in a way that is more 'permanent' and the use of which can be more overtly intrusive and upsetting.

Therefore, in order to confirm assent, I spoke in class to the children about my research. I explained how I would be observing them and their teachers and seeing how they played in the classroom and at Forest School, that I would be talking about it with other people and writing it down, and that I would be filming and using cameras, which I showed them. In the pilot study, I showed them the GoPros and iPads that I was using and explained that they could use them to film as well. I also told them that I wanted to find out more about their school and Forest School, and so sometimes I would conduct chats called interviews with them, if they wanted to, where we would be drawing or watching videos of them playing and that I would record these so that I could remember what we talked about later, and their parents could come as well to see their work.

I explained that they could help me if they wanted to, and if they did not want to, that was fine too. We then discussed ways in which they could participate or not participate, and ways they could communicate with me each time I came into the class or forest. I had a chart with all of their names on it, and they came forward one by one to mark a ✓ (tick) for yes, and an X for no next to their names, if they wanted to be involved, or to leave it blank if they wanted to think about it. One boy who marked X [no] during that first session, changed his mind later and started asking me to film him and his work. He became one of my sample group to focus upon, as he spoke English as an Additional Language, having been born in Eastern Europe. I was interested in how he experienced interactions with others in both the classroom and the woodland setting, having this characteristic of diversity. I explained that children could change their minds anytime by giving me a thumbs up or thumbs down, or other ways to indicate yes or no (we talked about ways we show “no”, i.e., shaking our heads from side to side or holding a hand up, palm facing out). In general, the children seemed used to being filmed by adults as their classroom teacher was often taking their pictures, asking them to pose with things they had made and taking video footage for later assessment and demonstrative purposes; but, they also appeared comfortable saying “no” to me.

After one term, I showed the class a slide show of photos and videos, and re-did the assent procedure. They all appeared very excited to see themselves on screen; by then, I was primarily focusing upon the specific children (presented in Chapter 6) for my data collection, although I took some whole group photographs and filmed other activities so that there would be some footage of everyone for an end of term presentation for the class (all parents had volunteered consent for their children to be photographed and filmed). Also, when filming, more children than just the five I focused upon were involved in the activities. Some children often asked me to film them doing something, which I obliged as much as I could or the classroom teacher would photograph them, as she was doing for her classroom records and display boards. A few children also wanted to use my camera, as well as using my notebooks (Figure 4.1). I brought in a spare camera and additional notebooks and pens for the children to use in their free play time. I, therefore, have a few photographs of me conducting research, which is an interesting reminder of how we as adults often expect children to do things that we do not particularly like or

want to do, i.e., in this case, pose for photos. I consider these photos to be a reminder of how saying yes, or assenting, is not as clear-cut as we may wish to interpret.



*Figure 4.1 'Turning the tables': filming the researcher*

Additionally, it was important to gain children's assent to film, but also to stand back while doing as much as possible to not interfere in the children's activity. By the end of the spring term, only one girl was repeatedly interested in using the camera, as well as continually seeking my attention and wanting me to film her and/or play with her (she was not a focus child). In order to oblige, I organised my time in the classroom and at Forest School in such a way that I could be free to spend a few moments following around or being led by this particular child and others who were not focus children. This seems to be responsive to an ethnographic approach, in that I was still able to observe a wide range of dynamics and interactions within the settings as a participant observer.

When undertaking video-recorded and video-stimulated interviews, children were asked if they wanted to come with me to the staff room to watch the videos and, while there, were asked if I could audio-visually record our interviews. Similarly, adults were also asked each time if they could be recorded and/or filmed. This was usually a very simple process of me saying, 'Do you mind if I record this using this camera?' The camera was then set on the table to record. This procedure conveyed to them that what they were saying was contributing to data collection, and was 'on the record', so to speak. They were also asked if they would like to see or hear what had been recorded.

Within the classroom, when I did informal interviews with the children, I was seated at one of the working tables with paper and felt-tip markers, and the children could choose to come to the table and speak with me during their 'free play' times. When they were seated at the table, I asked for permission to record and to use their drawings in my

research. Sometimes they chose to take their drawings home and I took photographs of the drawings instead.

Showing the photographs and video footage to adult staff members, gatekeepers and the children contributed to ongoing informed consent, ensured that they were aware of the potential risks and consequences, as well as providing me with feedback on the process. For instance, I was able to ask the children and the adults about the experience of being filmed, i.e., “Did you feel like you could stop being filmed when you wanted or that if you wanted me to film you, I would?” in order to ensure that I was not being intrusive and that I could reflect upon future data collection methods.

### **Deliberate methods and intentions for transparency**

The table below (Table 4.3) is influenced by Bae (2005) who asserts that in ethical research, the researcher needs to be transparent in her activities, including communication with participants, to articulate intentions for why one is undertaking a particular activity.



Table 4-3 Intentions behind research activities, adopted from Bae (2005)

<b>Stages of the Study</b>	<b>Date(s)</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Intention</b>
Pre-pilot study	May 2016	Preparation: phone calls, emails, and visits to school and Forest School office and setting	To meet the adult participants and the gatekeepers and to introduce myself and my research topic
	May 2016	Ethical approval from UWTSD	To obtain ethical approval and articulate potential ethical issues and their avoidance, undertake an ethical risk assessment
Pilot study fieldwork	June 2016	Preparation, visit to settings, observations without filming	To meet the children and parents, staff members and enable them to become familiar with me.  To trial consent and assent collection methods
	June – July 2016	Participant observation in which I was taking field notes, using video-camera and camera to record; working with children to use GoPros	To collect source material to pilot selection process, transcription and analysis.  To trial data collection methods
	June – July 2016	Interview (informal and formal) with adult staff	To collect source material and to communicate the focus of my research

Pilot study fieldwork	June – July 2016	Informal interviews with children using drawing and recording devices	To trial informal interviewing and mosaic methods of data collection with children
	July 2016	Video session – showing pupils, parents and staff the photographs and videos that were taken	To trial video stimulated methods, to make participants and parents aware of the nature of the filming, to contribute to assuring consent and assent in the main study
	July 2016	Showing teaching staff non-edited videos and photos, chosen by the researcher, as a structured VSRD session.	To contribute to the open dialogue between teaching staff and myself, to create an ‘atmosphere of trust’ (Bae, 2005, p. 286).
Pilot study analysis	July-August 2016	Piloting transcription and categorisation of data	
<b><i>Stages of the Study</i></b>	<b><i>Date(s)</i></b>	<b><i>Focus</i></b>	<b><i>Intention</i></b>
Main study	September 2016	Formal research proposal and ethical approval submitted to and accepted by university	To ensure full ethical approval by university
Main study Fieldwork	November and December 2016	Preparation, visit to school and Forest School settings, spending 2 days in the classroom and one day in the FS setting without audio-visual recording or photographs	For the pupils to become familiar with my presence, to reacquaint adult participants with my presence.
	January 2017	Information session for parents and children (using photographs from pilot study, as well as teacher’s photos of Forest School)	To gain informed consent and assent

	January 2017	Circle time with children (and teaching staff) in the classroom to talk about assent and strategies for declining being filmed or indicating wanting to be filmed (chart created with children and physical ('thumbs up/down'), and verbal techniques ("stop!", "no/ok", etc.)).	To gain informed assent and to contribute to children's understanding and methods of withdrawal at any time.  To become familiar with each child
	January – July 2017	Participant observation, using audio-visual methods of recording, taking photographs and field notes	To collect data for later selection and transcription
	January – July 2017	Interviews, informal, both structured and unstructured	To provide background information to be used in interpretation and analysis, to collect data for selection, transcription and interpretation
	April – July 2017	Video stimulated interviews with children, parents, and staff x 3 days	To get participants' viewpoints, to provide parents with feedback and clear accounting for the research filming process, to collect data for transcription and interpretation
	End of term (March) (July)	Video and photo slideshows for pupils as a group/class	To provide a 'show' for the students and staff at the end of the fieldwork/term for their pleasure
	July 2019	Story-stick session in class with pupils	To demonstrate to pupils that I am a student (being assessed!) too, to thank them for their participation and contribution, to celebrate with them my passing my MPhil transfer panel where I had presented a 'story stick' of my PhD journey thus far.

	May – July 2017	<p>Analysis within fieldwork and supplementing field notes</p> <p>Informal interviews with adult participants about specific events</p>	To get adults' views on particular episodes of transcribed video clips, (EAL TA) for translation
	January – September 2017	<p><i>Categorising audio-visual recordings</i> Upload and categorise audio-visual recordings to computer, coding according to activity, child, and setting.</p> <p><i>Writing field notes</i> Write up field notes immediately following each session in CR or FS either during session or immediately upon leaving the setting. To store and categorise accordingly.</p>	<p>To manage large quantity of audio-visual recording</p> <p>To undertake initial analysis</p> <p>To manage/analyse field notes for further inquiry.</p>
<p>Transcription of conflict events for analysis</p> <p>Analysis of conflict episodes using env. affordance approach</p>	<p>October 2017 – January 2018</p> <p>January 2018 – October 2018</p>	<p>Transcription of particular events of conflict for analysis, using Hedegaard and Fleer's (2008) interpretive approach for transcription</p> <p>Apply environmental affordance approach (Bang, 2008, 2009)</p>	<p>To manage extensive data collection by focusing on specific 'trigger' events</p> <p>To make visible the perspectives of participants and the researcher and indicate layers of analysis</p> <p>To focus upon conflict as an indicator of motive misalignment</p>

Writing findings and discussion chapters	July 2018 – October 2018	Articulating the findings in line with the theoretical framework and the research questions.	To articulate how the elements of the study come together to answer the research questions
Writing the Dissertation	November – February 2019	Attend Nativity Play at the school and spend an hour afterward with the original study class, who are with the same teacher in Year 2  Writing the dissertation as a whole by rewriting and streamlining previous chapters written in isolation	To continue a research-relationship with participants  To create and edit a coherent account of the research study

### **4.5.3 Methods used for data collection**

A researcher whose objective is ethnographic description of classroom activity needs to attend, capture and transcribe multilayered, multivoiced and chronotopic features of the system, in terms of how, by whom, mediated by what tools, and when and where actions are uttered and done. Aligned to and sometimes distinct from spoken and written discourse, movements, gestures and expressions play critical roles in signalling power struggles over agency. This evidence of counteraction may well offer innovative means by which teaching and learning processes need to change, and, most importantly, how collective action towards a shared objective might be repaired and regained (Reed, 2008, p. 204).

Qualitative data collection methods were chosen to reflect the complex and multimodal nature of interactions. Qualitative methods 'aim to reveal the nature, patterns, and quality' of interactions (Mercer, 2010, p. 6). Field notes, interviews, audio-visual recording and informal conversations all contributed to gathering data for analysis. One criteria for the evaluation of research proposed by Silverman (2001) is that methods of research are appropriate to the nature of the question(s) being asked (p. 222). Therefore, I have used methods which enabled me to explore the activities, motives and intentions of the participants closely and over an extended period of time in different activity settings.

#### **Participant observation**

Observational methods are used as a means to describe content and context of the activities and interactions in which participants engage (Tudge and Hogan, 2005; Silverman, 2001). 'When researchers observe a class or group of students working together, the interaction observed is located within a particular historical, institutional, and cultural context. Students and teachers have relationships with histories, which shape the fluid process of classroom interaction' (Mercer, 2010, p. 5). My methodological approach was also inter-relational in that it paid close attention to how children behaved and reacted to the actions of others and the physical environment (Tudge and Hogan, 2005). Dunn (2005) argues that naturalistic observations 'provide invaluable evidence on children's real-life experiences and their reaction to those experiences' (p. 87). Rather than systematic observation which is used to provide quantitative data on interactions for analysis (Mercer, 2010), this study used participative observation methods to provide qualitative data about children's experiences in both the classroom and Forest School settings (Robson, 2011b). This method involves entering 'into the institutional practice where a child spends his or her daily life and, by thoroughly participating in the child's activity settings, making records about the child's interaction with other participants, focusing especially on the child's intentional acts' (Hedegaard, 2018, pp. 3-4).

Each session of fieldwork lasted for at least 1.5 hours (the length of a Forest School session). Wachs (1985 cited in Pellegrini et al., 2004, p. 100) recommends a minimum of

1.5 hours per observation for field observations. Observations within the classroom were undertaken in shorter bursts, according to the children's schedule; in general, I stayed for a whole morning, a whole afternoon or a whole day, taking breaks for lunch to organise and write up field notes, having coffee with teaching staff in the staff room, or watching play on the yard at break time and chatting with teaching staff.

Pellegrini et al. (2004) assert that participant observers 'want to be considered as part of the natural setting' (pp. 96-97); while I did help both children and staff while undertaking fieldwork in order to contribute and be less intrusive, I found that children as well as adults were obviously aware of my presence, since I had a unique role in each setting and was not there every day. For instance, children often sought my attention which they did not necessarily do with the regular staff, indicating that although I came regularly, perhaps I was still a novelty – *and* I had cameras, paper and pens, which several of the children wanted to use, look at or talk about. Therefore, it was necessary to use what Corsaro (2005) refers to as a reactive or semi-participant approach to observation for the fieldwork: the researcher only participates when approached by children, in order to gain insight into children's cultures from their perspectives. Corsaro (2005) describes the role of the successful ethnographer in children's cultures as 'an atypical adult' (p. 6), as contrasted with 'typical adults', who are 'primarily active and controlling in their interactions' with children (p. 9). The children often solicited me to join in their play as I was observing them at play. I used discretion in doing so, needing to approach each instance by weighing up whether I needed to focus on my own goals for the session (more likely by the end of the field work). The benefit of an ethnographic approach is that joining in is not to be discouraged in fieldwork as it can contribute to building relationships and gaining further insights into participants' experiences (Hedegaard and Fler, 2008). However, the researcher also needs to maintain boundaries and focus on the aims of the research (Robson, 2011a).

Additionally, the researcher has a dialectical relationship with the participants in what Hedegaard (2008d) refers to as the 'double-ness of the researcher in the research situation' (p. 205). She argues that this means researchers should take reflexivity 'one step further' and attempt to develop an awareness of how the researcher's role straddles both participation in the research setting as well as analysis of fieldwork data (Hedegaard, 2008d, pp. 205-206). An articulation of how the researcher contributes to the activities being observed, influences activity and communicates with the participants is an essential component of the dialectic-interpretive approach used in this study. Indeed, during the last phase of the fieldwork when I needed to get interviews with particular children in order to complete my fieldwork before the end of term, I often needed to explain to some children that I was unable to help them, i.e., draw unicorns, and refer to my aim for the day. I felt that this contributed to the overtness of my role as a researcher in the classroom.

## Interviews

This study attempts to explore the positioning of the individual child within the environment without losing 'the voice of the child' (Fleer and Quiñones, 2009, p. 89). While informal as well as semi-structured interviews were utilised with adults (primarily audio-recorded in order to be transcribed and reviewed later), many informal conversations with children also took place and contributed to field notes, rather than being recorded audio-visually.

In order to more formally interview the children and also to provide a way to ensure assent, I set up 'interview sessions' with children in the school setting. These sessions were scheduled during 'free play' time and were an option that children could choose to participate in. They could also come and go as they chose. On these occasions, I provided a table upon which I had large pieces of flipchart paper and felt tip pens; on others, I had my laptop set up at a table with video clips and photographs I had taken of the classroom and Forest School activities. Sometimes, the table contained both. In these sessions, I asked the children if I could audio-record using the iPhone, or record audio-visually using the video setting on the camera. In sessions with children for whom English was an Additional Language, the Polish speaking teaching assistant was also present. When there were groups of children, the audio-visual recording allowed me to record their peer interactions as well as their intra-actions with the art materials and the laptop, thus contributing to further collected data.

Toward the end of my field work, when I had specific episodes that I wanted to interview particular children about, I arranged with the teacher that these children would be asked if they wanted to come to a staff room, located outside the classroom, or to the empty dinner hall to watch video episodes of themselves and their play and be interviewed. Again, they were able to come and go as they pleased as it was located next to the classroom.

Also in the final stages of the fieldwork, I asked children and adults (parents, teaching staff and Forest School leaders) to view video-recorded episodes and comment upon them in order to gain further perspectives for my later interpretations and analysis. These comments and discussions that ensued were recorded, with consent/assent, and later transcribed to become part of the interview data gathered. The children's viewings of their photographs and video-recordings contributed to the first stages of analysis and provided insights that framed subsequent interview sessions with adults. In this sense, the children contributed to the interpretive analysis, thus demonstrating how children's 'accounts... can be integral in giving a place for starting fine-grained analysis and close examination' of data collected (Theobald, 2012, p. 36).

Therefore, these viewings and subsequent transcriptions are used as a dual data source: both observation and interview. The interaction between the participant(s) and the taped episode is considered in relation to the video episode, but also in relation to the interaction with the researcher and with peers who may have been in the interview



room. Indeed, the word interview itself suggests that there is an interactive process to looking at something, either concrete or abstract, together.

### **Children's drawings, writing and mark making**

Knight et al. (2016) assert that 'alternative educational research processes and tools', such as collaborative drawing, are inclusive and socially just methods which are 'highly receptive' to the diverse ways in which children communicate (p. 323). During classroom fieldwork, children were invited to come to sit with me at a table in the classroom upon which sheets of paper and felt tips were placed. Collaborative and independent drawing, or other work that the children wanted to do – this often involved grilling me in forming letters of the alphabet and how to spell – could take place as what I called the 'interview station'. I audio-visually recorded our conversations and their interactions with each other and with the drawing materials, with their assent. On occasion, this table was set up in the school cafeteria or in a second staff room (in an underused wing of the building by the reception year classroom, which was useful to minimise disruptions), in order to have the laptop out and they could watch the videos that I took of them while they were drawing and interacting; they were able to come and go from the 'interview station' to class as they chose.

Children's drawings were also used in the data collection in the outdoor environment, although this methodological tool was not initially planned for my outdoor data collection. When I had my notebook out to take field notes, one girl in particular wanted to write and draw as well. The following week I brought a few extra notebooks and pens in so that I could provide for those children who were wanting to write and draw, using tools like mine. I continued to do this throughout the fieldwork. The first child in particular regularly wanted her specific notebook and pen each week, which contributed to the data collection in that it instigated communication between us. I also showed her that I had taken a photograph of her work to be used in my research 'to keep and use', and she kept the original. She had development delays in language as well as not having English as a first language. The notebook became an important tool for our communication and the drawing was used to 'make visible children's thinking and meaning-making' (Knight et al., 2016, p. 333). In order to use these drawings and emergent writing as data, I asked the children if I could take a photo of their work or of them drawing and writing in order to gain assent.

### **Audio-video recording and still photographs**

I used a Canon camera for audio-visual recording and photographs, as well as an iPhone and iPad. An iPhone worked well for audio-recording interviews with adults, while the camera was useful to audio-record interviews with children as they were very active during interviews, so their body language and gestures were of interest. Both the Canon camera and the iPhone were useful for capturing informal interview data with adults, *i.e.*, when we were talking while I was filming children at play. I would ask if they minded that I was filming the children's activities as well as recording our conversations. This was

successful in gathering their comments, and thus perspectives, on activity that we were observing together *while it was occurring*, as well as interview data that was unrelated to the simultaneously occurring activity. This use of audio-visual recording provided multiple means of data collection in that I was able to have an informal interview taped at the same time as an event sequence of the children.

The Canon had a better zoom lens than the iPhone, so I used it most often to be less obtrusive. However, the children were used to being filmed with iPhones and iPads by the teaching staff in the classroom, so those means of filming and recording may have been less novel, and therefore, less distracting, for them. For instance, several times a few wanted to use my camera, but no one asked to use my iPhone. After the pilot study, I did not use the iPad or the GoPros again. All of the filmed and recorded data were uploaded to computer and saved to a hard drive immediately following the fieldwork session, and was then stored in a locked filing cabinet. After uploading to the hard drive, these data were deleted from recording devices.

All of the audio-visual recording devices I used had screens so that I was able to show children what I had filmed and photographed, so that they could see themselves immediately if they asked. Over time, they were less concerned and waited until we had our “movie presentation” sessions on the classroom whiteboard or our individual or small group sessions to see themselves and each other.

I used the audio-video recording to capture what Silfver, Sjöberg, and Bagger (2013) refer to as ‘subtle events’ (p. 12), i.e., body language and tone, as well as action, wider events and context. It was particularly useful later to be able to go over and over a particular sequence of events and look for more and more detail in the detailed analysis stages. Fler (2008) asserts that within the cultural-historical tradition of researching children’s development, the researcher is not attempting to ‘capture everything they see’ on video-recording (p. 106). Instead, the intent is to document the ‘dynamic and changing nature of the social situations in which the children are located’ and the child’s motives, goals and intentions within everyday activities in order ‘to focus on the child’s perspective’ within institutional practices (Ibid.). While video technology allows the researcher to capture events in order to later *repeatedly* observe what might only be seen once if not captured on film, Walsh et al., (2007) warn that the researcher must be aware that there always will be events and contexts and action that have not been recorded and are, therefore, outside of the researcher’s attention. Yet, my analysis of events benefited from what my supervisor called my ‘data hoard’ (Waters, *pers. comm.* 12 May 2017) in that I was able to piece together what happened prior to and immediately after events of conflict that I filmed. Because I was taking multiple snapshots and filming periodically, I was able to piece together later what activities were taking place before and after the episode of conflict, which gave further insight from an interpretive *whole child* perspective.

Einarsdóttir (2007) asserts that methods such as photographs and drawings alone provide 'limited information'; it is the 'interviews and discussion with the children and their interpretations of the pictures and explanations' that prove to be 'essential' (p. 203). Therefore, the audio-visual recordings and the photographs taken during the fieldwork were used to stimulate more data gathering in interview sessions with participants using photographic and video stimulated interviews as an additional method, described below.

In the pilot study, I tried to use Go-Pro cameras to capture the 'child's perspective'. What I gained from this is that children enjoy playing with the settings on the cameras, thus distorting the images captured; and that watching the footage later made me suffer from motion sickness. I then encountered Hedegaard's methodology which demonstrated that there were other ways to also consider the perspective of the child, rather than asking them to use the camera themselves. As Rautio (2013, p. 396) argues:

It is quite possible to consider, however, that children, like any beings, might not need support in encountering the world and expressing to others something of these encounters – this takes place anyway, all the time. Children might not need adults to provide them with equipment and allocate special spaces and time for participation. They might need an adult to take seriously the things and actions with which they encounter their worlds anyway: say, things called toys (Woodyer 2008), or stones.

Nevertheless, to contribute to the process of interpreting children's perspectives, I did provide structured opportunities to gather children's input, namely by using video-stimulated interviews.

### **Video-stimulated interviews**

The viewing by participants of the researcher's audio-visual data is increasingly recognised as a useful methodological tool. It can be useful for several different reasons: to encourage participants to remember their thought processes during an event, to reflect upon their activities, and/or to provide an account of particular events and to engage in conversation with the interviewer or others about an event or episode of filmed interactions (Lyle, 2003; Silfver, Sjöberg, and Bagger, 2013; Theobald, 2012, 2017a; Tanner et al., 2011). Literature on methodology distinguishes between three methods using video-stimulated dialogue: video-stimulated recall, video-stimulated reflection, and video-stimulated accounts, all of which have subtle, yet distinctive, differences. The difference particularly relevant for this study lies within the researcher's intentions and purpose for using the method. Stimulated recall (SR), and its off-shoot *video*-stimulated recall dialogue, is a method most commonly employed in studies which 'necessitate a technique with which to investigate cognitive processes such as decision-making' (Lyle, 2003, p. 862).

Stimulated reflection, too, is used within psychological and educational research; its intention is to provide the opportunity for the research participant to reflect upon his/her

practice or activity in order for the researcher to explore the participant's metacognition and metacognitive awareness (Tanner et al., 2011). Its use is particularly valuable for communicating with education research participants about their self-beliefs, self-perceptions, and self-regulation (Ibid.).

A third use of video-stimulated dialogue is referred to as video-stimulated accounts (VSA) by Pomerantz (2005) and Theobald (2012, 2017a). Video-stimulated accounts are comparable to semi-structured interviews in which open-ended questions by the researcher provide opportunity to explore both topics of interest to the researcher as well as matters of interest to the participant (Theobald, 2017a). Indeed, some of the video-stimulated interview sessions with children were more similar to unstructured interviews in that our conversation was triggered by the photos and videos that they wished to watch; I gave them access to the laptop screen to pick out photographs and videos that they were interested in, in addition to asking them to watch particular ones I had chosen. The aim of VSA is to 'prompt' conversation by showing video (or in the case of this study, video and photographs): '[a]s such, video-stimulated accounts are interactional events in their own right during which accounts are co-produced and responded to' (Theobald, 2017a, p. 132). The sessions may be audio-visually recorded, audio-recorded, or noted by hand. In this study, I used the iPhone recording device to record conversations with adults and the camera's audio-visual recording capacity to capture the multimodal participation of the children. I also used this approach to contribute to informed consent and assent as a method of showing rather than just telling participants what kind of data I was collecting for the study.

Recording the video-stimulated accounts also provides opportunity to document how the participant negotiates and ascribes meaning in relation to the researcher when discussing viewed events. As Theobald (2012) notes, participants in both interviews and in VSA sessions draw upon perceived notions of how one 'should' behave or what one 'should' say in such a situation with a researcher, or even just with a school-based adult in the case of children. In this study, the children had differing reactions to being allowed out of class to help me with my research. For some, it was viewed as a privilege or treat, many were genuinely interested in the photographs and film footage, and others were just curious or happy to be out of the classroom. They were allowed to leave the interview table at any time and go back to class. Theobald (2012) notes that in VSA, the interaction between researcher and participant is of equal interest; in my study, it contributed to my understanding of the participant's perspective and motive orientations.

Using audio-visual recordings also enabled me to seek clarification when transcribing interviews and filmed episodes from the Polish-speaking teaching assistant. She had been hired to work specifically with the EAL children in the class. This contributed to the interpretations being more closely aligned with children's intentions (Theobald, 2017b).

My use of this technique is in line with the VSA approach; however, I use the term *video-stimulated interviews* (VSI). I think that within the findings chapters, it is more clear to the

reader how the data were gathered, i.e., an interview situation, that utilised photographs and video data previously collected to stimulate discussion that would also be used for data. I employed this method in a variety of situations: with children as they drew and watched videos of their play and with parents to inform them about how I was undertaking my research, what kinds of things their children were doing and how I might use this data collected. These conversations were recorded as interviews, which they understood as I was recording the video-stimulated interview. With teaching staff and Forest School staff, the method was also useful to gather their perspectives of children's activity.

Transcriptions are treated as interviews in the same way that non-video stimulated interviews would be: recognised as influenced by the questions I asked, the setting and so on. I chose certain episodes to watch with children and adult participants; however, with the children, I also allowed time for them to look through the photos on the laptop screen and choose what they wanted to watch. Often children asked to be shown a particular event they remembered my filming, which was important to them. In this way, the videos acted as a stimulus for remembering and discussing events that were important to them; although, they may remember events and emotions differently than how they actually perceived them at the time (Tanner, et al., 2011).

In my video-stimulated interviews with teaching and Forest School staff, I chose the videos for viewing ahead of time to stimulate discussion on the pedagogical practice or on the activity within particular events that I had chosen as examples of *conflict*. These sessions with teaching staff and Forest School staff were driven by my research and interview questions. However, sessions with the parents had a different objective. These VS interviews were intended to ensure ongoing consent and allow parents the opportunity to withdraw their children from the study, ask me questions and demonstrate what I had been doing in the fieldwork. There was also the informative element of what their child was doing in the class and at Forest School. I chose to show them a selection of photographs and videos of their child, not only the recordings of conflict. Only one parent came without her child, indicating that she would prefer to visit with me alone.

These sessions proved to be useful for participation in the research process as well as providing me with insights into the perspectives of participants. Utilising video-taped events and photographs in this way considers the impact that recording children's and others' experiences has. In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989) and ethical procedures in research, including informed consent and assent, showing videotape recording and photographs to parents of participants, children and adults is a method that elicits immediate reaction. After viewing, a participant would be better informed about the intentions of the researcher and may decide to change their mind about participating or be more aware of what the research entails.

## **Field notes and research diary**

Field notes were taken in both settings during the fieldwork as well as immediately afterward. I transcribed these onto Word documents as soon as possible after the fieldwork in order to record any extra information that they triggered in my memory. These were filed according to date and cross-referenced according to activity, i.e., types of play, teacher-led activity, the setting, and individual(s), according to participants' names. Notes were then further categorised based upon themes within the literature review, e.g., communication, conflict, cooperation, types of play and mediational tools.

Winther-Lindqvist (2009) states that although she was focused upon her research questions in her study of children's identity formation in transitions, in reality, data may be 'constructed in the field' due to vantage point for observation or an intuitive feeling that 'something interesting is going on over there' in which 'strong identifications were made' (p. 34). I began observing children's activity and writing down field notes based upon such moments of 'strong identification'; however, I soon realised that I was beginning to lose focus of my research questions (which were arguably part of the problem, see Chapter 8), as so many things in both settings were happening of interest. Therefore, I filmed large segments of activity of each target child to record an overview of each session. However, for transcription purposes I narrowed this down to moments in which I noticed children and adults were in conflict, when peers were in conflict, based upon Hedegaard's (2008a, 2008b) approach for considering the child's perspective and motive orientation.

I also took extensive field notes for each focus child based upon any of their activities that I observed. While these identifications caught my attention, I began each session by filming and/or observing a specific child to gather data. Due to the nature of the settings, it was often easy for these filming episodes to contain more than one focus child to contribute to analysis later upon viewing. Field notes were typed up immediately following the observation session in order to not lose any of the details that I could remember. They were stored according to date, but also cross referenced by participant, setting and multiple descriptions of activity, i.e., MUD PLAY, PLAY WITH STICKS, LEGO as well as CONFLICT, COOPERATION, ADULT-CHILD INTERACTION and so on.

## **4.6 Data analysis procedures**

Hedegaard and Fler's (2008) methodological approach extends to interpretive analysis following the data gathering based upon three levels of analysis: common sense, situated practice and thematic level. In the first stage, common sense interpretation, the researcher/interpreter notes her understandings of what is taking place in the interactions and activity setting. 'Relations stand out and the patterns in interactions can be seen' and the interactions become 'objectified' (Hedegaard, 2008c, p. 58).

Secondly, situated practice interpretation is applied, in which links are made between observations of children in several activity settings and 'dominating motives, patterns of

interactions and problems' may be explored and explained (Ibid.). This stage is based upon Hedegaard's (2008b, 2008d) schema for analysing young children's everyday life activities in institutional care-giving practices by exploring the following:

- The intentional orientation of the researched children
- The interaction between the participants (and interaction patterns of the individual)
- The conflicts between different persons' intentions and projects in the activity
- The competence that the researched person demonstrates during their interactions in these social situations.

Finally, a thematic level of interpretation is used to articulate how the interaction patterns of the child are situated within the complexity of institutional practice patterns in relation to the aim of the research.

Therefore, there were several steps for both data gathering and the data analysis. The episodes chosen for analysis were based upon conflict for theoretical reasons, as articulated above and more thoroughly in Chapter 2. However, this theoretical choice contributed in part to the choice of children, as well as choice of observations. Because some of the children in the class had already been labelled with 'challenging behaviour' and been seen by an educational psychologist, using the concept of conflict to interpret motive orientations of some of these children, as well as those who had not been given this label, seemed to be a particularly useful way to explore the dialectical relationship between children and the institution(s). I observed children's activity for nearly 20 days and filmed 13 hours of children's activity over the course of the fieldwork; these recordings and the field notes from observations over the project's timespan were categorised according to activity setting and conflict episodes. Finally, I chose the episodes of conflict to fully transcribe and analyse, then further filtered these so that I present in the dissertation one episode of conflict from the classroom and one episode of conflict from the woodland. As there were not necessarily many episodes of conflict to choose from, for some of the children, this whittled down the corpus of data to just two episodes to present. For others who may have had more instances of conflict, I chose the ones in which I had extended video recordings for in order to utilise video-stimulated interviews.

Because field notes were written immediately following observations, interviews were transcribed immediately following their completion, and audio-video recording was uploaded and filed according to participants' pseudonyms, and categorised according to activity, individual, setting, and theoretical and methodological themes, I began scrutiny simultaneously with data collection in order to categorise their storage on a hard drive, according to categories related to the literature review on types of play, types of interactions and spaces/places of activity. This influenced further observations in the field. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, the act of making decisions about what to

observe, what to write up, and what to select and summarise demonstrates the integral aspects of data collection and the first stages of analysis.

### **Transcription and interpretation**

Bezemer (2014) states: ‘...making a transcript is an invaluable analytical exercise: by forcing yourself to attend to the details of a strip of interaction you gain a wealth of insights into the situated construction of social reality, including insights in the collaborative achievements of people, their formation of identities and power relations, and the socially and culturally shaped categories through which they see the world. That is the epistemological function of transcription’ (p. 155). The process of transcription of events and video-stimulated interviews with the children included non-verbal as well as verbal communication (Kress, 1997; Kress et al., 2001; Jewitt, 2009). Audio-visual methods of data collection gathered information about how the children – and adults – were using speech and their own bodies for mediation, including facial expressions and gestures, as well as how they used material resources within the environment (see table 4.4, column b, below).



Table 4-4 Transcript of video-stimulated interview

Speaker	b)Verbal and non-verbal communication	c)Adult’s perspective	d)Interpretation of child’s perspective	e)Interpretation of child’s motive orientation
Researcher	What did he say there? [pointing to laptop screen]	I’m checking to make sure my transcription of this event is correct.		
Owen	<p>He said, “I’m not playing with you ever again. Let’s have a leaf fight” [frowns].</p> <p>[Watching the ‘sword fight’, he laughs out loud and throws his head back.] Ha!! We’re fighting!! We’re play fighting!! YEA! With Sticks!! Hahaha!! [Laughs and shrieks with laughter].</p>	<p>This ‘jousting match’ with the 2 boys seems slightly dangerous, although both boys are smiling, so it’s considered play fighting by both CRT and FSL1 (VS interviews). In their VSI interviews, CRT and FSL1 were unsure if they would have intervened or watched it to see what happened. FSL1 thought she would have waited and the CRT thought she might have intervened sooner.</p>	<p>Looks sad or is he just concentrating when he tells me what Jordan said to him? I am about to ask, but suddenly he sees the ‘jousting’ and he becomes very excited and happy. Reinforces an interpretation that this is play fighting from his perspective and is considered fun/funny.</p>	<p>O. seems to really want to play with J., although earlier in the interview, he mentions that J. is sometimes mean to him. He is very excited by the sword fight/jousting because it transforms the original conflict – J. not wanting to play with him, into a ‘play conflict’ which allows him to play with Jordan, which is what he seems to want.</p>

Data which is specifically selected for transcription have multiple layers of framing by the researcher (Bezemer and Mavers, 2011). There is the event or act itself which takes place within a particular frame; then, a new frame is added because it is chosen by the researcher for further examination, based upon particular research objectives and theoretical perspectives. I chose episodes of conflict to fully transcribe, using my layered approach to transcription, based upon Hedegaard's (2008a) assertion that conflict situations enable the researcher to interpret the child's motive orientation in everyday activities, as well as consider more fully the institutional perspective. The transcript thus layers what happened or what was said with a recorded account of how I came to my interpretations about multiple perspectives (Table 4.4, columns c, d).

In writing out the events for interpretation an environmental affordance perspective (Bang, 2008, 2009) was applied to Hedegaard's (2008b, 2008d) schema to consider motives, intentions and competences, using the framework in Table 4.5.

Table 4-5 Environmental Affordance Perspective (Bang, 2008, 2009) for Analysis

<b>Environmental Affordance Perspective</b>
<p><b>Things and Their Affordances</b></p> <p>Interpretations of the Affordances of Things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?</li> </ul> <p><b>Social Others and Their Affordances</b></p> <p>Interpretation of the Affordances of Social Others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the child relate to the affordances of social others and how might that reveal small novelties?</li> </ul> <p><b>Self-experience and Motive Affordances</b></p> <p>Interpretation of Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the child experience herself as a 'social other to herself' (Bang, 2008, p. 131)?</li> <li>• How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the classroom?</li> </ul>

Finally, thematic interpretation was applied to the findings in order to consider meaningful or significant relationships between the data gathered and the aims of the research, supported by the literature review and theoretical frameworks (Miles and

Huberman, 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Hedegaard and Fler, 2008; Robson, 2011a). This was done 'by hand', rather than using a data management programme such as NVivo. The coding related to interpretations in response to children's perspectives, adults' perspectives (institutions), and the researcher's perspective (theory and reflexivity). Samples of the transcription and interpretive writing which were assembled to present the findings in relation to the children's activity are presented in Appendix 2.

Data analysis was undertaken without the aid of a data management programme, although I had intended to do so from the start of my studentship. However, by the time I was able to access NVivo training, I was halfway through my fieldwork and I had already created a filing system using Word for data and for literature. I began to put my existing data and upload current data into NVivo; however, over the summer holidays when the university switched to an updated version, I lost my access to the programme. Therefore, I continued to organise my data using files in Word. While a strictly manual analysis process takes longer and is more painstaking, my immersion in the raw data in order to manually sort through the empirical findings in relation to the research questions allowed for a 'worrying' (Bennett, 2010, vii) of words and concepts, i.e., things v. artefacts, which may have been overlooked when creating nodes in a data management programme. The manual process that I used was in keeping with the methodological approach of documenting the interpretation process along the way and having all of my data to hand, rather than risk a programme excluding some during analysis. Fler (2016) states:

Vygotsky (1997) argued that just when the data gathering commences, researchers often exclude valuable data, as we might see during the process of transitioning into a study site in naturalistic settings. The data gathered at these times is important for gaining a fuller picture, one that needs to be included to ensure validity in the analysis. Studying how the research context is established and the ongoing role of the researcher during the data gathering process gives greater insights into the process of development (p. 12).

#### **4.7 Reflections on reflexivity**

Bae (2005) warns there can be an inequality of status and power within the researcher – early childhood educator relationship in research projects; this inequality can 'contribute to ... reification and reduction of the people working in early childhood settings' (p. 286). In order to recognise the responsibility I had as a researcher entering into the workplaces of others, I was conscious of power relationships with all participants. For example, the teacher who was participating had several years of experience within early childhood, holding prestigious positions in Flying Start and as head of Early Years in the school. It was, therefore, quite natural to frame the research investigations with her in the position of *expert* and me in the position of *learner*, a relationship which was reflective of the ethnographic approach of submersion in an unfamiliar culture. However, as our relationship developed over the year, I was treated as a colleague and as I began to show her episodes for our video stimulated recall dialogue sessions, our learning from each

other began to be recorded and subsequently transcribed. This acceptance as a colleague from the teacher may have made an impression of inequality with the teaching assistants, however. I was quick to solicit the advice and opinions of the teaching assistants, who too, had more experience of early years than I do; the bilingual teaching assistant had the added understanding and knowledge of the Polish community and language, so I also sought her participation as an expert. When I joined in with the tidying up, putting on coats and helping the children with their drawing and play, and also sought advice from staff, I hoped my participation would lessen a possible perception of research as an 'assessment' of staff capabilities.

I also worked to minimise notions of 'assessment' in the outdoor environment, in which I have previously worked as trainer. By overtly positioning myself in my new role as a student researcher, developing competencies, I began by asking questions rather than assuming anything; by the time the main study began, the FS staff and I had established a working relationship similar to the one I had with the classroom teacher. However, by the end of the fieldwork, I had spent more time with teaching staff since they were present in both settings. This highlighted the need to address orientation with participants (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994). Atkinson and Hammersley (1994) argue that there are features of fieldwork identity which can be 'problematic', such as whether or not the researcher is known to some, all or none of the participants; how much about the research is understood and by whom amongst the participants; the researcher's engagement in activities in the field and how this 'locates her or him in relation' to the participants and the activities; and the orientation of the researcher as 'insider' or 'outsider' (p. 249). In this study, I also considered how I communicated with the adults, since I was going from one setting to another; often staying behind in FS while the children and teaching staff returned to school, or leaving the woods to return to school with the children and teaching staff. I was careful not to let informal conversations and interviews turn into 'gossiping' about how practice was undertaken in the other setting. My intention was to learn from both settings and keep a respectful distance as a researcher, although I was spending a lot of time in both places as an ethnographer.

The methodology that I used starts from that premise of dialectical interaction and relations across the research, as well as the institutional, setting. The data which I collected from the participants was used to frame the research, contribute to further investigation and feed into the analysis and interpretation. In order to include all of the participants, I communicated openly with them about what I was reading and how the theoretical perspectives were shaping the nature of my research, thus inviting them into dialogue (Bae, 2005). Throughout all phases of the study, I wanted to ensure transparency as I was observing and recording both adults and children, so I showed audio-visual recordings and photographs to the whole group at the end of both terms.

I made my research questions and intentions clear to parents with whom I was able to speak, and by information letter to the group of parents at large. However, one important procedure that I failed to consider prior to handing out the information and

consent letters was to have had them translated in *print* into participants' first language. Instead, I relied upon the bilingual teaching assistant to translate verbally and to ensure that the Polish-speaking parents understood the consent forms and information letters which were written in English. At the time I was unaware that the consent forms could also have been translated into Hungarian, Mandarin and Arabic to ensure *fully* informed consent.

In considering positions and roles, an ethnographic approach poses potential dilemmas in what ways and to what extent the researcher engages 'in activities in the field and how this "locates her or him in relation" to the participants and the activities' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 249). In my role as 'atypical adult', I needed to make it clear to staff that I could not be included in the adult-to-child ratio. The pilot study alerted me to the need to negotiate my role as researcher. Particularly in the FS setting in which activities were quite spread out geographically, I did not want to find myself in a position of being responsible for anyone's safety if I were observing a child climbing a tree, for instance, and unable to focus on gathering data.

While this was accepted and respected by the staff of both school and Forest School, there were incidents in which my role as researcher who *is* also an adult proved ambiguous. These were usually related to conflict between pupils or conflict between rules and pupils. For instance, if two children were fighting they may have looked to me to intervene; however, my role as researcher undertaking participant observation meant that I allowed the interaction to occur without intervention, although I found myself feeling uncomfortable watching as though I were allowing it or even promoting it. This is considered in Chapter 6, in which the affordances of the researcher as *social other* and the affordance of the camera as a *thing* are recorded. Certainly, a variety of roles can provide the basis for collecting data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p. 123), but I wanted it to be overt to both adults and children that I was working as a researcher for ethical as well as practical reasons.

Additionally, as my research questions were formulated around the interactions between participants, I needed to ensure that the adults, in particular, did not feel that I was assessing or judging their practice. Within any educational or organisational setting, there may be perceived or real inequalities of power (Bae, 2005). Therefore, in order to ensure that the relationship between adult participants and myself was fully transparent and clear, I had several informal meetings with staff to discuss my intentions, my interpretations, and my questions.

In this kind of study in which participants' perspectives are sought, yet also interpreted in line with a pre-considered analytical framework, an ethical dilemma arises. Using photographs to illustrate my interpretation presents a conundrum in which I do not wish the participants to be identified and have tried to not present faces which may be recognised; however, expressions and situations are how I formulated my interpretations, so photographs are used. They, alongside descriptions, could put the participants at risk

of being recognised. In order to respect the privacy of the participants, I showed them the images that I would use in my dissertation and asked for their ongoing informed consent. In many photos, I have tried to use technological solutions to create more privacy, although this does not make the photographs stylistically uniform for purposes of the dissertation's aesthetic qualities.

## 4.8 Conclusion

Edwards (2001) argues that in qualitative research, the validity of a study is 'a judgment about the extent to which it can be said that the research has captured important features of the field and has analysed them with integrity' (p. 124). Thus, my claims to validity rely upon the ways in which I have tried to make visible the multiple ways in which I collected data; participated and observed in fieldwork; communicated with participants at each stage of the study; and chose, transcribed and analysed data at specific stages of research. The layers of data and subsequent layering of analysis follows an interpretive approach which recognises the role of the researcher as data gatherer, interacting with the participants, thereby contributing to reflexive and ongoing interactivity between the researcher and the data, which is being interpreted according to specific theoretical constructs.

Hughes (2001) claims that within an interpretive paradigm 'knowledge is valid if it is authentic, that is it is the true voice of the participants in their research' (p. 36). Use of the word 'true' is troubled, however. Although I assert that I, following Hedegaard's schema, present the child's perspective, this perspective is interpreted by *me*, using the lens of the environmental affordance perspective. Although this study seeks to authentically present those moments in the data collection when activities were transformed by children's participation, my activity as a researcher certainly contributed to shaping participants' activity and their voices. This chapter acknowledges this in documenting the role of the researcher and examining the choices and use of methods which record the participants' voices and actions. The following chapters present the findings and analysis based upon data collected to build theoretically-informed interpretations of children's participation in collective activities.

# Chapter 5 The Institutions

## 5.1 Introduction:

Using Hedegaard's (2008a, 2012, 2014) wholeness approach to study children's participation calls for consideration of the societal perspective (presented in Chapter 1 and in the first section of this chapter), an institutional perspective (presented Chapter 2 and the findings in this chapter) and the individual's perspective (presented in the Chapter 6). The wider contextual frame – or macro-perspective – within which the study is located helps shape the values, demands and expectations underpinning the everyday practices of the institutions within which children participate. These expectations, both directly and indirectly, provide the standards against which significant adults, such as parents, teachers and educators, 'evaluate a child's competence and motive appropriation in relation to their ideas about what such participation in situational practices should lead to' (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 18). Key findings presented in this chapter relate to how the physical spaces, the routines and structures, the range of activities supported, and the staff roles are used as tools to mediate institutional expectations for children's participation. Data were gathered using interviews and observations, some of which were audio-visually recorded.

Postma (2012) argues that separating the social from the material by categorising them dualistically creates a flawed understanding of how interconnected and dynamic socio-material practices are. From an activity-based perspective, analysing the systemic nature of the institution makes visible the dynamic, yet individual, elements in relation to people, artefacts, motive orientation and goal-directed activity. This chapter, therefore, aims to recognise the value of presenting a 'diffracted assemblage' (Barad, 2003) of the social and the material in practice, which refers to the non-dualistic nature of how both the social and the material dialectically intra-act with each other. Different social others and things in the classroom and in the Forest School will have different properties and will afford different interactional activities. These multiple affordances contribute to a 'culturally developed pattern of activities' (Bang, 2008, p. 126). Following Massey's (2005) assertion that '[s]paces are products of human interrelationships, habits and rituals, materials and symbols, as well as the physical properties of the space' (*cited in* Jackson, 2018, p. 143), the chapter presents the intentional mechanisms which drive the institutional activity, composed of physical and symbolic artefacts, human subjects and outcome-based objects.

*Abbreviations used include:*

CRT: Classroom Teacher, Mrs Gordon<sup>7</sup>

LSA: Learning Support Assistant

TA: Teaching Assistant

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<sup>7</sup> All names of participants have been anonymised.

TAP: Teaching Assistant, Polish-speaking

FSL: Forest School Leader (there are two, so they are referred to as FSL1 and FSL2)

FSA: Forest School Assistant

FSV: Forest School Volunteer

FSD: Forest School Director

## **5.2 The Reception Classroom**

### **5.2.1 Early intervention**

More than half of the pupils in class are eligible for free school meals (eFSM), reflecting the school as a whole. Eligibility for free school meals is used as a proxy measure for challenging socio-economic circumstances, and extra funding is provided for supportive measures (WG, 2015c). In the classroom, there were interventions in place in order to address additional learning needs, speech and language, challenging behaviour and to strengthen links between home and school. These interventions suggest that practice is in alignment with government policy for that ‘all children in Wales [may] have a bright future’ and not be ‘disadvantaged by poverty and inequality’ (WG, 2013, p. 2).

#### **Additional Learning Needs**

Nearly three-quarters of the pupils in the school have been identified as having additional learning needs (ALN); and, over half of the reception year have below expected baseline assessment scores for their age. To support the classroom activities, there were regular visits by a parent and child support worker, to support parents and children doing activities together on school grounds; a communication specialist using WellComm, a screening toolkit for speech and communication delays in the early years; and, a Local Education Authority behavioural specialist. Additionally, the Forest School programme which had been running for three years was funded by multiple charitable organisations, based upon this disadvantage. The primary school is centrally located within a housing estate, bordered by a large 7600- acre woodland, where Forest School sessions take place one day a week throughout the school year.

The classroom teacher, however, was unconvinced that the extra support for their pupils went far enough to bring the school in line with other more advantaged schools:

I don't think we are your standard school - we have such a high number of children who have needs, whereas compared to other schools in the west. You know other areas, the percentages is much lower, they have things like ‘catch up’ weeks where those children are taken out to work with a teacher on specific things. Our numbers are so high we couldn't possibly manage it. Whereas in some schools, some classes might be differentiated - the children differentiated into particular classes - here we might have six different levels in one class. So, as far as we can - with specific needs, we can take children out, like with SENCO and dyslexia,



and so on, there is someone coming in to take out children. But there are so many children, unfortunately, that need extra help that they don't actually get it. And if that one child went to another school, they'd be considered a priority. It's really hard. In terms of Estyn, it doesn't look pretty when you look at our data for all our outcomes at Key Stages, we just have a slide going on that goes down and down and down (CRT, interview, 14 June 2017).

From the teacher's perspective, more than half of the children in her class needed the support of a team of people, in addition to parents and teaching staff, often including social services and specialist learning support. However, with limited resources, she felt that the gains the children did make were not reflected by their scores on assessments.

It's really hard – it's soul destroying really – at the end of the year, the local authority sends you a spreadsheet with all the schools' end of Foundation Phase outcomes and if they've hit their CSI [core subject indicator] or not. And you know, other schools are getting 60% which is considered quite poor, and other schools are at 95% of pupils reaching outcome 5 or above in literacy, numeracy *and* PSD. And, we are on there this year at 17%. It's heart-breaking, as a school and as a teacher. When you see it in black and white compared with every other school in this area, it's heart-breaking. However, when we look at our children, we know why. If even one of our struggling pupils was in another school, they wouldn't be there! They would have been seen by Ed Psych and would be considered special needs and have been referred to a special unit. But, here, we don't get any more Ed Psych time just because we have more pupils who need it, so we literally house children and those children just plod on, just coping, and by the time they go to comp, they are really, really behind (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

This concern about children's development, from a trajectory perspective, impacted upon the provision and practice in the reception classroom in trying to meet diverse needs. The teacher was concerned for the children who needed specialised support in an inclusive environment, which was not necessarily designed for overarching inclusion, particularly in a class of 36 pupils. For instance, although she valued play (interview, 4 July 2017), the teacher rarely observed or joined in the children's play in the classroom, due to specific assessment demands. Although the teaching support staff had more freedom to observe play, they, too, usually had an assessment activity to undertake with small groups of children at a table during 'free play time'. During the allocated time for play, whether indoors or outdoors, the teacher said she was obliged to do literacy and numeracy interventions and assessments or other paperwork to support the individual needs of pupils and help to raise their attainment scores. The demands of the focused tasks in literacy and numeracy, in addition to the number of students in the class, impacted upon her attention to the children's chosen play activity:

I think because I am working to a tick list of getting kids through a focused task I engage with them then, but I don't have time to engage when they are playing or watch each child in a playful situation. I did last year, I think. Last year with only 24

pupils, I had some pockets of time where I'd finished our focus tasks, and I could play with them or observe them playing. But not with this many. I haven't done any of that this year. In order to get all 36 through their focused tasks, hasn't left me with any time to observe them not at my table, doing specific skills for numeracy or mental recall or whatever (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

It appeared to be difficult for the teacher to deliver structured learning based upon child-initiated activities with such a big class; instead, there was provision for activities which were structured and then play time, which was unstructured and child-initiated.

However, the teacher lacked time to observe the unstructured play time in order to develop learning based upon each child's specific interests or orientations. Although, the Foundation Phase Framework is ambiguous when it comes to deliberate approaches for structuring learning around child-initiated activities, it suggests the following:

There must be a balance between structured learning through child-initiated activities and those directed by practitioners. A well-planned curriculum gives children opportunities to be creatively involved in their own learning which must build on what they already know and can do, their interests and what they understand. Active learning enhances and extends children's development (WG, 2015a, p. 4).

Yet, this was difficult to achieve in practice in such a large class with such a range of diversity. The ratios in the classroom were 1 adult to 8 pupils. The four staff included one Early Years-trained teacher with a Flying Start professional background, one learning support assistant (LSA), and two teaching assistants (TA) with Level 3 qualifications in Child Care and Development. One of these TAs provided bilingual language support for five pupils for whom Polish is a first language.

### **Linguistic diversity**

English is the main language spoken in the school, although there are measures in place to support Welsh language learning. No pupils speak Welsh as a first language (Estyn, 2009). There is a demographic mix of families who have lived in or near the area for two or more generations, families who have moved in from other areas in as well as out of county, and families who have moved to the area from abroad, either for work or seeking refugee status. Nearly twenty percent of pupils speak English as an Additional Language (EAL) having moved to Wales from abroad (Estyn, 2009).

They get placed here just because this is where the housing is. They have a hell of a life here. There isn't much tolerance for multiculturalism here and they are made to feel like second-class citizens (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017).

The CR teacher prioritised English language learning in order that the children could develop their communication skills, whether they spoke English as a first or additional language. Welsh was also utilised in whole class activities, such as circle time activities. The Polish language pupils spoke mainly between themselves and the Polish-speaking

teaching assistant when in the classroom. The following year, the head of the FP was planning to keep them all together again in order to support their learning:

I'm going to put all the Polish speakers with [Polish speaking TA]. Because I can see they've progressed so much since she's been with them. Keep them together in the middle class (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

Thus, cultural diversity tended to be an isolating factor rather than a unifying one; the Polish speakers tended to play and sit together, creating their own peer subculture in the classroom. Languages other than English or Welsh were not referred to or drawn upon as a 'fund of knowledge' (Hedges et al., 2011) by the classroom teacher. There was one boy who communicated mainly in Hungarian at home, another who spoke Chinese in the home, and a girl with an Arabic-speaking mother and Polish-speaking father. All three were more fluent in English than the Polish as first language speakers and were the singular child who spoke that particular language; their home languages were not included in the classroom's communication during my fieldwork visits.

The classroom teacher regretted that the Polish-speaking teaching assistant was called upon to undertake more responsibility than would usually be expected of a TA, due to the number of children learning English. She was expected to be a translator for parents, to attend meetings, write reports and do one on one language intervention work with the pupils; however, she still counted in the ratio of adults to learners, even though her time was taken up by working with a specific group of pupils. The classroom teacher, therefore, said that she left a large amount of teaching responsibility of the Polish speaking pupils to the teaching assistant, who did not have the teacher's skills or experience in Early Years.

### **Vulnerable families**

The school's 2009 Estyn report claims there are number of '[i]n-year transfers, that is, pupils starting and leaving the school during the year' having an impact upon 'continuity and progress in learning' (p. 1). The classroom teacher estimates that less than half of pupils will stay through to year 6, although the impact is less on the reception year class<sup>8</sup>:

We have a lot of people moving in and out of the community later on – getting rehoused and that kind of thing, so by year 6 only about 40-50 per cent would have been here throughout their school career. But, in the early years, they are usually 'home grown' and known by health visitors and Flying Start and then us (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

The mobility of the population contributes to the shaping of the school's understandings of and expectations for attendance, in order to provide consistency. Due to some of the more vulnerable children missing school frequently, the classroom teacher asserted that it was important to create personal relationships with the parents/carers in order to know what was happening with each family outside of school and how that might impact

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<sup>8</sup> Less than two years after the fieldwork period, one-sixth of the class – and two of the five I had focused upon - had moved to different schools.

upon the children's attendance and progress. Having a background in Flying Start had contributed to the CRT establishing relationships with families in order to be better informed about individual children's participation across institutions. Hedegaard (2008a) states that '[a]ssumptions about development as constructed in one community do not necessarily transfer to other communities' (p. 12). The teacher had an open-door policy for parents/carers, in order to bridge expectations between home and school.

We've just had a team meeting. Things have been pretty stressful around here recently with some of the families. An example the head gave to the education minister is that in the nine years she's been here, she's seen about fifty children go into care. And that's huge when you think a teacher in the other parts of the country might have one or two in their whole career. It's emotionally draining (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017).

The teaching assistants also had early years training and supported the children in their transition from home to school, by nurturing them but also ensuring they understood what was expected of them as school children. The classroom teacher asserted that having a Flying Start background was ideal for working in the reception year:

Flying start practitioners are really highly trained in child development, so they know what is "normal" child development on a spectrum of development. They know that even if children have some low abilities, they understand that some children may progress not necessarily in a linear way, but in an expected way. So, behaviours can be quite low level and not alert any learning needs – they understand the difference between significant needs and what is maybe just a case of understanding how children bring some things from home and just need extra support. They also work alongside health visitors, so it's a very holistic approach to the whole child, including the home, health, everything that contributes to the child's development (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

This understanding reflects Vygotsky's (1998) assertion that children develop in relation to the social situation within which they participate, at home, at school and within other institutional practice. This development is not objectively related to the child's biological age or psychological tendencies or environmental situation separately, but to the inter-subjectivity of all the elements of the social situation of development. The classroom teacher's values for classroom practice and relationships between the school and the home were based upon her understanding of socially situated learning.

### **Rights and responsibility**

The school's focus on educating children located within a discourse of disadvantage encompassed the expectations in regard to pupils' rights and how rights and responsibilities were framed within the school. The intended ethos of the school as a *Rights Respecting School* (UNICEF UK, 2018) is frequently signposted both outside and throughout the school building. The *Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) are displayed on bulletin boards and painted onto murals on the walls inside and outside of the building (Figure

5.1). There are helpline numbers for both children and parents/carers to communicate, i.e., Childline<sup>9</sup>, as well as signposted ways to make a complaint on displays throughout the corridors and in the reception area. This creates a sense of both giving information as well as a commitment to safeguarding.



Figure 5.1 Rights Respecting School

Within the reception year classroom, the rights of the child are also displayed. The children have drawn pictures of themselves and placed them next to rights linked to practice, i.e., 'You have the right to ...'. This layering of ethos onto the material setting suggests a commitment to children's rights and participation, as well as to how participation was expected to be framed within the institution. The rights of the child displayed were presented in relation to the child's responsibility in the classroom. For example, the right to an education was sub-headed as a responsibility to attend school every day (figure 5.2). This demonstrated the school's perspective relating to the expectations for the children; it also alludes to the school's expectations for the children's parents and *their* responsibility for ensuring the children attend school regularly.

Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson (2014) suggest that merging rights with responsibilities in such a way can potentially contribute to a neoliberal ideology, in which individual self-responsibility replaces an ethical community responsibility of care. It did appear to be the case that children were being given obligations to engage in school practices that may have been at odds with actions they did not have control over, such as coming to school every day, or with actions that did not support their individual choices or tastes, such as eating all of their school dinners or packed lunches. However, pupils did not seem to be punished for failing to meet these expectations, contributing to a sense of caregiving and nurturing by the staff in the study. Although the children's behaviour in relation to such demands was acknowledged verbally and directly to the child most of the time, it was

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<sup>9</sup> Childline is a telephone- and online-counselling, support and advice service provided by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC).

also noted by the classroom teacher in order to consider potential problems within the home or care institution and the child's.



Figure 5.2 Display in the classroom: the rights and responsibilities of the child

The classroom display shown in Figure 5.2 clearly connects the children's rights with the subsequent responsibilities that children have in order to conform to school practice (values). However, this is suggestive of a neoliberal agenda, in which the children are expected to promise to come to school every day (which may not be within their control) and to eat all of their lunch (perhaps suggesting a lack of choice), as individual responsibilities which may not be reflective of wider contexts over which they have little control.

While Siraj-Blathford (2009) argues that 'children who experience education through taking some responsibility for their actions and learning become more effective learners' (p. 154), this display appeared to stem directly from the tension felt by the school in relation to expectations from the home. This conflict between the demands of school and home can be conflicting for children (Siraj-Blathford, 2009). The classroom teacher said that there are high rates of looked after children (LAC) and children whose home lives were 'chaotic' (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017). For some of those families, getting their children to school regularly may not have been a priority; however, for some families, it may have been difficult if they had been moved away from walking distance, were housed in a shelter, or staying with family, according to the classroom teacher. The classroom teacher asserted that the best thing that could happen to the community was for a factory to re/open, in order to create local employment (interview, 24 May 2017), and perhaps to impact on cultural melding of daily work routines with those of the school's, which allude to cultural-historical influences as shaping school attendance.

In the school, as in the classroom, there were artefacts and displays of participation; yet, the adult voices in the hall of the school expressed the tension between the rights of the child to participate by using their voices and the demands of the school to keep noise to a minimum. In the public spaces of the school, there was quite a lot of shouting by adults to keep order, particularly during times of transition when children were all speaking at once and often in loud voices, such as lunch time and moving toward the yard. These voices seemed to be trying to keep the 'moral codes about how and where children ought to learn and behave' (Fielding, 2000, p. 231). Usually these voices belonged to dinner staff or to upper primary/KS2 teachers. The rights of others to be listened to and respected were evident in the demands of classroom practice. When children infringed upon other's rights to be safe, for instance, verbally or physically, they were taken aside and spoken to quietly by the teacher.

There was also a reference to the rights of teachers and children to be safe from others, including parents and visitors, at the school entrance. This display, along with the overall decoration theme of children's rights throughout the building, appeared to be directed at visitors, perhaps suggesting an aim of the children and staff as a community, which demanded respect from *outsiders*. There is a closed circuit television (CCTV) camera and a sign which warns outsiders that they are under surveillance (Figure 5.3). These messages of expectations permeate the school, although may be only accessible for those who can read – and read English – for both children and parents/carers. It was less clear visually or by observation how the staff are expected to treat the children or the parents/carers.



Figure 5.3 CCTV camera and written warning outside the main entrance

## 5.2.2 The school building and classroom

The reception year classroom, the nursery and the Flying Start were all located within the same wing of the primary school; this wing was separated from Years 1 to 6 by an



assembly hall and the school reception area. Although the classroom, the nursery and Flying Start had separate outside extensions from their classroom for play, the reception class outdoor area led to the bigger yard for playtime, which is solely for the reception year and Year 1 pupils. These physical aspects positioned the reception year as bridging childcare provision, education preparation and primary school, reflecting the pedagogical orientation of reception year.

The reception year pupils' parents/carers dropped off and picked up the pupils directly from the classroom door that leads onto the outdoor area (Figure 5.1). This outdoor area had a gate which was locked during the school day, so that it was safe for the children to access throughout the day from the classroom. However, the classroom teacher said that she felt it was too chaotic with a high number of pupils to allow free flow play between the inside and outside classrooms. Instead, children were allowed out on a rota system during very good weather in the summer term.



*Figure 5.4 The play area outside the classroom and pick up and drop off point.*

Although physically and pedagogically positioned close to pre-school space, the reception year children are also expected to begin to take on responsibility in keeping with the expectations of the older primary school children. For instance, the children are given permission to go to the toilets alone, which requires leaving the classroom, going through the coat hall, crossing the lunch room and passing through double doors which lead to the corridor where the toilets are located. This corridor extends to the assembly hall, which linked the early years with the rest of the primary school. Going to the toilet was also a chance to negotiate responsibility for some of the children as it was an opportunity to be unattended. This permission is given in exchange for behavioural demands of going



straight there, using the toilet and washing hands, and coming straight back to the classroom. The children appeared to enjoy this independence.

Going to the toilets provided an opportunity for the children to inspect what was going on in another part of the school building. The former Flying Start staffroom, which I used for conducting interviews, was in the same corridor. I occasionally noticed children from the reception room loitering in the toilet area, or peeping out from the doorway, waiting for another child to arrive, in order to engage in play, i.e., water play when there were two or more of them there, although if an adult passed by, they quickly finished up and returned to class. One day I heard a teacher say to a boy, 'Hurry up, then; stop messing around and get going.' A moment later, I heard the same boy repeat those words to someone in the girls' toilet, signalling his appropriation of cultural demands (field notes, 9 March 2017).

On the other hand, looking for company was not always directly related to negotiating the rules: one child who was peeping around the door frame asked me to stand outside the toilet when she saw me walking down the corridor. She kept peeking out to make sure I was still waiting in the hall. When I walked her back to the classroom, I told the teaching assistant that she had seemed nervous and asked me to stand outside. The TA explained that previously the fire alarm had gone off when the girl was in there, so that now she was afraid (field notes, 5 July 2017). The activity of going to the toilet, therefore, presented a significant opportunity for the reception year children to develop competencies associated with being given responsibility of themselves in readiness for the demands of primary school.

### **Classroom design and expectations for behaviour and activity**

The expectations for children's responsibilities, behaviour and activity were reflected in the layout and design of the classroom. The classroom was arranged with many colourful toys and loose parts around the perimeter and small tables and chairs in one half of the centre of the room and a carpet/rug on the other half. The rug was centred in front of the teacher's laptop and the interactive white board (Figure 5.5); it was used for circle time and whole group lessons, but the children could play on it as they wished during free time. The areas around the perimeter are loosely structured by subject area: a topical/themed role play area which changed each half term, i.e., theatre, shop, mini-beast science station; a craft/creative corner with a table, paper, pens, scissors, paints next to the cleaning supplies and sink; a literacy corner with a bed, beanbags, dress up clothes, books; a literacy and numeracy area with Numicon shapes, pens, papers, worksheets, desks and chairs; a construction area with figures, LEGO, blocks and cars and other plastic small toys.

While there were specific areas to which the classroom resources belonged, all of the resources were freely accessible to the children and there was a sense of ownership in that they could move the resources around as they wished during 'free play' time. The scissors were kept in holders on the wall at child height, for instance; and the children knew where everything was located and seemed to have free access to all materials. Although the children engaged with the objects in each area, and the things were all human-constructed with loosely specific intentions associated with them, the children could use the classroom resources anywhere in the classroom during free play time. This

indicated that the specific areas were provided to give ideas, rather than to be prescriptive, and were intended to offer structure for *tidy-up time*, so that the children knew where everything went.



Figure 5.5 Numeracy Area



Figure 5.6 Literacy Area

During *tidy up time*, they were responsible for putting everything back in its place, too; this activity contributed to teaching the expectations and values of the institution. In regard to expectations for teachers, however, it may have appeared to the children that the demands for tidying up were solely the responsibility of the children. While the learning support adults also helped put things away, the classroom teacher used the time to get the next activity ready and to encourage the children to prepare for this next activity by clearing away and taking responsibility for putting their projects in their designated areas. The teacher did this by calling out and counting down from 10 to 1, which perhaps contributed to the impression from the child's perspective that adults did not tidy up in the classroom. For instance, although I often helped tidy up, using the

opportunity to contribute to the classroom activities, one afternoon I wrote field notes about the play session instead. A young girl approached and asked me, 'Why aren't you tidying up?' Before I could answer, she said, 'Oh yes, because you're a grown up.' This signalled a perceived separation of adults and children, reinforced by their roles and responsibilities in the classroom.

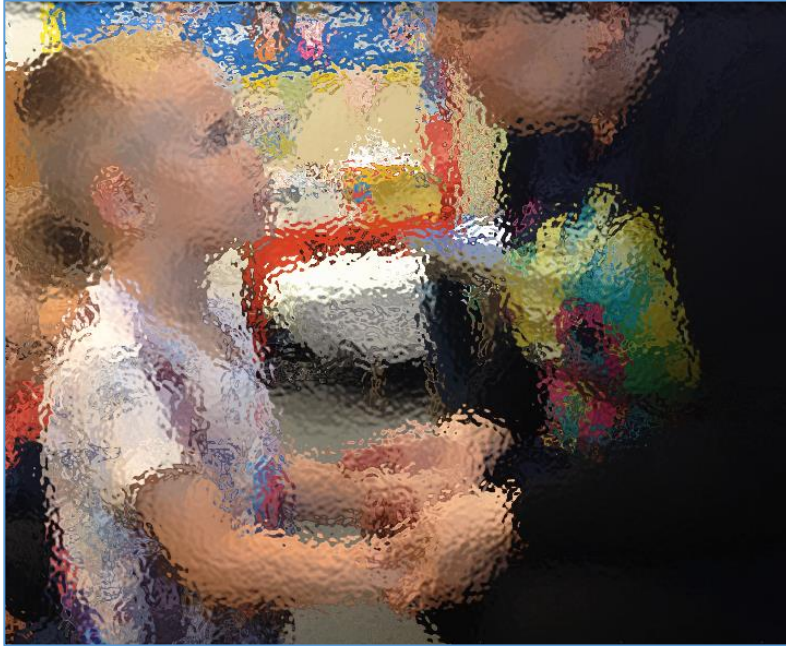
On the display boards in the classroom are displays of children's birthdays, Forest School Activities, Children's Rights and Responsibilities, and a 'gem' reward centre. This has cups that each child has decorated with their name and designs. They are tacked up to the display board and as a reward for specific behaviours, the children receive a gem (a plastic bead) to go into their cup (Figure 5.7).



*Figure 5.7 Gems in cups on display board*

### **5.2.3 Structure and (self)regulation**

One afternoon a boy who was bouncing around on the rug and finding it difficult to settle, listened as the teacher gave another child a gem for good behaviour earlier in the day. The boy immediately scooted over to the teacher on his knees, asking for a gem. She held his hands gently and stroked the top of his hands with her thumbs, calming him and encouraging him to look her in the eyes while they spoke (Figure 5.8).



*Figure 5.8 What can you do to get a gem?*

The boy told her: 'I want a gem.'

CRT: 'You would like a gem, ok? So what do you think you can do to have a gem?'

Boy: 'Sit criss-cross' [referring to the position of sitting with one's legs crossed in front].

CRT (nodding): 'Sit criss-cross and show me really good listening. And what about during play? What do you need to show me during play to get a gem in your cup?'

Boy: 'Good things.'

CRT: 'That's right, good things. Be kind. Sharing. And, letting others play with you. Because you have lots of friends here who want to play with you, so you need to let them play with you, ok?'

Boy: Nods.

CRT: 'Ok, show me your good sitting and I'll get some gems out for your cup.'

Boy goes to a place on the rug and sits with legs crossed, while teacher goes to get a gem from her selection tray (Field notes, 8 March 2017).

The teacher here indicates that specific valued behaviours are required for specific tasks in both whole group focused activities and during playtime. For focusing attention in whole group activities, sitting with legs criss-crossed on the rug, hands to oneself and attention on the person speaking are expectations of the institution. These expectations

contribute to the larger demand placed upon children of developing self-regulation and social skills, considered foundations for development (Bodrova and Leong, 2007; Bodrova et al., 2013). The expectation during playtime, to which she refers, is that the children will show consideration for others by sharing, being kind and playing with others in these ways. These expectations also contribute to the institutional demand of self-regulation and social skills development.

Interestingly, in the pilot study, the other reception year classroom teacher, who had previously been a teaching assistant in Key Stage 2 with years 5 and 6, said to me one day as I walked into her classroom, 'I can't believe I have to say "criss-cross, criss-cross" all the time! I don't know why they can't just sit still!' (*informal conversation recorded in field notes*, 24 June, 2016). Rather than implying that she felt such regulated sitting infringed upon the rights of the child, the teacher appeared angry at the children who could not or would not sit still without her intervention. This teacher had come from a small village school, which did not have the 'same challenges' that this school did, according to the teacher. In contrast, Mrs Gordon, the main study CRT with a Flying Start background, was clear that her role was to develop these skills, with compassion, so that her pupils could achieve to their potential and meet the demands of later school years. Her understanding of school readiness was to develop social and self-regulatory skills, such as being kind, sharing, playing well with others, knowing when to speak and when to listen, following rules and practicing appropriate responses to authority, which would empower them to meet the challenges that lay ahead in school (informal interview, 8 March 2017). While Mrs Gordon devoted much of her time to literacy and numeracy tasks and engaging children in scientific concept development as well, she asserted that the developmental levels of the pupils required equal grounding in personal, social and emotional skills.

These values in relation to school readiness skills were fabricated into the structure and routine of the classroom. This followed a similar pattern each day, except for when preparing for special events, such as presentations at assembly or the Nativity Play. The routine and structure was a rhythm of contraction into a structured and highly regulated sitting circle formation and expansion into unstructured play activities, although these time periods of play also included one on one structured skill development time with an adult. The daily routine typically was characterised by the following schedule:

9:00 am: *Opening circle*, composed of four distinct activities, with a focus on using Welsh language. During this time, two helpers of the day *helpwr y dydd heddiw* are identified by nametags, which are handed out to two children. This opportunity for responsibility was held in high esteem by the children, as it granted certain rewards, power and privilege i.e., badges and stickers, one's name being on the chart, helping the support staff, handing out milk and snacks.

I also see children helping each other out – they quite like to show each other what they know. It's not showing off, it's helping; but of course they do like that sense of praise and achievement that comes from helping others. They love to be Helper of the Day. Like R., yesterday he was biting people and so on, but today he was helper of the day and his behaviour was perfect! He needs more days like that, but so many kids in class means he can't be helper of the day as often as he would like, but

he also needs to realise that he can do that, even without having that badge on - but it takes time (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

This morning circle, and other circle times, were focused upon the children's participation for communication. Knowing when to listen to the teacher and each other and when to speak in turn was demonstrated by the activity of emotional checking in and Welsh language practice: Rhodri, a dragon hand puppet known as *Rhodri, the rights-respecting dragon*, is passed around and the children say how they are feeling, 'Dwi'n hapus, wedi blino, drist...' when they are handed the puppet. They were not encouraged to elaborate. If they did, the teacher smiled and asked them to pass the puppet on so everyone could have a turn. There was a sense of having a schedule to stick to, rather than a genuine orientation toward finding out how everyone was really feeling. Also, the activity appeared to have a primary goal: to use Welsh words for feelings. If the children met both expectations, sharing their feelings in Welsh, they received a nod, a smile and confirmation in Welsh: 'da iawn.'

Throughout the rest of the day, the schedule is divided into blocks of 15- to 30-minutes. These blocks of activity have outcome focused aims, ranging from subject areas to personal tasks, such as hygiene e.g., handwashing and tooth brushing. There are designated play times throughout the day. During play time children had freedom to play around the classroom; when the weather was good during the summer term, they were able to access outdoor area during free play in the afternoons. Due to the number of children in the class, they were on a rota system to use the outdoor area. Some children were called out of the classroom for WellComm assessments or supported parent/child activities in the canteen during these play times on certain days of the week.

The classroom teacher felt under pressure by expectations for outcomes, as she explains:

We are trying to do early years experiences the way the research tells us it's best to do it, with the free play and the experiences, but with the demands on us 'oh, they have to be at this stage by this age' and then we have to stop all the time to 'do literacy' and 'do numeracy' or stop that to go out and play... and there's no flow and it's contradictory. You never feel like you're doing it properly (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

When asked if she had time to communicate with children one on one, during more relaxed moments, such as play time, in order to assess informal moments for learning, outside of established literacy and numeracy work in which she had assessment criteria to complete, the teacher replied:

I don't think the structure of the day lends itself to that, not for that extended length of time. I mean even with all the time for play, they have assemblies and timetables – I know they have a lot of time for play, but with the timetable, by the time I've done an introduction and by the time they find an activity and settle into it and know what they want to do and are really in it, it's time to stop and go do something else. Especially with



the boys. I know some of the boys love the construction area where they all work together and they are playing things and working things out, and you can see their faces drop when it's time to finish, like X, his little face when he has to stop – he goes 'awww...'. He really does not want to stop. And I find that difficult because I know best practice would be that they have longer. It would be nice to give them extended periods of time to really have some in-depth time for play. I mean, I'm not really saying they're that disadvantaged by it; to a certain extent, this is what school is and it does have a routine and they have to get used to the fact that this is school and they have these short periods of play opportunities and that learning comes first (CRT, interview, 14 June 2017).

This highlights the demands of the literacy and numeracy framework assessment activities felt by teacher in the reception classroom and how that informs the class's daily routine. Also, although there is time for play for the children, there is not time for the adults to observe and assess the play itself due to undertaking the structured activities with individual children or in small groups. The teacher did not feel able to use the play periods to undertake the learning assessments. However, the classroom teacher valued unstructured play and set the tone for the rest of the staff to support the children's play ideas and activities while one on one and small group work was taking place.

The teaching assistants also helped with focused activities during the free play activities of the children; the Polish-speaking TA focused upon the Polish-speaking children, so tended to observe them and be nearby in their playful activities if not undertaking assessed activities. Therefore, overall, adults rarely entered or intervened in the world of children's play except to monitor and resolve episodes of conflict. These moments of crisis were usually only considered harmful to the flow of congenial play if a child complained about it to the adult, or if the conflict escalated so that the adults became aware of it. Frequently, the adults tried to listen to both sides of the dispute before asserting a resolution, thus using disputes as learning opportunities for social skills.

The motive orientations of the teaching staff are illustrated by the classroom teacher's comment, that although she feels 'best practice' would include longer play episodes, she was not sure that the children were actually 'disadvantaged by it ... this is what school is and it does have a routine and they have to get used to the fact that this is school and they have these short periods of play opportunities and that learning comes first' (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017). While acknowledging that long periods of uninterrupted play is important, she admitted that the role of the reception year is to prepare children for *school* in which play and learning are distinct activities. This preparation involves a great deal of regulation in order to teach children self-regulation.

During circle time activities, in particular, the teaching support staff monitored behaviour from the edges of the circle while the teacher led the activity. While there were behaviour-related reprimands throughout the day, the children as a group found it most difficult to meet the expectations and demands for quiet, still behaviour after being outside for play time and during the period right before lunch. For example, my field notes for one day read:

The children are expected to sit on the carpet and watch a Peppa Pig cartoon on the whiteboard for 20 minutes before lunch. During this time period that they are expected to stay still and quiet, there are several disturbances by adults: a Flying Start teacher comes in with a singing snowman hat on to talk to the classroom teacher, but the children are 'shushed' by the teaching assistant and LSA when they get excited. The teaching assistant puts the lunch bags on the tables for those who are having packed lunch, but the children are reprimanded for turning toward or straining to see if theirs has come in and where it has been placed. One boy takes a book out of the book tray and is told to put it away. Two boys say how hungry they are and ask if it's lunch time yet, and are told to be quiet. Those children who are absorbed in the cartoon are given a 'gem' by the teaching assistant for good behaviour (field notes, 2 February 2017).

While the classroom teacher was more capable and experienced in managing the whole class, the teaching assistants and learning support assistant were focused on managing behaviour in order to support the teacher - and to keep control if the CRT was out of the room. The LSA said that she felt her role was 'helping the children'; observations showed that she did one-on-one activities, such as drawing with children during their free play time, and directing their attention toward the teacher or the whiteboard in whole group activities (LSA, interview, 8 March 2017). Her communication with the children as a group appeared to be limited to commands related to expectations for self-regulation. When working in small groups or on craft projects with the children, however, she was able to communicate with them using fewer commands and more instructional conversation. For all of the support staff, the demands for regulating children were greater during circle time and whole group activities.

For example, sitting still when required on the carpet, with hands to oneself, appears to be a key skill for self-regulation the children are expected to learn in reception year. The preferred method for teaching children how to sit quietly was to ask them to sit with their legs crossed and with a forefinger to their lips as though restricting speech. From this position, they are chosen to go to lunch or line up for assembly, get their coats and other tasks for which they are chosen one at a time. The level of self-control required for this is quite high as they often have to wait patiently for the teacher to see them and then call upon them. This sitting is also required for focused activities, such as getting a snack or having a whole group activity in which their attention needs to be focused upon the interactive whiteboard. Fenwick (1998) argues that 'teacher directions and responses to students' are selectively biased toward coordinating the children's activity so that the group as a whole community runs efficiently:

Structures of discourse embedded in teacher directions and responses to students emphasize particular values and expectations (attention, order, accountability, hard work, responsibility, mutual respect), make clear what sorts of action are considered legitimate, and disregard as invisible those layers of activity and relations (covert student exchanges, peer group hierarchies, sexual conflict) which are not granted legitimate status in the classroom space. The immediate pragmatic constraint is safety for all, and coordination of movement so that students can complete the



tasks designed by the teacher. But at the same time, teachers want to encourage appropriate levels of student spontaneity, creativity and expression. In managing the classroom space, therefore, teachers are confronted by several tensions that they must orchestrate simultaneously and smoothly (Fenwick, 1998, p. 621).

In an interview, the classroom teacher expressed her intentions as: ‘Some just need more self-regulation skills and learning how to be in the classroom before they are ready to go up to year one. Reading context and knowing you know, like this is home time, this is when we get ready and get our stuff together [...] you’d be amazed how much of reception year is just “learning the ropes”’ (CRT, interview, 24 May, 2017).

Tensions between individual expression and whole group management was evident in the classroom, particularly in relation to speaking and volume levels. For children, learning how to negotiate the subtleties of when to speak and when not to speak is critical for meeting school expectations. The larger the number of pupils in one place, the noisier the smallest interactions could seem. For instance, in the pilot study, the classroom teacher had twenty-two pupils. I observed several examples of open-ended and engaged conversations indicative of sustained shared thinking during structured as well as unstructured activities. However, in the main study, the large class size meant that one on one interactions between adults and children were less frequent except during assessments, and small group interactions seemed to suffer also. Additionally, even if intended to be quiet, the conversations between peers contributed to a noisy classroom, so pupils were being told to ‘be quiet!’ very often. Due to the volume of noise, I was unable to record small group sessions as I had done in the pilot study. The teacher said that she felt ‘frazzled’ as she tried to assess all thirty-six pupils over the course of the terms in a variety of literacy and numeracy activities, but felt that although this one on one time was really important for the children’s communication skills, they still needed more specific one on one intervention in which there was a quiet space for that one on one interaction to get the full benefits.

Maynard et al., (2013) points out that the ‘major financial input in the Foundation Phase relates to new (higher) adult-to-child ratios –1:8 in nursery and reception classes’ (p. vii). Having four members of staff in the classroom was essential to ensure that children received the levels of support they required with negotiating being an individual in a community of peers in an institutional setting. Perhaps because of the large class size or the challenging behaviour of some pupils, much of the support was required for policing the rules of the classroom, in order to maintain cohesive community, which indicates that smaller class sizes are more suited toward more individual-responsive relationship building.

The classroom teacher had a background in Flying Start, which was evident in the way that she interacted with the pupils. She was aware of the challenges that many children faces in their home lives and the transitions between home and school. She also understood her role as one of supporting the children to make the transition from preschool or home to the classroom, by working on social skills, behaviour as well as emerging literacy and numeracy. The classroom teacher, who described some of the pupils’ home lives as ‘chaotic’ (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017), spoke briefly with each

parent, if possible, at school drop-off and pick up time, in order to create a bridge between the school and home. These were also opportunities for parents to come into the classroom, as well as programmes within the school during the school day. It appeared that Mrs. Gordon was continually available for the parents of the children, as she greeted each parent every afternoon. She said that her Flying Start background had contributed to her understanding of the importance of good home/school relations and trying to ensure continuity between both. Additionally, her role as leader of the Foundation Phase placed an expectation upon her to act as a mediator between other teachers and parents as well. She believed that the school was in a position to help some families find strategies to lessen the conflict between home and school practice. This was primarily aimed at ensuring parents understood the expectations of school practice, so that parents might accommodate their parenting style to be more in alignment with the school's discipline:

And, even families that are doing ok in school, the parents will come and tell me what the child is like at home – I think parenting skills are really lacking. They use a lot of technology at home to interact with the child.

I think the parents that I have to work with on behaviour, they don't want to challenge their children because they can't handle the emotional outburst; they will pander to their children and pussy foot around, so their child has all the power and calls the shots at home. The parents would rather give in than have the challenges of telling their child no (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017).

There was sense that a participatory approach to expectations in the classroom was encouraged, in the sense that the children were advised that they had choices, even if it was clear that a particular choice would result in disciplinary action. The whole class was introduced to the classroom charter in which behaviour expectations and boundaries were drawn up and explained by the teacher:

We are consistent from day one: the rules are the rules, this is how we are going to have a happy classroom, we have a class charter in the beginning, and we go through what's going to make us happy with our friends, and that never changes. So, they've got the boundaries and they know. They are consistent enough in school. But, you do get the odd children who will kick back and say 'no, I'm not listening to you, why should I listen to you, you can't tell me what to do.'

It's really conflicting for me, because I don't want to be all authoritarian and be like 'you're the child, you have to listen to me because I'm a grown up.' But, equally, if they keep breaking the classroom rules, that everyone else can follow to make a happy classroom society, then they have to face the consequences of that. But, they don't... they don't learn it and they keep retaliating back (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017).

Her overall intention was to enable each child to be a fully participating member of the community of practice in the classroom, which entailed following the rules, not hurting

each other, and learning effective communication skills. Supporting the children in their verbal communication was prioritised, particularly in encouraging them to ask for things, to speak in particular ways (e.g., kindly), and listening. Their writing and reading skills were developed in the small group work and in whole group activity.

Two gaps seemed evident, however, in relation to the institution embedding literacy skills in the expectations of everyday activity:

- Valuing Polish as an active language in the classroom, such as saying ‘good morning’ in Polish, in order to draw upon Polish-speaking children’s funds of knowledge. There were also children who spoke Arabic, Chinese and Hungarian in addition to English, but they were more fluent in English, so their languages were not visible nor drawn upon at all in the classroom.
- Valuing reading as a solitary, or relaxing small group activity in order to encourage a lifelong relationship with books.

Books were in the reading corner of the room, but reading was rarely chosen as a ‘free play’ activity. The teacher only read a book aloud to the class once a week, and teaching staff did not seem to read books themselves, only ask the children to read to them during literacy lessons. There were many filler moments in which an animated cartoon was put on the whiteboard, rather than reading to the class. It may have been that reading to the whole class of 36 children required a level of confidence in storytelling in order to hold everyone’s attention, whereas showing a film was an activity the children were used to at home and would settle and listen most of the time. Below is one example from my field notes:

At 2:00, those children whose parents are there for the parent/child learning sessions with the peripatetic support worker employed by the council get to leave to go into the hall to work on art/craft project with their parents. This week it was decorating a family tree. There were only about 8 children left in the classroom (half the class was at FS, 8 children were in the hall with parents).

The TA was trying to put a film on, but the computer/projector screen weren’t working. It felt like a perfect time to read a book to the children – something I’ve never seen happen, probably because there is difficulty with 36 children, but in this tiny group it felt possible. She worked with the computer for several minutes and some children were starting to fidget, a few saying that they wished they could go out for family time. I was sitting next to the book rack, so I picked one up. The child next to me got up to get a book, then another child got up for a book and sat down with it. Child A brought a book entitled HUG over to the LSA, but the LSA just put it down on the table. After a few moments the TA got the laptop working, so the children could watch a cartoon. I felt like I should focus and set an example, so I put my book back reluctantly. In the classroom, the children play with toys, are pulled aside for literacy or numeracy, then go back to playing with toys. I’m not sure they see an

adult reading a book? They love it when Miss E. draws for them. Inevitably when I'm taking notes, some children come over to me and want to draw as well and use my paper and pens. When I picked up a book, they also wanted to do that (Field notes, 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2017).

The pupils appeared to mimic adults for expected behaviour in relation to writing; for example, much of the mark making explored was writing letters for their names and making ticks in a row, as teaching staff did during their one on one time at the tables. It seemed like a missed opportunity to not have book reading as an imitable activity in the classroom, which could contribute to a sense of being part of a community of learners.

### **5.3 The Forest School**

The children attend Forest School (FS) one day a week throughout the school year (September to July) in nearby woodland, travelling by minibus. The children attend a half-day session every week, with half the class attending in the morning and half in the afternoon. Two members of the class teaching staff attend the Forest Schools sessions with half of the class, and two staff members stay in school with the other half of the class.

Zittoun (2016) presents a sociocultural view of institutions as 'temporarily solidified meanings and patterns of interactions, which are usually crystallized in different forms: materiality (as the walls of a school), semiotic constructions (as written regulation or textbooks) or ideal or communicational constructions, such as social representations...[They may be] strongly bounded to a material setting, such as a school...or more fluid institutions [that] can take places in different places and dissolve again' (p.2). In this study, Forest School may be characterised as a 'fluid institution', although Waite, et al. (2015) suggest that 'non-standardised practice can be challenging to study' (p. 868).

Although there is a centre in which the charity is located, the FS staff meet participants in local woodland settings nearest to the client group's location. Therefore, particularly in this study, the materiality of Forest School presents a contrast to the classroom – even an outdoor classroom -- in that it is within a local woodland with an area several times that of the classroom. The materials and resources belong to the non-built location, as well as material artefacts brought in for the sessions. So, too, are written artefacts being designed as the Forest School Association and Forest School Wales articulate Principles to assert what makes Forest School a specific practice (FSA, 2018; FSW, 2018).

The Forest School provision is delivered by two Forest School Leaders (Level 3 qualified) staff from a local registered charity specialising in Forest School and outdoor learning and play, one volunteer doing her Forest School Assistant (Level 2) training and one volunteer (a university B.Ed. student). In addition to the two members of school staff this meant that the ratio was usually 1 adult to 3 children. The Forest School is a registered charity, operating since 2000. The organisation consists of a board of trustees, a core staff of five people, plus free-lance sessional staff and volunteers. It is also a member of the Wales Outdoor Learning Training Network, the Forest School Association and Forest School Wales. All of these organisational structures make its practice well-placed to not be

dependent on any one person's interpretation of Forest School. However, this is not to suggest that individuals within the organisation do not share the institutional values, as one Leader expressed:

I remember saying to the director of FS something I picked up from my youth work training – something from student management or business psychology or something – the idea of a 'psychological contract', where as a worker you have the same values, principles, and goals as the organisation where you work. Forest School is the only place where I've ever felt that (FSL2, interview, 28 June 2017).

Such a statement asserts an alignment in values and expectations between the practitioner and institution that has been found in other studies of Forest School practice (see McCree, 2014; Davis and Waite, 2005).

Zittoun (2016) argues that 'institutions are usually "given" to people by the social environment. Because of their material and symbolic composition and their particular temporality, they tend to be transmitted across generations' (p.2). Forest School in the UK is not a social institution that has been 'transmitted across generations', as it is a relatively recent development for use as a classroom tool. The Scandinavian model, upon which it is based, may be considered more of an institution in that regard, as it has cultural and historical roots in families engaging in forest summer holidays and in early years childcare (Leather, 2018). However, Forest School is based upon conceptualisations of playing outdoors, an activity setting which may be considered historically and culturally situated in institutions such as the family/home; however, it is an activity setting which has been interrupted in recent decades (Louv, 2004). The founder of the charity based the model for the organisation upon principles of play and participation for all ages and abilities, to create opportunities to play outdoors and access local woodlands for anyone deprived of opportunities for 'free play in nature', with an aim to serve children across advantaged and disadvantaged communities (Director, interview, 4 March 2018).

### **5.3.1 The woodland site**

The Forest School ethos is to provide Forest School in a woodland which is local to the client group, so temporary sites are set up in copses of trees or woodland closest to the school or community group. The charity has several sites available for their use throughout the county. This reflects the values of the charity to minimise the use of transport where possible and to encourage users to get to know their local woodlands, thus demonstrating an orientation toward Sustainable Development Goals (FSD, interview, 14 November 2016).

The Forest School sessions took place in local woodlands adjacent to the community and housing estate. The classroom teacher said that a few of the children may walk dogs there or visit with their family members. The children travelled two miles by minibus to reach the entrance to the woodland. The FS site was a short walk from the minibus drop off point, set behind a rhododendron hedge, which provided privacy from the public on the main woodland path. The boundaries of the site were not obvious, although the children seemed to know the perimeters and there were enough adults on hand to

ensure all stayed within the boundaries. The importance of staying within site was reiterated during circle time, due to its being a public woodland.

Entering the site through the hedge of rhododendrons off the public footpath helped to set the scene, however, of a private woodland. Branches were very low, creating a canopy effect, which one walked through to emerge into a clearing. In the centre of the clearing were two tall intertwined trees: a beech and a birch. The site had further natural boundaries on two other sides: one of rhododendron again and one an ancient hedgerow, which had overgrown. This hedgerow had a natural dip where some trees lay fallen and was composed of oak, ash, hazel and beech. There was also a path that led away from the site to the left, which was out of bounds past a small bridge and a path that led off site to the right, which was out of bounds past the mud puddle. This path led in one direction to a pond and in the other direction to a large clearing which had 150 year old oak trees on it as well as some rhododendron. This area was used as a second site for playing running games and treasure trails. Within this clearing, there was evidence of bonfires, such as large fallen trees and logs, which had been burned. The leaders had to check carefully for broken glass bottles before each session and occasionally had arrived at the woodland to find youths camping. Beyond this clearing lay more woodland, which the children would occasionally access for structured activities, such as treasure hunts, when the weather was very cold and the children needed warming up by walking.



Figure 5.9 The Forest School site (drawn by P. Taylor)

The circle area situated within the site's primary clearing was punctuated by small hazel trees and large oak trees, which were useful for hanging the shelter sheets on rainy days. The leaders set out seating mats or overturned black buckets in a circle before the children arrived, with a stuffed animal on each one. Logs seem to be the usual seat of choice in Forest School sites, but staff said that in this site, they preferred to leave no trace when they left, in order to not encourage use of the site by community members. 'If we have logs here, young people just come in and burn them when their firewood runs out,' said FSL1 (FSL1, informal interview, 20 November 2016).





*Figure 5.10 Fire circle*



*Figure 5.11 The 'extra' site beyond the boundaries*

Within the site, the Forest School staff had set up rope swings, a ropes course and net hammocks in particular trees which had been tested for safety. The children also had access to rope as a loose part each session and sometimes created rope swings themselves in lower branches of the rhododendron or used them in other ways. These ropes were also attached by the children to trees at the top of slopes and used to pull themselves up, or as boundaries.

More so than the classroom, this outdoor site was a co-construction between the Forest School practitioners, the site itself and the children. While some aspects of the space were designed and/or designated with particular purpose in mind by the FS staff, others were appropriated by the children for their own activities based on their perceptions of

the affordances of the features. The Forest School staff orientation appears to be centred upon promoting affordances for the children to experience the natural world without too many expectations placed upon their activity:

FSL1: I mean, the important thing is to have access to this [gestures to the woods] and [to] have a link with somewhere on their doorstep is really important and they might discover that this is a place where they can come and have some breathing space. I mean literally it is a breathing space. If someone wants to go off and be alone there is space for them to do that. I'm sure Mrs G. has noticed that.

This site works particularly well because it's got open spaces but it's also enclosed - it's got a good balance of trees to openness. I read this book about the brain on nature which said there's an optimal formula for what ratio of trees to space makes people feel restored and calm... like if it's too dense or dark people can have panic attacks or feel anxious. If it's too open, it's still beneficial to be outside, but it doesn't feel safe and held.

FSA: There is lovely dappled light today coming through the beech leaves which makes you feel very good. Mrs G noticed it too today – and said that the energy was really calm.

FSL1: It works here – there is just enough space – they feel free and there's enough space, but they also feel safe as they can see the boundaries. They don't feel hemmed in, but they also don't feel like they've been dropped into a vast forest.

We were up there playing *1, 2, 3 Where are you?* [hide and seek game], and instead of counting we were just listening to the birds, and imagining what they might be saying, and someone said, 'I want to play with you'. So they are aware of what's here.

FSA: That's funny, 'cause when we were hiding [her team], someone found a little spider in the bark of a tree and we were talking about why it might live there and why different species choose certain habitats.

FSL: There are chances for incidental encounters – just as well, you know if you tried to set up bug hunting, it would be too dry or you couldn't find any [laughs]. But, if you stumble across something, everyone is like, wow, look at this! That's really nice, because it's that sense of wonder - it's the wow factor and the sense of discovery and finding something unexpectedly that they really engage with. Not that bug hunts can't be like that... but you can then introduce something else they have to deal with, like not finding anything and being discouraged. They are really into the robins who have been here all year. And, last week, the squirrels got into the raisins but only at lunchtime when the kids weren't here – because of course that's what happens – the animals come out when



everyone goes away. We do make bird feeders out of lard and pinecones and bird seed, and then you can see from week to week that something's been eating it, even if they don't see it happening.

They certainly interact directly with leaves and trees all the time though. Although last week, they wanted to go look for frogs... we had been watching the frog spawn and the tadpoles all spring but hadn't been back to the pond for a few weeks. We didn't see any though.

There's always a heron up by the lake. And there are kingfishers on the stream or river over there (FS Staff, interview, 14 June 2017).

The Forest School staff appear to be interested in the individual child's experience within the woods; their communication is related to affordances for shelter and refuge (Kirkby, 1989), quiet, contemplation and finding special things of interest in the woodlands. They also note that rather than plan too much, they find the spontaneous events that occur in the woods can guide the activity. This echoes what Lenz Taguchi (2010) calls an 'intra-active pedagogy' and what Kraftl (2015) calls 'biopolitical', in which it is ontologically impossible to plan in advance what kind of learning will take place. When asked about children's interactive experiences, one of the two Forest School leaders replied immediately with a description of the child's relationship with the place and the features of the place:

Well, there are the interactions that children have with the environment when they come here which is really important. And that might be very specific, like [Bence] always has this area up here and you know he's used it for so many things: it started off as a construction site and then a fast food restaurant ... around this area also is where they did all their painting and decorating. You know some children use certain areas very specifically (FSL1, interview 14 June 2017).

She continued to describe how the children and the adults together 'discover how you can use the site' in relationship to the natural features as well as 'what's happening to the environment... vandalism, weather or dangerous trees' (FSL1, interview, 14 June 2017). These orientations toward discovery together and shared experiences guided the leaders approach to facilitating the sessions.

Materials brought onto the site consisted of tarps, ropes, string, chalk, blackboards, nets, swings, buckets, spades, woodland creature puppets and some hand tools in a tool box. These could be taken by the children and used in any space that they chose around the site. This was similar to the classroom in that the children had agentic use of the equipment within the boundaries not harming the equipment, wildlife or each other. The adults would assist in putting up the swings and nets in places that were strong enough and safe enough to hold the children's weight. After a few weeks, particular branches seemed to support the nets and swings best, so the FS staff had them up already in the trees before the children arrived on site.

We have lots of loose parts – spades, buckets, ropes, tarps, puppets, which they use wherever they want to really. But, we put up, say the

swing, where we feel a branch is safe. They might try to then put up another swing on their own somewhere else, which is fine, and we'd just make sure it's in a safe place. Like there was a bit of jostling for turns on the swing over there, so we put another one up next to it – then they can run back and forth if they can't be bothered to wait [laughs].

We put the rope on the tree on the mud mountain which they found and turned into 'Mud Mountain', but we noticed they were using the trees to climb up, but some needed some help – or wanted us to help them – they're so little! – so one boy was trying to put a rope around that tree to use as a pulley system. So many of them used it then to get up – they don't even need it anymore! - so we put it up at the start of each session each week so it was already there. So some things are already here when they come, like the swings are up and the rope ladder, and the puppets we put around the fire circle or hide in the trees; the other stuff, the buckets and paintbrushes are just here for them to get if they want them.

So, they kind of create the space or it's created by the environment itself really and we all work with that. It changes throughout the year as well, like them noticing things, like it feels more enclosed now [with leaves] and in winter it feels more open (FSL1, interview, 14 June 2017).

Not only was the design of the site determined by the natural features, it was also co-created to some extent with the children; and, its design and use changed according to the season was influenced by the site itself, rather than by human design.



*Figure 5.12 Climbing Mud Mountain*



*Figure 5.13 Swings and trees*

While the Forest School staff wanted the children to explore the imaginative potential for play of the non-human nature and features already present on the site, they also brought in artefacts for the children to use. Each week they considered what ‘kit’ they needed to bring for the next, based upon the children’s previous use of the artefacts, even if that seemed to go against their own orientation for not wanting to bring in too many props:

I think you can have too much kit – it stops kids from - well, it feels like I have a lot of kit here today [looking around and laughing]. It’s interesting, because over a certain number of weeks, kids expect you to bring things back and you have to remember that some kids get attached to stuff you bring, they make very strong attachments, especially to the animals, so if you bring 16 puppets, but forget the one they’re attached to, the number is neither here nor there, if you forget that one they’re attached to, it can be devastating for them. So, I think you have to tune into your group and be aware that if there is a child who needs something, then you need to bring it. And that continuity is important, although that doesn’t mean that over time you might not try to work with that child to wean them away from that one object, maybe not take it away, but as part of what you’re doing with them and [their needs] (FSL1, interview, 14 June 2017).

This presents a value orientation toward artefact use which is geared toward developing imagination in giving children access to both non-human features as well as specific human-made tools. It is also focused upon responding to, rather than solely guiding, the children’s interests. The leaders demonstrate flexibility in their orientation, so that the children’s needs and interests are given the highest priority. In this sense, the orientation of the Forest School is characteristic of informal learning. Rather than just being something that happens outside of schools, Rogoff et al. (2016) claim that informal

learning is more about 'how learning is organised and supported, rather than *where* it takes place' (p. 357, emphasis in original). Informal learning's list of criteria is: 'embedded in meaningful activity, builds on the learner's initiative or interest or choice (rather than resulting from external demands or requirements), and does not involve assessment external to the activity' (Ibid., p. 358). This supports spacious pedagogy.

Pedagogical tools such as risk assessments, session plans and formative/summative evaluation sheets were part of the FS leader's artefacts, although both leaders asserted that they were 'dynamic' and open to changing conditions. A session plan helped to consider what activities might correspond with the season or build upon the previous weeks and to plan for what 'kit' to bring the next time and the evaluations at the end of each session fed into what they planned or brought for the following week. For example, human-made artefacts to support written/emergent literacy were not present at the beginning of my field work. Sometimes the leader brought a story book, or instigated some drawing with charcoal from the fire took place to support emergent literacy, but such provision appeared limited. However, when after a few weeks of a small number of pupils wanting to use my pens and paper, small chalkboards and chalks were purchased by the charity and brought along as part of the Forest School 'kit' to support the children's interests.

### 5.3.2 Structure and (self)regulation

Although each session allowed for flexibility according to the children's interests and choices, there was a structure and routine to the session which stayed the same each week. The structure also had an expand/contract feel as the classroom did with children being drawn together for certain activities, then allowed to go away and make their own play choices. This drawing in and sending out had the same motive orientation for the Forest School as it did for the classroom: to practice self-regulation and to listen. In the Forest School, however, the children were instructed that they needed to do this to consider how to take care of themselves, how to take care of others and how to take care of the forest. The primary difference between the routines was that the time allocated to play was longer at Forest School than in the classroom due to no formal assessments taking place; the adults – both the teaching staff and the Forest School staff – were able to spend most of their time observing and supporting the children's activity. The classroom teacher, in particular, was better supported in the woodland environment as she had a member of school staff with her, 3-4 Forest School staff who were responsible for the routine, and only half the class (13 children or less). She was better able to have individual conversations with the children, to observe their activity and record audio-visually what they were doing. This difference and providing a structure to support that was part of the Forest School's orientation to practice; they did not want to recreate the classroom in the outdoors.

The typical structure of the day was as follows:

**9:30/1:00: Circle time:** Children arrive and take a seat around the fire circle. The fire circle was set up before the children arrived, so that upon their arrival they could walk straight to a seat for the group greeting. They sometimes played a little on the way, but mainly

headed straight to the circle. The seating area was not so dissimilar in that sense to the carpet in the classroom; however, no one was asked to cross their legs or put their fingers over their lips. Being quiet did not appear to be particularly valued in the Forest School institution, although listening is. When they arrived there was a puppet on each seat, so the children had a toy to hold or set aside as they wished. They fidgeted; they balanced on the buckets; picked up a stick; played with, passed on or set down their puppet; and they listened. The leaders explained that listening was important so that the children could keep themselves safe.

During the opening circle, the Forest School leader often held an artefact or material object up for the children to see, such as a loppers or bug box that the children might choose to use, or a craft item that they could choose to make that day. Sometimes it was a leaf or other object found on the woodland floor, which the leader would show the children. A plan was either suggested or made for the day's session: if one of the children was curious about whether the frog spawn in the pond had hatched into tadpoles, for instance, that would be the opening activity. Often the leader would explain a whole group activity to start that she had prepared earlier such as a treasure hunt to find a treasure that the children might use that day, such as mallets to do *hapa zome* (leaf printing technique) or a whole group game, such as tag or a den building challenge.

**9:40/1:10: Whole group activity/game:** tag or treasure hunt kind of activity with whole group (as described above).

**10:00/1:30: Unstructured play:** The children chose a variety of activities and moved from activity to activity freely. Some children chose to stay with one play area, especially if they became involved in a project. For one boy, it was taking apart a log bridge and rebuilding it. Each week, he returned to the project and various other children joined in for a short time. The classroom teacher said that that was one thing she found enjoyable about the Forest School sessions: '...watching the children get really involved in something and not having to tell them to stop after 15 minutes' (CRT, interview, 1 March, 2017). For all of the adults, but especially for the classroom teacher, who was unable to observe the children at play in the classroom for very long, the opportunity to watch the children in a relaxed atmosphere was very important. From an observer's perspective, the atmosphere always seemed calm. Even when the children were running around playing tag or shouting, the session never felt chaotic or out of control. With half the class, twice the staff ratios and at least four times the space, perhaps that is not surprising; however, it also seemed that being outdoors absorbed the sound. While in the classroom, there was often a lot of 'shush'ing; in the woodland, the children were not asked to regulate their volume, even during circle time.

**10:30/2:00 (approximately): Circle time/Snack time:** the children were called over to have a snack and a hot drink or juice if they wanted it. Sometimes children offered to help in the passing out of snacks. When they were finished, they could return to their play.

**10:45/2:15 (approximately): return to play**

**11:30/2:40: Circle time to close.** A woodland puppet was handed around the circle for sharing time. When each child held the puppet, they were asked what they enjoyed doing that session and what they might like to do next time. Then the puppet was passed on.

Following everyone's turn, they lined up to leave the woods and gave the leaders a high five as they left the woods to return to the bus and school.

Although there was a structure to the day, within that structure there was space for the leaders to follow the children's interests or to adapt the session plan so that the children could have some freedom within that. Even within planned activities, the leaders felt that they could allow for individual creativity and not prescribe how the children had to undertake an activity. The Forest School leader (FSL2) described the following session:

We had a plan that we were going to do a fire, but we noticed the rhododendrons [had bloomed] and decided we would collect the flowers with buckets and make magic carpets [from sticks and flowers laid on the ground]. If you get hung up on making the picture frame, it kind of defeats the objective of creativity. We let them turn it into their own activities. [My demonstrating] the picture frame with flower petals inside is a kind of instigator, especially for those who like to follow something first. We just said, 'we want to collect treasure' and then it turned into several different activities. Some comparing flowers, other quantities, T., D. and W. hiding flowers and layering; L. N. B were making patterns, W. didn't know what to do when we started the frames, D. was really proud that he had made a flower out of petals and a stick after being shown how by Miss. He was so excited to take it home to his mother. R. got really into doing what I had done [for a demonstration] and made a picture. L-M made necklaces to take home to mum. There were choices, but not ones that we had provided, necessarily. They had their own ideas, watched each other, and had time to change direction, do something else. K. made a magic wand (FSL2, interview, 27 April 2017).

I noticed that during circle time in the beginning, the leaders would tell the children what they had planned for the day in a general sense, such as explaining an opening group activity prior to 'free play' time. However, there was a flexible approach even toward the group activity. For instance, one day a child shouted out: 'Can we go see the tadpoles?' during the opening circle, and the leader responded: 'Oh, yes, let's! I wonder if they are still there or if they have turned into frogs?' And everyone got very excited and jumped up to walk over to the pond. The leader used their enthusiasm to gather them around in a circle and talk to them about how they were going to go over to the pond, how they needed to stay safe by staying behind the rope barrier. While she was saying this, the other Forest School leader ran ahead to put the rope barrier around the pond and to be there when the children arrived (field notes, 10 May 2017).

This was a common approach to spontaneous activity – due to the number of adults, the Forest School leaders were able to follow the children's interests by assigning adults to special areas or particular activities. There were usually five adults to fifteen children, which gave the impression that rather than the adults 'smothering' the children, there was a sense of community. Adults were usually spread out observing and being on hand for support, with one or two focused on a particular activity with greater risk involved, such as tree climbing or the fire. Sometimes a pair would cluster together to casually chat

about the children's play. Both the Forest School leaders and the teacher commented upon the pleasure they took in communicating about children's learning and development with each other during these 'free play' sessions. The classroom teaching staff felt supported by the Forest School staff, so that they did not have as many concerns about control, despite the fact that risky activities, such as tree climbing and being on the edge of the pond, were taking place (CRT, interview, 1 March 2017). The approach to regulating the children's behaviour and activity could be relaxed in the outdoor space, due to the space and numbers.

#### *Adult – child interaction*

In the Forest School setting, all of the adults observed the children's play actively. Wood (2014) suggests that 'where free choice and free play are privileged as the main ways in which children learn, this may reduce opportunities for children to choose activities alongside adults, in which they can share interests and intentions, through flexible and responsive engagement' (p. 5). However, at Forest School, although the unstructured 'free play time' was provided in which children could choose what they wanted to do, some activities were undertaken specifically by one adult, such as particular crafts or lighting the fire, in which the children joined in. The Forest School leaders felt that one aspect of the adult's role was to be a role model. They would begin to gather wood to light a fire, use tools or create clay creatures or other craft activity and the children who wanted to would join in and be given instruction, as required. The following week, some children would then ask to use tools or to light a fire and be further supported by an adult (field notes, 29 January 2017). The adults held their teaching position in these moments very lightly however. If a child, for instance, was using a tool incorrectly – but not dangerously –, the leader would ask questions to initiate an opportunity for the child to try it differently.

There were also opportunities for spontaneous play between adults and children, some of which invited a switch in social roles (Sutton-Smith, 1997). For instance, a Forest School leader spontaneously transformed a long rope she was winding up to put away into a lasso and started to 'corral the children'. After she had left the game, some of the children continued to play it and later in the day and the next week, they roped up the teacher and the teaching assistant, thrilled with their subversive play (see Figure 5.14). This '*doing of playfulness*' (Horton and Kraftl, 2017, p. 218, emphasis in original), characterised the adult approach, particularly those of the FS Leaders.





*Figure 5.14 Tying up the teacher*

Adults moved around the site, supporting children as needed or just observing. Because of the high ratio of adults to children (1:3), each adult seemed to be keeping an eye on a different activity setting within the space, i.e., someone watching the rope swing, someone else standing by the muddy puddle, one person travelling around, one person by the fire, but also moving fluidly around the site. There was not necessarily a designated person at each activity – except for the fire, which required a FS Leader - because the activities changed with the children’s interests, so the adults would move around a lot. Also children asked for certain things or had trouble with something, like getting a turn on the swing, so an adult might intervene by chatting with the children about the problem and trying to find a solution together. Then the adult would stand by that particular activity and observe the children’s play for an unspecified amount of time. These moments of adult intervention in the children’s play seemed to only take place if someone was having difficulties being included or understanding how to use a tool or play a game, or if there was a conflict between children. They first watched, however, and usually only intervened if a child approached them to ask for help or if they felt it was a serious situation in which someone might be harmed.

Although the leaders carried out formative and summative evaluations after each session for each child, they did not have to formally assess the children. Their evaluations fed into what activities they would support for the next session and what support each child might need for meeting any challenges, according to a list of holistic development areas of learning from the Foundation Phase framework. However, when asked if she was



following specifically a Foundation Phase framework for particular outcomes or a strictly free-play, child-initiated play work approach (Play Wales, 2017), the FSL1 replied,

‘A bit of both. I wouldn’t say that I’m completely savvy with everything ‘cause I don’t work in the classroom environment, but I have read all those documents at various points and talk with the teachers. And, sometimes teachers will ask us to do particular things – to go with particular themes or criteria that they have to meet. [...]

On the whole, the way I’ve gone with it, this is the fourth year of this reception class project, is to go by feel with where the kids are at – and the way the kids are going -- and incorporate certain things that they might be doing in class – like this year, they were really into writing with your being here with your notebooks [laughs] so we got chalkboards and chalk and followed their interest in writing and drawing, so they could be developing their work with fine motor skills as well as their gross motor skills, but really it comes from them. And we just focus on them.

This class particularly I felt, when they first came – they were quite diverse in their abilities, they were quite diverse in every way...It’s almost impossible to plan for meeting everyone’s needs, so it’s been a case of just letting them go – whoosh! [gestures throwing arms out into space] – into the woods and then see who is doing what, who needs what, who is struggling, who is achieving, who is in their comfort zone and who is not. And, kind of helping them to get to the next rung up the ladder from where they’re at.

I think you can probably do that better in the woods than maybe in the classroom, there’s more scope for doing that and it’s less formal and less outcomes based, well, the outcomes are happening anyway, but you don’t have to do that formal, you know, assessing (FSL1, interview, 14 June 2017).

Lester and Russell (2008) argue that policy often fails to have a definitive definition of play, which contributes to the interpretation of play as that in which the only good play is that which contributes to the child’s development and maturity. In Wales, the Foundation Phase Framework tends to consider outdoor play in terms of outdoor learning and its relationship to development and maturity. Yet, there is an attempt to differentiate between learning in the outdoors and that which might just as well be undertaken indoors:

Outdoor learning is not just taking indoor activities and doing them outside. It is not letting children outside for play time. Understanding this difference is key to good practice. It is an attitude of mind rather than a bank of lesson plans or resources. The outdoors is not an extra to the Foundation Phase: the Foundation Phase and the outdoors are inseparable (p.3).

This 'attitude of mind' seems to be a call for looking through a lens of playwork or outdoor play, rather than strictly through a 'teaching/curricular' lens. In fact, the Forest School approach has been suggested by the Welsh Government as a 'complement' to the Foundation Phase: 'The Forest School approach to children's development and learning complements the Foundation Phase pedagogy' (DCELLS, 2009, p. 6). Although the staff are not assessing for particular outcomes, they are able to meet many of the aims of the Foundation Phase in relation to physical activity, health and well-being. The charity works with learners of all ages and abilities, from parents, babies and toddlers, primary schools, secondary schools, pupil referral units and special education units to other charitable organisations, such as British and Ethnic Minority groups and Women's Aid. This variety of client groups informs their practice beyond the Foundation Phase Framework; however, they recognise their contribution to the aims of the Foundation Phase.

Even so, the motive orientation of the Forest School leaders was certainly impacted upon by the lack of formal outcomes that the classroom teachers felt she had to achieve. The Forest School staff saw themselves as facilitators, rather than teachers; although some FS leaders in the organisation have teaching qualifications, the two in this study did not. The leaders cited their 'lifestyle' experience in the outdoors as their main qualification. They lived in low impact housing; and, when asked how she got involved, FSL1 said that she had lived at Greenham Common after school and learned everything she needed to know about living outdoors and cooking over a fire. FSL2 said that, although she was a trained youth worker, much of her approach her to play and conflict resolution at FS came from her own childhood memories of playing outside. These perspectives echo an approach noted by Chawla (1994): 'adults' childhood memories of the outdoors may affect the sort of provision they are likely to consider for children in their care' (cited in Waite, 2011, p.69). Certainly, the FS staff lifestyles and occupations were in alignment – and both focused upon the relationships between human and non-human nature. They considered their specialism to be in supporting children to play 'in the woods and feel at home here – because it is their local community' (FSL1, informal interview, 15 March 2017), although they also supported the needs of the classroom teacher for meeting what was expected of her.

Additionally, although the Forest School leaders had an orientation toward unstructured activities and play, they did not equate that with no structure or framework within which they provided play opportunities: 'We don't just let them run riot,' remarked one leader. 'But we don't try to control them either.' While the Forest School approach to control was noticeably lighter in touch than in the classroom, the Forest School leaders had similar approaches and motive orientation toward self-regulation in conflict situations between peers, as described by FSL2: 'We try to diffuse, distract, it's not always easy. We try to use the right words and emotional literacy.' Her approach to two boys who were punching each other exemplified this Forest School's approach to conflict: 'I walked over and I separated them, talked to them individually and I was then able to say, "ok, now I see why this happened, I can see why you felt so bad you had to hit someone, why you may have felt so angry, but physical violence is not acceptable." Then she explained to them why this was the case: "We can't have people here who lose control. We have a lot of dangerous activities: fires, knives, and we have to be calm and responsible for ourselves and take care of each other too" (FSL2, interview, 28 June 2017).

This seemed to exemplify the Forest School staff approach to conflict and/or challenging behaviour, in which their interventions consisted of listening to the children, acknowledging emotions, and explaining why something could not be tolerated. In fact, all of the rules at Forest School were introduced to the children in the context of why they were important and how, by following them, certain goals could be attained or certain outcomes avoided. Rather than regarding certain behaviours as negative or irresponsible (Hughes, 2012) or regarding children as deficit of mature adult behaviour in which they are conceived as ‘becomings’, i.e., adults in training (see Prout, 2005), the Forest School Leaders accepted the cause of children’s behaviour and acknowledged it, from the position of children as ‘beings’ *and* ‘becomings’. By acknowledging emotions, acknowledging the behaviour, then explaining how and why that would not work, the Forest School leader provided the children with an opportunity to take control of their behaviour and an understanding of why that might be a preferable option for the future. The intervention was both necessary and sensitive (Else and Sturrock, 1998), in order to engage respectfully with the child in the present ‘being’ while at the same time instructing them on expectations for ‘becoming’, thus acknowledging the child as an agentic individual within a collective institution.

The Leaders considered their primary role to be to accept, support and guide children’s participation in the setting, in whatever form that might take. One Forest School leader considered the definition of participation as ‘involvement – in any way you can’ (FSL2, interview, 28 June 2017). When asked how that might be enacted in the Forest School setting, she replied that because there are no assessment tasks in the woods, the adults are able to ‘consider what the child is actually doing...We recognise that everyone learns differently, in their own ways and their own time’ (Ibid.). She connected the children’s participation with her role as a leader:

I see my role as to facilitate play – in that age group anyway... my idea of play comes from play background, I suppose, all that intrinsically led and personally motivated ... I don’t always agree with personally directed, in some ways, for instance, in that video we watched of Sylwia playing tag – she had absolutely no idea what was going on, she needed some guidance because she was getting distressed because she didn’t understand, so it was necessary to help her understand the rules of the game, or the idea of the game. We bring a lot of props and we also utilise the woodland landscape for imaginative and other kinds of play. And we do actively encourage it, probably more than adults in that kind of learning arena (FSL2, interview, 28 June 2017).

The Forest School staff seemed to consider the children differently to the classroom staff, in that there was less demand for accepting the adult’s authority, simply because they were adults and ‘in charge’. When asked how she felt about children’s rights and responsibilities, one leader commented:

Well, they are just shorter than the rest of us, but that means they see some things differently, more closely. And they take the time to see things in more detail, quite often. You know the expression “herding

cats”? [laughs]. They are all independent, looking out for little things, bumping into each other, going at their own pace, but they are still all cats who want to play – just in their own way. [laughs] I don’t know why I’m comparing kids to cats – I’m more of a dog person! But, it’s the same with dogs, they’re all different and while some might fit in with the pack better than others, they all have their own history and things going on. I know a lot of rescue dogs who have all had their own trauma in the past and you just go with where they are at, get to know them and do the best you can to make them feel safe with you, safe with others, so that they have the best life possible (FSL1, informal interview, 26 April 2017).

She further explored this idea, quick to note that she was equating children’s perceived status as like animals ‘as second class citizens’, with adults feeling superior to them. FSL1 mused on the idea that like animals, children are often traumatised as a result of adults who see them as pets received for Christmas, then discarded, or as animals ‘trained’ without understanding of their innate nature as having inherent value in themselves. While she laughed at herself for getting her ‘metaphors in a twist’, what she seemed to be describing was an understanding of human and non-human nature being equally respected, and adults and children being equally valued as participating individuals within a community of mixed ages, abilities – and species (FSL1, informal interview, 26 April 2017). This corresponds to social ecological principles, as well as those of democratic education based upon children’s rights.

The other Forest School staff all held this same perception that children were often treated in a way that did not respect their individuality and individual needs.

It can be frustrating sometimes – and you can see why teachers maybe give up and just shout, “Do this now!” – I do it myself as a parent. But we all mess up as parents – and get stressed and shout, then wish we hadn’t. But then we have time to apologise and most of the time, hopefully, we aren’t shouting, so it’s a one-off kids can recover from and you have time to make sure it’s not a pattern or whatever. Whereas, the way that I see it, at work, whether you’re a teacher or Forest School leader, you don’t get repeated second chances – you’ve got to treat children with respect all the time! If you’re stressed, you need to sort it out. It’s our job to be calm, to be patient, to see children as individuals with individual needs, to care about whether they had breakfast or not, or whether they are feeling sad (FSA, informal interview, 27 April 2017).

It’s nice for them to get some space to be able to say how they feel, do what they want about it and be respected for those choices. That’s what we all want, isn’t it? (FSL1, informal interview, 27 April 2017).

These perspectives on children as human beings with the same emotions and needs, and the rights to express those and be respected, as adults and a perspective on adults as human beings who are still ‘becoming’ themselves contributes to an understanding of Forest School, in this context, as an institution with an alternative approach to the classroom as an institution.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter contribute to considering the first research question: What are the expectations and values of the institutions, as characterised by the socio-material affordances of practice? The expectations and values of the institutions were similar in many ways, which reflected both institutional values in principle and the personal values of the individual adults. In the classroom, practice – and the social and material affordances – was directed toward achieving the aims of the Foundation Phase in respect to developing social and emotional skills, including self-regulation, being part of a group and individual well-being; providing play opportunities, both within structured and unstructured time periods; and working on literacy and numeracy skills with a focus on early intervention. However, the classroom teacher was frustrated that her role, and the subsequent activity of the children, was so focused upon assessment for these aims. She felt that the children needed the time and space of reception year for ‘learning the ropes’ (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017) of being in school, which she argued could be delivered without having to break up the day into learning/work moments divisible from play time. This impacted upon what she afforded the children as a social other; she said that she felt the children associated her with ‘work’:

in the school, they can see that there is a big divide between work and play which isn’t ideal. Because that’s not supposed to happen – they shouldn’t always think of sitting at a table as work, and being on the floor is play. And it’s segregated. And, they see me and my table as work! (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

The classroom teacher was more able to observe and also join in playful activity when she accompanied the children to their trips to the forest. The lack of time to observe play in the classroom impacted on the children who required more input for self-regulatory behaviours, in that the adults in the classroom were less able to observe the whole situation around the child and his/her interactions with others and objects. The teacher explained her perspective:

There are some kids who demand a lot of time, behaviour wise. I think because I am working to a tick list of getting kids through a focused task I engage with them then, but I don’t have time to engage when they are playing or watch each child in a playful situation (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

In the Forest School, the socio-material affordances made available were related to facilitating children’s social and emotional skills development for (self) regulation, physical development and relationships with the natural environment. There were fewer demands to follow a particular curriculum, so the adults could spend most of their time observing, thus providing support based upon the interests and needs of individual children and creating a playful environment. While there was a routine which shaped the session, within that routine there was flexibility for what activities were actually undertaken. This notion of the adults there as support extended to the classroom staff also, who visibly relaxed in the Forest School setting as they felt confident that the Forest School leaders were providing a safe space within which the children could play and explore. Due to an absence of assessment pressures, the classroom teacher was afforded

a space in which she could be social with colleagues and children and also take photographs of the children at play for later use in a reflective assessment capacity.

The physical features of the Forest School were considerably different, obviously, since the FS was held in a secluded section of woodland which had diverse features. The affordances of this setting were not only physical, however, but ideological. There were loose boundaries, which worked both ways, i.e., no CCTV camera ensuring the children's safety from the outside and physical walls keeping the children in. This provided affordances, therefore, for the children to self-regulate and stay within certain parameters and also to co-manage risk with each other and with adults. Similarly, demands for self-regulation were visible in the use of tools and resources, since they too had elements of risk associated with them. This reflected the expectations of the Forest School staff, in which children were perceived as simultaneously already competent in managing risk as well as developing competencies in managing risk with support from others.

Key findings presented in this chapter relate to how the physical spaces, the routines and structures, the range of activities supported, and the staff roles are used as tools to mediate institutional expectations for children's participation. The available affordances of these tools in both institutions are used to consider how the children participate in the classroom and at Forest School in the following chapter.

## Chapter 6 Findings: The Children

*Children's efforts and motives are usually directed towards successfully participating in the practice traditions of particular institutions. Children also create their own activities in the specific activity settings within these practices. As such, children's engagements and motives have to be seen in relation to both the traditional practices of the intuitions and the activities they generate for themselves in the institutions (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 15).*

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the data collection, which were gathered in relation to the research questions: How do developmentally, linguistically and culturally diverse children participate in activities in and across institutions? And, what is the child's experience of their participation and their developing motive orientation in relation to the demands of institutional practice from the child's perspective?

Although I observed the class as a whole, I focused on several children in particular, based on three criteria: informed consent and expression of interest in participating in research by parents, the child's assent and ongoing interest in participating, similarities in age (all turned five in the spring term of the reception year) yet diversity in linguistic, ethnicity and personality characteristics. In this chapter, I analyse moments of conflict in activity settings in both the classroom and at Forest School for five of the focus pupils using 'thick description' (Ryle *cited in* Geertz, 1973). The transcriptions of these events were based upon Hedegaard and Fleer's (2008) approach (samples provided in Appendix 3). Conflict was used as a *trigger* for transcription, in order to consider the child's motive and see 'what he or she is oriented towards', following Hedegaard (2008a, p. 19). Although this is a small sample size of children and events, from a large class with many interactions throughout every day, it provides an opportunity to consider activity settings from the child's perspectives, based upon a pre-determined criteria of *conflict*.

To participate in shared activities within family or school practices is a basic condition for children's development. They meet demands in these practices and challenges in their activities. The demands can be found both in the physical conditions and objects and in the activities. Conflicts can arise from not being able to handle objects, also as conflicts between different intentions of persons in the activities, and between different motives related to different activities in the practice (Hedegaard and Fleer, 2009, p. 260).

Reed (2008) argues that considering 'teaching and learning as a co-constructed dynamic' necessitates understanding 'learners' actions in relation to the teacher as expressions of agency' (p. 198). Negotiation, opposition, challenging, appropriating, creating,

transforming and other forms of participation present an opportunity for the child's development of self in relation to the values of the community of practice. Thus, an individual in crisis or conflict with others provides the researcher with a moment in which to consider the child's perspective and developing motive orientation as an agentic actor in collective activity. In this way, it is possible to consider how the child's participation can be viewed as developing competencies and motives in relation to the available affordances of institutions. Bang (2008) suggests that *small novelties*, or the 'ongoing flow' of the child's participation in activity settings, may be viewed as potential patterns that may eventually build into *great novelty* over time, in which developmental 'pathways' may surface and 'general capabilities emerge' (p. 119).

The transcription of the following episodes began the moment in which everyday activity appeared to shift toward conflict; the conflict is either between children or between child and adult, as an individual or as a representative of institutional demand. I consider the end of transcription as the moment in which the conflict appears to be resolved. Although there is an inherent tension in my asserting that there is a *beginning* and *ending* when observing ongoing processes and interactive experiences, I have constructed these notions of starting and stopping points in recognition of the necessity to manage data presentation in a way that is practical as well as purposeful.

Following the description of events, I consider how the individual child's participation could be viewed through a lens of affordances of *things*, *social others* and *self-experience*. The presentation of the findings for all of the children is based upon Bang's (2008, 2009) environmental affordance perspective, in the format below. However, I have modified the affordances from Bang's, which only lists affordances *promoted* by the institution, in order to present affordances that children perceive to be available, yet which may not be in alignment with the intentions of the institution. These are presented in the tables in **bold** print, to draw the reader's attention to their apparent juxtaposition with practice intentions. All affordances are presented within the descriptions in the body of the text in *italics*.

**Format of findings:**

Overview of child

Classroom episode of conflict

Affordance perspective

***Things and Their Affordances***

[Interpretations of the Affordances of Things](#)

How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?

***Social Others and Their Affordances***

[Interpretation of the Affordances of Social Others](#)

How does the child relate to the affordances of social others and how might that reveal small novelties?

***Self-experience and Motive Affordances***



## Interpretation of Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives

How does the child experience herself as a 'social other to herself' (Bang, 2008, p. 131)? How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the classroom?

### Discussion and summary

## 6.2 Jordan

### 6.2.1 Overview

Jordan had recently turned five years old at the time of the events described below (January birthday). In the classroom, he was one of the first children to greet me when I began fieldwork. He did not appear shy and quickly volunteered to be part of the study. Additionally, his mother came to the introductory meeting I held at the start of the fieldwork and volunteered him to be part of the sample group. She suggested that she would complete a home diary, although this was not one of my proposed methods for data collection. In the end, she did not do this.

According to the class teacher, he has been assessed for speech and language intervention due to his mispronunciation of certain words, and he has been observed by an educational psychologist to make recommendations about challenging behaviour in the classroom. The teacher describes him in her end of summer term assessment: '[Jordan] can be quite dominant and unkind to others in school. Responds to positive reinforcement' (*Classroom teacher's end of year notes*). Jordan joined in whole group activities with enthusiasm, and concentrated on the teacher's directions during literacy and numeracy lessons on the whiteboard. He seemed to consistently sit with legs criss-crossed and finger over lips in order to be called quickly for lunch or playtime or other reward for sitting well.

Jordan appeared to enjoy fantasy or role play (Hughes, 2012) in both the classroom and at Forest School: being builders, making dinner at the kitchen, driving the van for the painting job, painting the trees (with water and brushes), or playing superheroes. These were his favourite activities, although he would try to join in other games which were more exploratory. On one occasion I observed him participating in exploratory play in which he picked up mud and flung it against a tree, seeing if it would stick to the bark, imitating other boys who were doing this. However, he very quickly transformed this activity into fantasy play, drawing a small group of boys with him to a grove of trees which became a rocket ship. Once there, he rested under the branches, in the rocket.

His usual playmate was Owen in both the classroom and at Forest School; however, the boys' interactions were often characterised by conflict. At first, I noted in my research journal that they were friends and played together often. However, one day in school, I watched them line up (queue) for lunch after playing amicably during morning free play

session. Jordan was behind Owen, his hands on Owen's shoulders, chanting, "I don't like Owen, I don't like Owen" as they marched off to the lunchroom (*field notes, 22 March 2017*). The classroom teacher said that their mothers were 'enemies'; yet, her end of year notes comment upon his fraught relationships with peers in general. The following examples of conflict involve both peers and adults as social others.

### **6.2.2 Classroom episode of conflict**

The following classroom episode takes place during a whole class activity of dancing, which has been presented by the teacher and is led by a video on the interactive whiteboard. The children are expected to imitate the movements of the animated dancers on the screen. Jordan's focus of attention is divided between the characters on whiteboard and the group of friends that is dancing near. This situation exemplifies a not uncommon conflict in the reception year classroom: a tension between a child's focus of attention on a particular artefact chosen by the teacher (book, whiteboard, etc.) and the child's focus upon their peers or another artefact of the child's own choosing, attracting her/his attention.

During this activity, which only lasted a few minutes, I was sitting in a small child size chair by one of the tables to the side of the classroom rug, observing the children and writing field notes. The episode initially drew my attention due to the conflict between the teacher and the child, but upon closer examination, I was able to identify an internal conflict within the child, as I shall describe.

The children sit around the edges of the rectangular rug in the middle of the room. Those in front facing forward to see the teacher and the white board. It is this rectangular seating arrangement in which they start and end the day and to which they return throughout the school day, gathering for whole group activities. From a material perspective, this rug is an artefact with particular institutional features: the children are learning that when they sit here in whole group activities, they are asked to follow particular rules designated by the teacher in order to practice self-regulation, such as sitting with legs crossed in front, keeping their hands to themselves, facing the teacher, and so on. When it is play time, however, they may use the rug as a soft space upon which to lie down or to which they may spread out their toys; during play time, the rug becomes their own space to appropriate for their chosen activities.

Now, the circle time transitions to a whole group activity, which the teacher explains. The teacher puts a video on the white board of some animated characters dancing and asks the children to stand and dance along with the song and characters. They rise and, in doing so, those in the back and on the sides begin to fill in the space in the middle of the rug to start dancing. Jordan is with a group of boys that sit in the front facing forward. This is a privileged position which many children prefer. Those in the front step a bit forward off the rug as they begin to

dance. While there is a lot of laughing and smiling as the children sing and dance with the characters on screen, most of the children appear to be focused on dancing along with the animated characters, with their laughter directed at the screen. The teacher stands at the front by the screen, smiling.

Jordan is in the front with a group of boys, enjoying dancing with them, doing some funny moves, which are not on the whiteboard, to encourage more hilarity among his peers; he is smiling and laughing with them. Soon, however, their dancing becomes more exuberant, as their focus switches from the screen to each other, resulting in some jostling of positions; suddenly, one of the boys from the back of the group shifts into Jordan's 'space' when the dancing moved around a bit.

Jordan finds himself squeezed out of the desired group. He becomes distressed and tries to regain a position back in the middle of the group. The teacher sees this and tells him to move to a space in the middle of the rug where there is more room: she points and says with slight exasperation, 'Jordan, just go back there.' He moves to where she is pointing, but his attention is only on the boys in the group he just left; after a few seconds of still trying to dance, he starts to cry and stops dancing. In my field notes I have written:

J. was jostled out of his space. When he protested to the person who took his place, Mrs. Gordon told him to go to the back of the rug where there was more space. He did, but he was unhappy – perhaps he perceived it as unfair, because it seemed that he was jostling for space, when in fact, C. had slipped into his space after returning from the loo, or maybe he was sad because he lost his place in the front by the boys (field notes, 9 Feb. 2017).

He looks around and notices me watching, so he walks over to me and comes very close to me. His nonverbal communication – the crying, lowered head, and nearness of his face to mine – appears to indicate his desire for a combination of comfort and intervention.

In response to his nonverbal communication, and because I have been watching the drama unfold, I ask, 'Are you sad because you lost your place by your friends?' He nods affirmatively and sniffs. I look over at the group of children and say, 'Look, there is a place now by Sam', pointing to a space that has opened up in the front due to one child leaving to use the toilet. He turns to look and runs into the gap, smiling and resumes dancing, directing his gaze to the screen and turning to laugh with his friends.

The teacher and I exchange glances and she smiles. Her smile indicates that she is not irritated with my intervention, which she later confirms in an interview; her primary goal is to have everyone engaged in the activity. Later, when we discuss the event, she tells me that she interpreted the situation from the perspective that

Jordan *used* me to get his own way. The teacher shares with me how Jordan is often unhappy if he is unable to be in control of the situation (Interview, 23 June 2017).

### Affordance perspective

Drawing on Bang’s (2008, 2009) conceptualisation of the affordances particular to the classroom, I explore the affordances of the activity settings, which Jordan actualises. These affordances are considered in connection to Jordan’s developing motive orientations in relation to the orientations of institutional practice. Such considerations contribute to understanding how ‘possible developmental novelties [emerge] out of child–environment reciprocity in activity settings’ (Bang, 2009, p. 161). Within the tables, the italicised descriptions are those affordances which are not intended by institutional practice, but are affordances that have been taken up by the participant.

Table 6.1.1 Things and Their Affordances

<i>Things</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Rug	Sitting; standing; dancing; jumping
Floor beyond the rug	Dancing; standing
White board screen projecting the video on laptop  Music from the speakers	Watching; imitating; smiling  Listening; dancing; swinging and swaying
School building	Sheltering from the rain
Classroom walls/ceiling	Separating this class of children from others in school; creating a group  Containing/ <b>constraining</b>

### Interpretations of the Affordances of Things

#### How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?

The music from the laptop speakers, the floor, the rug, the whiteboard showing the dance video and the teacher’s instruction are things with which Jordan interacts. Viewing these things through a material lens (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) and an affordance perspective, Jordan’s participation in the activity is co-created by his inter- and intra-action with them. Like most of the children in the room, he actualises the affordances of *jumping* up and down on the supportive floor, *swinging* his hips and arms in the air, *hearing* the rhythmic

music and *dancing* to its beat. His attention is drawn also to the images on the whiteboard at the front of the room and he interacts with the screen by *imitating* the characters and *smiling* at them. Initially, he carries out the activity by *staying* on the edge of the rug, which defines the in-boundaries of the physical space as presented by the teacher for whole group activities.

The rough play which develops may be seen as relating to the time period of the school day, which is usually designated as outdoor play on the yard. The boys usually run up and down the yard, engaging in physical, strenuous activity at this point in the day. By staying inside due to the rain, the classroom is *sheltering* as well as *containing/constraining* their activity.

### Social Others and Their Affordances

<i>Social others</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Teacher	Instructing/being instructed; organising/being organised; controlling/being controlled; watching/being watched; speaking to/listening to; giving directions/following directions; intervening/receiving intervention; smiling/being smiled at; separating/being separated
Me, the researcher	Watching/being watched; speaking to/listening to; asking questions/answering questions; comforting/being comforted; showing/being shown; intervening/receiving intervention; help/being helped
Peers: group of friends	<b>Bumping into/being bumped into</b> ; dancing/dancing with; showing/being shown; <b>fighting/fighting against</b> ; laughing/making laugh/laughing at; watching/being watched; joining/being joined; <b>competing/competing with</b> ; sharing communal space; giving/receiving attention; <b>disrupting/being disrupted</b>
Peers: other children in the class	Watching/being watched; dancing as a member of the class; moving toward/moving away from; sharing communal space

### Interpretation of the Affordances of Social Others

**How does the child relate to the affordances of social others and how might that reveal small novelties?**

At the beginning of the activity, Jordan is able to actualise the social affordances provided by the activity setting and teacher's intention of group dancing in such a way that aligns with the teacher's motives. The teacher intends for the children to enjoy themselves and

to have a good time dancing. Jordan experiences these social affordances as *being instructed, listening to the teacher and following directions*, as well as *dancing as a member of the class and sharing the communal space*, all of which are important in the classroom.

However, for Jordan, the activity also presents social affordances that he has perceived, that were not necessarily intended by the teacher or institutional practice, but which are related to his interactivity with his chosen group of peers: *copying others and being copied, making others laugh and laughing at others, pushing and being pushed*. All of these, he actualises with pleasure, as indicated by his laughter. The boys' interactive experience with each other causes *laughing*, as well as *bumping* into each other, which appears to create a sense of physical, social and emotional inter-activity. Physically, because space is becoming limited as the children move, the close proximity of his friends in the front row affords *jostling* for position, which includes *pushing, shoving and bumping* against each other. Taking up these material affordances of the space result in a conflict visible in the social affordances: the boys' transform and appropriate the activity from one in which there is *dancing and sharing space*, to one in which there is *jostling or rough playing*. This appropriation of activity is in conflict with the teacher's intention that the children dance for physical exercise, but within the parameters of the institution's expectations of self-regulation and keeping one's hands to oneself. There is not conflict between the boys, however, as this rough play is enjoyable for them; and, for Jordan, *joining* in creates a positive emotional experience of belonging to this particular group of boys. Being in the centre of his chosen group of boys becomes his leading motive.

While Jordan was not alone in this behaviour, he is chosen by the teacher to move. This may be based on the teacher's vantage point at the front of the class: Jordan is the one whose place has been taken by a newcomer, so suddenly he has been pushed out of his spot. She may perceive that his activity is *disrupting*, as he physically struggles to regain his place in the centre of the group of friends. Her intervention and instruction that he move to the middle of the rug where there is more room affords *intervening and instructing*, and Jordan's acquiescence to move affords *listening to and receiving instruction*, all of which are in line with the school as institution and classroom management. Thus, it would seem that Jordan's activity and the teacher's motive orientation are now in alignment.

However, Jordan is not content with actualising the affordance of being part of the whole class and *sharing communal space* with the other children in the class, although he may have shared this practice orientation at the beginning of the activity. He starts crying and soon stops actualising the activity's affordance of *dancing*, due to his distress. He looks around, sees me and actualises the affordances in relation to me, which are *watching/being watched, listening/being listened to* and, ultimately, *intervening*. When I *question, listen*, and, ultimately, *help* him back to his friends, he joins the group activity and begins to dance again; now *smiling* at the teacher, *watching* the video, and *dancing* with his friends, actualising the social affordances that demonstrate his motive

orientations are aligning with those of institutional practice, because his need has been met to be within this group of friends.

### Self-experience and motive affordances

<b><i>Self-experience</i></b> <b><i>(first person perspective on activities)</i></b>	<b><i>Affordance: Motives</i></b> <b><i>(Quasi-otherness)</i></b>
Be a member of a group Be a member of class	Be-a-member-of-group-able accept-shared-conditions-able
Be separated	separate-able
Make others laugh/entertain	Make-others-laugh-able/entertain-able
Tell others	Communicate-able Expressing-oneself-able
Follow instructions Do what one is asked to do	Follow-instructions-able Understanding-instructions-able
Lead dance moves	Imitate-able
Be punished/be disciplined <b>Be ashamed</b> <b>Breaking the rules</b>	Punish-able/disciplined-able <b>Shame-able</b> <b>Breaking-the-rules-able</b>
Seek help	Help-able
Dancer	Dance-able

### Interpretation of Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives

**How does the child experience herself as a ‘social other to herself’ (Bang, 2008, p. 131)?  
How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the institution?**

Initially, Jordan is able to self-experience the dance activity as *understand- and follow-instructions-able*, *dancer-able*, and *group-member-able*. He is able to stay on the rug and realise his ability to *accept-shared-conditions-able*. These understandings contribute to forming his perceived and realised capabilities as part of the classroom practice.

However, the more excited that he gets by the dancing and by the close proximity of his friends and their mutual appreciation of each other, his self-experience shifts to actualising the affordances that he perceives *in relation to his own developing motives*, which contributes to his *self-experience as entertain-able and making others laugh-able*. Instead of *following* directions, the interactivity between his friends and him, creates conditions for him to show off funny dance moves; he seizes an opportunity for being *imitation-able* and tries to get the others to copy him. This experience of self as the centre of the group of boys with whom he wants to be, who are physically at the front of the whole class, contributes to an interpretation of Jordan's emerging perception of self and his motives within the classroom dynamic. It also illustrates how children's participation in an activity may be characterised by appropriation, negotiation and transformation of the activity into one that is self-directed according to individual motive orientations that may not align with those of the institution.

Unfortunately, the limited space in the front row begins to impact upon the ease with which Jordan is able to actualise his dual motives: to participate in the classroom practice and to be close to his friends as a central player. His shift in attention can be viewed as a subtle shift in motive: the excitement caused by aligning himself with the boys rather than the dance routine causes him to lose sight of the previous social and self-affordances aligned with the classroom practice, e.g., *accept-shared-conditions-able*. When another boy steps into a space that he previously occupied, Jordan's perspective about *accepting shared conditions* shifts. The change in direction of his actions toward keeping his place with his peers creates a conflict between his orientations and the teacher's, and he is asked to move. The conflict signals a crisis moment in which the individual's motive orientation is not in alignment with those of the institution.

The teacher directs Jordan to move to where there is more space to resolve the lack of focus on the intended lesson; however, this changes his experience of the activity abruptly. The opportunities for him actualising the affordances of being off the rug (artefact), jostling with his friends (social others), which contributed to affordance of self-experience which were valuable to him, such as being *entertain-able*, have ceased. The move by the teacher now offers affordances perceived by Jordan that are not so pleasing, such as being *in-trouble-able* or *separate-able* with the teacher, as well as being *remove-able*, *isolated-able*, from the chosen peer group. This results in what may be interpreted as possible perceptions of shame and separation, which may be the cause of the emotional and physiological response of tears and which are not generally considered to be intended motive orientations of institutional practice.

In constraining some of the affordances of social others in relation to peer group that he was actualising, the affordances between the teacher and Jordan are affected as well. In a video-stimulated interview in which Jordan was watching other children play, he referred to other children who were behaving in a particular way as 'naughty' (*breaking the rules-able*); when I asked if that ever applied to him, he rolled his eyes, shook his head and said: 'no', indicating that he did not want to be identified with this quality (*interview, 23 March*



2017). Bang (2009) argues that the child 'cannot escape valuating what it is like to be "me" participating in the ongoing co-construction of the teacher-child (power) positions of the classroom practice' (p. 178). Therefore, Jordan's crying is an expression of how he experiences the situation from his perspective: *being isolated* from his friends, *being singled out*, *being in trouble*. This experience of conflict presents an opportunity to consider the values he places on both being a 'good' boy (classroom value) and being part of the boys (peer value), which guide his motive-orientation.

When he returns to the space within the boys, at the suggestion of an adult, his conflicts appear to be resolved. There is the possibility to actualise the affordances of things, social others and self, which align emerging motives and capabilities to be successful at classroom practice and to be successful at peer practice. The teacher's acceptance of his returning to try again indicates that the motive orientations valued in this activity are *being-a member-of-group* and *accepting-shared-space-with-others*.

### **Discussion**

In considering conflict as indicator of how the child's emerging motives are unable to be realised, and how that situation holds potential for the child's development, I look at the episode as a whole.

The activity has been instigated instead of going outside for mid-morning break, as it is raining heavily outdoors. Therefore, the rain has influenced the decision of the teacher(s) to stay inside, actualising the affordance of the school building. In what is usually an outdoor playtime, the children are staying indoors which contributes to how children actualise a particular activity.

The teacher's intention is that the children enjoy the activity of dance within the parameters of the rug, which represents a focused group activity. The affordance of the rug is unable to be actualised by Jordan when the social affordances of the activity, from Jordan's perspective, (to be included in dancing alongside friends) align with his possible motives (to be the centre of the social circle). If his only possible motive was to stay on the rug and be part of the whole community of the class, keep his eyes primarily on the screen and imitate the dance moves on the white board, he would be in alignment with the teacher's intentions for classroom participation. The lesson objective is that the children have some physical exercise on a rainy day; for the teacher, the physical aspect of dancing is the important activity and the space allocated for the activity provides affordance for that.

However, for Jordan, to be at the centre of the group of boys, not just a member of a class collective, appears to become his potential primary motive. The dancing, for him, affords a social opportunity to do funny dance moves and laugh with his friends. This affording of self-experience as not only being included, but being central to and possibly controlling the activity of the peer group, has the potential of being what Bang (2009) calls a 'small novelty' that over time create patterns of 'greater novelties' in which

developmental pathways are forged. Jordan also may consider a lack of space between his friends and him to be important. The physical closeness appears to be something that the boys enjoy.

While the objective of the whole group activity is to dance; in fact, from an institutional values perspective, the motive orientation is to *be-a-member-of-group-able* and *accept-shared-conditions-able*. Shared conditions in the classroom are a matter of sharing limited space. Or, in Jordan's case, appropriating, challenging and negotiating for space:

Space is not a neutral or static container for action. Rather, it is constantly in the process of being produced, always in the process of becoming through entanglements of bodies, desires, affect, material and symbolic objects, and so on – everything that coalesces at that mo(ve)ment to produce that space at that time (Russell, 2017, p. 6).

When the teacher instructs Jordan to move to the centre of the rug, she is turning her attention to the physical space and ensuring that the functioning of the dancing is not interrupted by children who appear to be fighting for space. She is also attempting to focus the children's attention on their own bodies: the intra-action between their bodies and the rhythm, their attention and the white board, and their physical space on the rug as well as leaving space between their bodies and those of the other children. A defining feature of self-regulation in the early years' classroom involves learning to be in your own space, i.e., sit within certain parameters and keep one's hands to oneself, and resolving other body/space/your body conflicts (e.g., Fielding, 2000). The activity of jostling and joking creates a sense of chaos within the limits of the space, from the perspective of the classroom pedagogy, as well as for other children who may be sensitive to the shift in activity as it contrasts with their individual motives and participation.

In this event, space itself plays a role. The close proximity of Jordan to the boys seems important to him; he appears to be enjoying the lack of space between them all, similar to when they were seated. Finding his spot on the rug between two favourite friends may have been important at the start of the session; when the dancing started, he may have wanted to continue that close proximity. When the teacher moved Jordan into the gap on the rug, the space between him and those with whom he wanted to play seemed to be what made him feel unhappy, because he was still looking at them when he began to cry. Although still moving to the music, he was unable to concentrate on the dancing as his attention was on the distance between him and his friends, and perhaps the fact that the other boys seemed to continue to enjoy themselves and he felt *isolated-able*. Instead of looking for a new dancing companion with a more nearby classmate to actualise the potential affordance of *accept-shared-conditions-able*, he becomes distressed. His friends were in front, not noticing his distress at having been moved; the teacher had turned her attention toward scanning the group as a whole.

However, when he saw me watching this activity, he closed the gap between us. Because I was an adult, but not a member of teaching staff, approaching me was an afforded

option – children in the classroom are expected to approach an adult when they have a problem, rather than risk getting into trouble by going back into the cluster of his friends or stopping the dancing altogether and not doing as he had been told. Also, his previous experience of me as being interested in him as I was doing my fieldwork presented me to him as *approachable*. Of course, if he hadn't seen me, he may have sought attention from a staff member. Either way, as a social other I afford him *watching/being watched; speaking to/listening to; asking questions/answering questions; showing/being shown; intervening/receiving intervention; help/being helped*. His actualising what I afford him serves co-creates the conditions for him to actualise the affordances of self-experience that seem important to him. His actualisation of what affordances were available contributes to his affordance of self-experience and the development of motives and competencies. Certainly, my intervention acts as a 'pivot' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 97) to transform the activity to one that enables him to realise his motive to dance with the boys at the front.

In this instance, the teacher appeared satisfied that he was happily joining in and not causing any problems within limitations of space, indicating that her motive orientation for the activity encompasses the children dancing and having fun, within certain parameters for participation. Within these parameters, the teachers had created pedagogical space in line with Foundation Phase principles for enjoying oneself with friends and social activity *and* learning how to participate within a group as a whole organism, not only as an isolated individual undertaking physical exercise.

Jordan's potential competencies as a member of the class that develop in this particular episode are characterised by his dual motives to align both with classroom culture and with peer culture. His finding me / use of me demonstrates how he actualises the affordance of an adult to help him meet his needs – to be included with the boys, but also not in trouble with the adult(s). This action contributes to his competencies in seeking out guidance from an adult to help him get his needs met and to interact successfully in group activity, which is a valued skill in the classroom. In the following Forest School episode, he also turns to me for help, because again I am watching. In the Forest School examples, I do not offer intervention; he transforms the activity by actualising other affordances, which I describe in detail below.

### **6.2.3 Forest School episode of conflict<sup>10</sup>**

In the following Forest School episode, I describe the conflict that occurs between Jordan and his peer(s) during two activities: stick finding and den guarding. These activities in

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<sup>10</sup> For the first child presented, Jordan, the transcription for the first part of the FS episodes is shown here, to alert the reader to the process undertaken in the first stage of data analysis, which considers perspectives of multiple participants and the researcher. The whole transcript for the second episode is presented in Appendix 3. For the other children, I present the findings with only descriptions of events, interpretations and discussions, in order to provide a more readable format of the findings, in regards to

the FS setting do not occur within a structured, adult-directed activity or lesson; instead events take place during the time allocated for unstructured play in which children may choose what they want to do. This is referred to by the leaders as 'free play time', which is what it is also called in the classroom.

I was observing a Forest School session with the intention of filming activities in which one or more of the target children were participating. I told the children during the introductory circle time that I would be filming some of their play that day and asked for a show of hands for who would like to be/rather not be filmed or photographed. I had been filming at a distance, scanning the whole group of children as they began their play. The transcription of this episode, presented in two parts, starts at the moment when the activity of Jordan with his friends caught my attention due to apparent conflict. The analysis finishes when the boys have transformed their activity from one of conflict to one of role play.

The conflict was a sequence of activity (over ten minutes) which I filmed in its entirety. I was able to observe several active transformations by Jordan. The detail and length of the transcription is presented in Appendix 3 to serve to two purposes. First, to demonstrate the details which I was able to observe repeatedly, because I filmed this episode rather than taking field notes; I watched the video clips 25 times, noticing more detail each time in both verbal and nonverbal communication. The limitations of the previous classroom episode lay in the fact that I wrote field notes, immediately after, but I was unable to repeatedly watch the activity to get this kind of assurance that I had all of the actions and communication transcribed accurately. Additionally, because I had filmed the Forest School episode, I was able to undertake video-stimulated interviews with two of the participants, Jordan and Owen, as well as the classroom teacher and a Forest School leader, which allowed me to record their perceptions and contributed to my interpretation. The detail helps to illustrate how children participate in events beyond the point at which an adult might intervene, as well as what may precede and follow such moments of conflict. I discuss the role of the observer (me) and how the conflict(s) are negotiated by the children involved and how and when they seek adult intervention.

The children involved in this episode include Jordan, Sam and Owen (Activity Setting 1: stick measuring activity) and Jordan, Owen and two other boys, Ben and Jonathan (Activity Setting 2: 'resting [s]pot' activity). Because the sticks remain in the boys' hands during the filming, and across both episodes, demonstrating the boys' appropriation of the sticks as tools, I include both here in order to show the transitions within the ten minutes of free play that I was able to capture on film.

The first part of this episode for transcription begins with three boys, Jordan, Sam and Owen finding sticks and comparing their lengths, each searching for a longer one to show

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word count limitations and to consider how it may be presented in future publications in which space/word count is also limited.

the others. The clearing in which they play has a wide variety of fallen sticks from the branches of the tall tree canopies overhead. The sticks on the ground afford *finding, picking up, grasping, rejecting/throwing* and *measuring*, which the boys actualise. The activity also has some amenable social affordances that the boys actualise related to *communicating/communicating with* and *showing/being shown*.

Sam and Owen appear happy about the activity: they are smiling and excited as they find their long sticks and hold them up. Jordan, however, begins to transform this activity from one of somewhat benign competition to one of conflict: he begins to frown as his choice of stick is compared, grabbing Sam's stick in irritation - even though his own is actually the biggest, and turning his back on Owen.

Thus, Jordan leaves the activity of stick measuring in the clearing (FS event part 1) to create a new activity, motivated by his frustration or boredom with the measuring play. He looks toward me filming and decides to show me his 'resting spot' away from the game. His use of me as a pivot to initiate a 'withdrawal strategy' (Skånfors, Löfdahl, and Hägglund, 2009 cited in Wood, 2013, p. 6) is a moment in which he transforms the activity in order to continue feeling in charge of the play process. As such, it is similar to the classroom event in which he uses me as a pivot to transform the activity to one that allows him to meet his intentions. In this instance, he creates an activity in which, initially, there is no conflict: he is doing what he wants to and has an attentive audience with a camera, who is interested in him. However, Owen approaches and Jordan experiences conflict again (described in FS event part 2).

Throughout the episode I am undertaking what Hedegaard (2008d) calls interaction-based participant observations, participating in the interaction because he seeks my help verbally and non-verbally, my presence is not invisible, my attention not covert. I choose to limit my involvement when he asks for my intervention, however, because I want to see how the interaction runs its own course without explicit adult interference. In order to do this, I occasionally scan the whole Forest School setting with my camera, film some other children who are playing nearby (to listen later to Jordan's activity) and step back a bit from the activity, so that it carries on without influence of me or my camera. However, I do make some direct comments to the boys, which are included in my transcription. These, my presence and my responses can be recognised as playing their own roles in the activity, which is included in the analysis of the *affordances of social others*.

### **Forest School event part 1**

Due to the length, I have divided this transcription into sections to make the reading of it more manageable. I divided the activity into sections, according to where there seemed to be a shift in action or focus of Jordan's. Within the activity description are the video-stimulated (VS) interview comments by participants who watched the audio-video recording, individually, at a later date. These comments are highlighted here in red within the text and contribute to the study's approach to gathering data which reflects participants' perspectives, and includes participants' voices where possible.

Section	Activity Description
1.	<p>Jordan is playing near two friends, Sam and Owen. They all hold long sticks that they have found in the woodland. Owen is digging with his stick, then walks toward Jordan.</p> <p>Jordan walks toward Owen and when they meet, they hold their sticks next to each other's vertically to see who has found the longest / tallest stick. Jordan's is longer by several inches.</p> <p>Sam is hitting a stump with a stick, then walks toward Jordan and Owen.</p> <p>Owen walks away toward the fire circle, looking at the ground, perhaps for another, longer stick.</p> <p>Jordan, too, continues walking, poking his stick into the ground.</p> <p>Sam approaches Jordan; as he walks, Sam picks up a new stick, still holding previous curved stick, then stands by Jordan to measure against his stick.</p>
2.	<p>Jordan's stick is slightly longer. He says: 'No, only one of [sic] me,' and grabs Sam's stick and continues walking.</p> <p>[Jordan tells me, while watching the video in Video Stimulated (VS) Interview (23 March 2017), about the rule that only one stick at a time is allowed in the measuring. I asked whether or not the other boys were involved in creating, or knew this rule, and he smiled and shrugged].</p> <p><i>'You can see Jordan feels like he has the power' (Teacher's observation in VS interview, 6 July 2017).</i></p> <p>Sam runs after Jordan, trying to get his stick back; but, Jordan turns to put his body in between Sam and the stick. He is turned toward the direction of Owen, who is returning. Jordan quickly turns back to Sam and returns his stick. Jordan says, 'Let's play [pause]', but Sam interrupts. Sam puts both of his sticks on either side of Jordan's stick and says, 'I'll put one this side and the other this side.'</p>
3.	<p>Jordan says, 'No-oo' (ends with a whine). 'Don't want to!' He turns and walks away. Looking back over his shoulder, Jordan says, 'I'm going to find a bigger one.'</p> <p>Sam says, 'Alright!' He follows Jordan, as does Owen.</p>

*'They seem be playing individually but then drawn together because they all had sticks' (Teacher, VS interview, 6 July 2017). However, it appears that it may be an ongoing activity, due to Sam's comment below:*

Sam says, 'I found the biggest one last time.'

Jordan picks up a short but heavy log. Throws it on the ground and walks away, picking up the stick he held previously. He starts to hit a small hazel tree with stick along with Owen, who has started doing this.



*Figure 6.1 Jordan finds a bigger stick*

4. After a moment, Jordan comes to me and says: 'Miss, come with me' and heads toward a ditch behind what was once a hedgerow, made up of mature oak and ash trees, some of which have been laid.

He drags his stick.

'This is the wrong way.' He changes direction and goes into a different 'entrance' between two mature trees. There is a slight slope down into the ditch, where a fallen tree lies.

*Teacher: 'I find it intriguing that children, like to me, those two spaces – you know he took you to that first space - it looked the same as the second space, but he knew exactly, 'no, that's the wrong space – that's the wrong way, I'll take you this way' (VSI, 6 July 2017).*

5. Sam approaches with a stick which is at least seven feet long.

'I've found a bigger one, Jordan.'

Jordan turns around and exclaims, 'Whoa!' then turns his back to Sam and continues to go to the fallen tree. He does not return to the activity of measuring sticks.

	<p><i>Teacher: [laughs] 'His face! He had no words for that!' (VSI, Ibid.).</i></p> <p>Sam smiles, turns, holding the two shorter sticks in one hand and the long one in the other, and walks away.</p> <p><i>Teacher: 'But, the look on Sam's face as well [his look of satisfaction]' [laughs] (Ibid.).</i></p>
6.	<p>Jordan descends a short slope (of approx. one foot) which lies between two oak trees, each with a circumference of approx. 1 meter (100 years old). He sits on a fallen tree which is on the far side of the ditch, opposite the slope and 'entrance', certain that this is the place he was looking for.</p> <p>I am standing about 5 feet away, not in the ditch, but directly in front of Jordan. I say, 'Oh, this is a nice secret spot, isn't it?'</p> <p>Jordan, 'Yeah. It my restin [s]pot.'</p>

### Discussion:

This description of the first activity setting, in which the boys are finding and measuring sticks, can be viewed as a discrete event for Jordan, in which his participation is characterised by his frustrated approach to the competitive challenges of the activity. While the other boys appear to be enjoying finding sticks and measuring them against the others, smiling and looking for new sticks, walking away and returning, excited by their finds, Jordan gets irritated and tries to think of another activity (section 2).

The activity appears to appeal to Jordan in the beginning, but his attention shifts as he decides he wants to do something else. The conflict may be demonstrating his motive to be in charge of the activity or a new activity. Jordan enjoys when he '*[h]as the power*' was the CRT's interpretation watching the audio-visual recording (CRT, VSI, section 2). She suggested that her perception was supported by her understanding of Jordan and his motive orientation to lead play activity. Indeed, when Sam places a stick against Jordan's that is smaller, Jordan is irritated that Sam has two sticks with which to compete and takes one away from Sam. Jordan's stick is longer, yet he is unhappy about the two sticks, suggesting that some of the conflict lies in appropriation and negotiation of the rules of the game. When Sam tries to grab it back, Jordan puts his body in between Sam and the stick by turning his back to him, but then he hands it back to Sam.

In our VS interview at this point, Jordan explained that he was annoyed: there was a rule that each child was only allowed one stick. Owen later is shown using two sticks as well, so it would seem that the other boys were not aware of this rule; Jordan may have wanted me to understand that it was not *he* behaving outside of the rules of play by taking a stick away, but *Sam* who was breaking the rules. Jordan demonstrates his consciousness about what is acceptable behaviour when speaking with me. He seems



aware that if he has a rule, it may excuse what could be considered anti-social behaviour, according to school behaviour guidelines. This double-understanding signifies how he is able to interpret his own participation; his participation in the activity suggests that he is negotiating rules while participating in group activities.

The negotiation of rules by Sam leads to Jordan's reluctance to keep participating in the activity; Jordan expresses his desire to not play measuring anymore. He does want to keep playing with Sam, however, and tries to change the activity by suggesting 'Let's play....' and trying to think of an alternative (see section 2). But, Sam is focused on sticks. Jordan turns away, then calls over his shoulder to Sam: 'I'm going to find a bigger one' (*Section 3*).

Jordan picks up a heavy log, then drops it back down (section 3). Owen has started to hit a tree with his stick, and Jordan joins him. Sam digs both of his sticks in the ground. Suddenly, Jordan, withdraws from this activity to begin a new activity showing me something (*Section 4*). This aligns with his possible motive of being a leader or being focused upon. The conflict is resolved by remembering that he has a resting spot to which he may retreat, by noticing something else to do, and by finding a willing play partner [me] who appears interested in him. Therefore, when Sam approaches again with a very big log, he shows appreciation, but continues with his new activity of resting (section 5).

### Things and Their Affordances

<i>Things</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Standing trees	Hitting; boundaries; hiding
Sticks	Digging; poking; <b>threatening; fighting</b> ; communicating; grasping; supporting; rescuing; measuring
Soil/Ground	Digging; kicking; running, walking; standing
Leaves	Pulling; throwing; shading; hiding
Clearing	Crossing; leaving; approaching
Camera	Posing; watching; being watched
Ditch	Exploring; finding; resting; defending
Fallen tree	Sitting; resting; retreating; defending
Space	Running; shouting; fighting; resting; leaving; coming; watching

## Interpretations of the Affordances of Things

### How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?

The things in this episode are non-manufactured, except for the camera, although the history of the site has cultural-historical significance which contributes to the species present and their designation, i.e., rhododendron and species-rich ancient hedgerows. The clearing is made up of dead leaves and soil, fallen sticks, and larger logs. There are also some stumps, small trees and larger trees. There is a ditch that runs along the side of the clearing, lined on the far side with fallen trees that once made up an ancient hedgerow.

The affordances within the space include exploring and looking (soil); picking up, grasping, and measuring (sticks); hitting (sticks and trees); sitting upon (fallen trees). From the Forest School perspective there are no expectations regarding the things and features. Although there are some weakly framed rules regarding hitting trees (do no harm) and playing with sticks (do no harm), the features and things of the site are open-ended as loose parts to be used as the children imagine (FSL1, interview, 14 July 2017). The same rules apply to playing with each other: do no harm. So, from this perspective, the boys' diverse motives and actions are in alignment with Forest School practice and time for self-directed and chosen play.

For Jordan, he continues to actualise the stick's affordances for grasping and carrying to use as tool for walking and digging. He eventually rejects the measuring activity, which no longer aligns with his motives for play, by directing his attention to the affordance of the fallen tree which he can sit upon. As he tries to find the right place that he remembers, he actualises the affordances of *looking* and *finding*, affordances shared by the stick activity, but which now align with his motive to find a special place. Once he finds his spot, he actualises the affordance of the tree's natural seating for *resting* and *retreating*. The fallen tree, which is on the boundary of the play area, is affording Jordan a place of refuge, separating him from the others by a short distance, in which he is still able to actualise *watching*. Behind him are only trees, so he is on the edge of the whole group and is able to sit quietly and observe.

### Social Others and Their Affordances

<i>Social others</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Me, the researcher	Watching/being watched; posing/being recorded; communicating/communicating with; asking questions/answering questions; showing/being shown
Peers: Sam, Owen	<b>Arguing with/being argued with</b> ; being listened to/not being listened to/listening to; <b>controlling/being controlled</b> ; being communicative/communicating with; asking questions/ask

	questions; giving answers/receiving answers; organising/being organised; showing/being shown; <b>fighting together/fighting against</b>
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## Interpretation of the Affordances of Social Others

### How does the child relate to the affordances of social others and how might that reveal small novelties?

While the boys play with sticks together, the actualised social affordances include *showing/being shown*, *competing/being competed with* and *comparing/contrasting*. For Jordan, these affordances are actualised and align with his motives to play with the boys; however, when Sam challenges his stick and has *two* sticks, Jordan alters the competition by creating a new rule – that you can't have two sticks – and grabs the offending one [the larger] of Sam's. The teacher notes in the VS interview: 'It was interesting how they seemed quite individual in their play and the sticks brought them together'.

However, Jordan appears unhappy with the way the game's affordances for competition are being actualised by Sam; he looks around, agitated, perhaps to find a larger stick. When he sees me, my attention on the activity affords an opportunity to leave the game and to show me his special place, thereby meeting a social affordance for *connecting* rather than *competing*, perhaps; or, I again provide an affordance for *intervention* and in doing so, co-create a pivot which allows him to actualise a self-experience affordance of *being a leader*.

This space appears to be a refuge from the competition of the game and from the other boys. In actualising the physical affordances of fallen tree, which he calls his 'resting [s]pot', his motives related to social affordances for *escaping* and *being in charge-able* are also actualised. This appears to make him feel relaxed and happier (related to self-experience, below), so that when Sam approaches with a really big stick – a log! – Jordan gasps with appreciation. Thus, he is able to actualise the social affordances of play for *being shown* and *communicating with*, as social skills for developing friendships (Corsaro, 2005).

### Self-experience and Motive Affordances

<i>Self-experience</i> <i>(first person perspective on activities)</i>	<i>Motives</i> <i>(Quasi-otherness)</i>
Be a leader	Lead-others-able

Direct activities	Direct-others-able
Show/inform others	Communicate-directions-able
Follow the rules	Follow-the-rules-able
Make the rules	Make-the-rules-able
Sit still	Sit-still-able
Take time out to reflect	Reflect-able
Regulate others	Regulate-others-able
Make games/rules	Make-up-games/rules-able
Rescue self	Rescue-self-able
Appreciate/recognise	Appreciate-efforts-of-others-able
acknowledge	Acknowledge-able

### Interpretation of Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives

**How does the child experience herself as a ‘social other to herself’ (Bang, 2008, p. 131)? How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the institution?**

Comparing sticks does not appear to present the affordances that Jordan is seeking. Even when his stick is the biggest and he actualises *competing*, he does not seem happy. This contributes to the interpretation of his desire to transform the social affordance of competing. Indeed, when Sam approaches Jordan with his log after he has found his resting spot, Jordan is then appreciative, affording *appreciate-efforts-of-others-able*. Is it the affordances of the resting spot that has contributed to this affordance of self-experience? Being in the resting spot and taking himself away from the activity which he was finding frustrating may also be interpreted as affording *making-up-rules-able*, with no one there to challenge him, only me affording *being appreciated*. He mentions that he likes to go there when his legs hurt or he gets tired. Bang (2009) asserts that the affordance perspective on self illuminates ‘emerging and developing interests and motives for actions as well as feelings and values’ (p. 176). It is possible to see from his behaviour that he has found a place which soothes his conflicted feelings in the measuring sticks activity.

Jordan has transformed his participative experience by showing me to his resting spot. Finding the special place and being able to lead me affords Jordan the self-experience of ‘being a finder-able’ and ‘being a leader-able’. Either of these or a combination of the

two align with his motive for 'being in charge'. The ease that this produces is apparent when Sam approaches with the very big stick: Jordan seems to be more relaxed about the activity and is able to express appreciation: 'Whoa!' (Sam leaves happy too, as his motive to find the biggest stick contributes to his actualising *winning-able* and *being-acknowledged-able*).

The self-experience of 'being a leader' is not necessarily a classroom social affordance. In the classroom, it is clear that the adults are the leaders; classroom management in such limited space appears to depend upon it. In the woods, although there are adults too, the children are more able to claim this self-experience without being challenged by the adults.

The video-stimulated interview with the teacher allowed me access to her perspective of the activity in relation to Jordan's participation. She viewed Jordan's conflict to be that the person with the biggest stick was seen to have the power, or be the winner of the competition, or failing that, be the one to change/make up the rules. 'You can see Jordan feels like he has the power' (Teacher, VS interview, 6 July 2017). It appeared that he *wanted* to feel empowered, certainly, and needed to be able to be in control of the activity. Similarly, the Forest School leader remarked that Jordan liked to be the leader, preferably with 'a group of loyal followers' (FSL, VS interview, 7 July 2017).

The teacher also noted that Jordan and Owen have conflict in class and 'at home because their parents don't get on, so interesting to see that completely carried on in play – in every contexts of their lives. And that Jordan is the one stamping the authority. Owen just always wants to play with everybody, and he is drawn to Jordan, quite naturally. They've known each other since they were young, young...it's amazing watching the dynamics, because out of all those boys, Jordan is the alpha male. He's the one, "it's my game, it's my rules", and if someone else comes along and suggests something different or wins the game, he's like, "game over" and starts something else' (Teacher, VS interview, 6 July 2017).

In this activity, it does appear that Jordan prefers to not participate when he does not have control over the evolution of the game. This preference for control was also demonstrated in the indoor space and the dancing; Jordan experienced being told to move when the dancing became too boisterous as a crisis. The next part of this event supports the notion that, for Jordan, having control over the activity *and* how the other children participate and *which* children participate plays an important role in his enjoyment and ways of participating. However, both events suggest that he also does not aim to be in conflict with an adult. In VS interviews, both the teacher and Jordan mention that he is 'not allowed to play with' particular peers in school. He said of one boy, 'I not allowed to play wi' 'im and when I don, he say "Miss, Dordon [Jordan] won let me playin wi him" but my mum say I'm not allowed to play with 'im' [shrugs] {boy's name} don tell you [that?].' This is a specific example of conflict between the demands and values of institutions, home and school, which Jordan is learning to negotiate.

When I asked if perhaps he could be allowed to play with a certain boy at school, but not at home, he did not reply. Instead, he started to watch a video of the other boy playing in the forest, then he pointed out that the boy threw something; he gasped, 'that naughty.' I asked if that was why he wasn't allowed to play with the other boy, but he carried on looking through photographs on the laptop and did not reply. The idea of being 'naughty' resurfaces later in our interview, however. He does not like to think of himself as naughty, but is also playful about it, suggesting an understanding of irony.

### Forest School event part 2:

In the second part of this event centring on Jordan, he defends this 'resting spot' against Owen, who wants to play with him there. Although he allows two other boys to join him there, he will not let Owen in. When Owen continues to try to come in, Jordan then demands that he use a particular entrance and goes out a particular exit. The two boys sitting on either side of Jordan (in the middle in Figure 6.1.2 below) come and go throughout an ongoing conflict between Jordan and Owen.



*Figure 6.2 Jordan (centre) telling Owen to keep out*

In this episode, Jordan has created a new activity in a special place. Owen wants to play with him in the 'resting spot', but Jordan does not want him in there. The more that Jordan protests, the more Owen tries to get in to the space. Ben and Jonathan are allowed in and their company provides social affordances which align with Jordan's motive to be in charge: they ask him questions and are curious. However, they do not wish to stay all the time, particularly as there is ongoing conflict between Owen and Jordan, and so they come and go throughout the episode. Jordan runs after them trying to get them to stay and play, but is not successful.

Jordan feels some ownership of the space; therefore, he is not only particular about *who* comes in but *how* they get in, i.e., at which point they enter and leave. This creates on-going conflict: Ben and Jonathan, while allowed in, do not particularly follow the entry/exit directions appearing not to understand or care. Owen playfully resists Jordan's

rules in order to gain access to the play space; he uses subversion of the rules to gain entry, in order to achieve his own motive of playing with Jordan in that space.

The conflict is finally resolved following a sword fight with sticks, which acts to break up the tension and allows Jordan to *escape* from the stressful competition which he has co-created, but finds difficult to resolve. He is able to engage Owen in a new game in which he is the one who is chased, rather than being challenged and being the chaser. Indeed, the episode transitions to another location on site, called Mud Mountain that is a more communal space. In this activity, he gives Owen the role of Air Ambulance to rescue him from falling down the mountain, thus aligning both of their motives for play. Jordan has also returned to a game in which there are specific roles, role play, which he seems to find comfortable.

### **Affordance perspective**

#### **Things and Their Affordances**

<i>Things</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Fallen tree	Sitting on; leaning against; leaving, returning to; resting against; picking at; exploring; bug hunting; retreating
Stumps	Boundary setting; resting sticks upon; holding for support; sitting upon; leaning against; hiding behind
Standing trees	Hitting; boundary setting; hiding behind
Sticks	Digging with; poking with; <b>threatening with; fighting with;</b> mediating/communicating with; picking up; supporting; rescuing
Soil	Digging in; kicking against; running, walking and standing upon
Leaves	Pulling off; throwing; shading; hiding
Clearing	Crossing; going toward; going away from;
Camera	Posing for; looking at/being looked at
Ditch	Falling into; climbing into/out of; sliding down; crawling up; boundary making;
Space	Running; shouting; fighting; resting; leaving; coming; watching
Mud Mountain	Climbing; falling; slipping

## Interpretations of the Affordances of Things

### How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?

These things, like the ones above in the first part of this episode, are all non-manufactured, except for my camera. Therefore, they, potentially, have a large number of available affordances in terms of Kyttä's (2004) fields of promoted action and free action; additionally, as they may be considered loose parts (Nicholson, 1971), their possibilities are not constrained by intentions of Forest School practice. During the Forest School sessions, the areas as well as the resources available are appropriated and negotiated by the children from week to week. When I interviewed Jordan about the episode in a video-stimulated interview, he told me that the den has always been his spot for resting when his legs get tired. However, in other observations of him in this area he was pretending to paint the trees and playing cooperatively at 'being painters and builders' and sharing the space as a 'house' with other children; I did not notice him resting there alone any other time. However, he did use the copse of rhododendron as a rocket to rest in on another day, suggesting that his motive to have some space to retreat from social activity was met by any number of places in the woods that afforded *shelter* and *retreat*.

The physical space allows for extensive coming and going from all of the boys, which creates multiple opportunities for transforming one activity to another. Jordan stays within the space of the resting spot, except for when he goes after Jonathan to get him to stay and when he runs to a distance from which to have a sword fight. Being able to run away provides him with some space with which to renegotiate his motive for control over the resting spot. He chooses to leave the special space and not return, thereby not returning to the dynamic of the conflict with Owen.

### Social Others and Their Affordances

<i>Social others</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Me, the researcher	Watching/being watched; posing/being recorded; communicating/communicating with; asking questions/answering questions; showing/being shown
Peers: Ben, Jonathan, Owen	Arguing/being argued with; being listened to/not being listened to/listening to; controlling/being controlled; <b>rejecting/being rejected</b> ; being communicative/communicating with; asking questions/ask questions; giving answers/receiving answers; organising/being organised; showing/being shown; <b>fighting together/fighting against</b> ; rescuing/being rescued; challenging/being challenged



## Interpretation of the Affordances of Social Others

How does the child relate to the affordances of social others and how might that reveal small novelties?

In the first section, it is clear that Jordan likes how the two boys, Ben and Jonathan, have asked him about his resting spot. They are interested and they also ask permission to enter into his play space. These interactions do not cause conflict, which can be compared with his interactions that follow with Owen. Jordan does not want Owen to join them. A conflict arises which plays out for several minutes. When I ask in our VSI session about his not letting Owen come in, he repeated his remark 'too small'. I questioned him about this and he explains that the den is only big enough for three people, then that he is trying to keep Owen safe in this episode. Additionally, he says that because Owen is only 4, and since Jordan is 5, it is his responsibility to keep him 'safe'. He explains that he puts the stick up across the entrance to stop other people coming in because he himself had been falling. He refers to 'having 5' as 'better'. 'Ben have 5, Donadon have 5, me have 5. Owen only have 4' (Jordan, VS Interview, 23 March 2017).

Although Jordan does not want to play with Owen in the resting spot, he does want Ben and Jonathan to stay and play; however, they both run in and out, not engaging with the activity for long. At one point, Jordan even goes after them trying to get them to return, but these overtures are *rejected*. He actively tries to continue to actualise the social affordances of the resting spot which enable him to *show*, to *communicate*, to *control*.

Yet, it is Owen, even though Jordan does not want him there, who continually engages with Jordan, using strategies to participate and try to gain entry. The sticks eventually provide a turning point, as well as being catalyst, for the conflict. Once they are used to play fight – a situation which both boys exclaimed about in their respective VS interviews – the situation is transformed. In their interviews, both Jordan and Owen squealed when they saw themselves sword fighting with sticks. 'We were fighting – with sticks!' shouted Owen, shrieking with laughter (*VS interview*). The sticks are appropriated as tools to mediate and actualise affordances of social others, such as *clashing*, *performing*, *challenging* and *fighting*.

Bae (2010) argues that even in play between peers not all children have equal opportunities for participation:

With subtle communicative signals or through negotiations over roles some children emerge as forceful and expressive subjects on their own behalf, defining the premises of the play, whilst other children seem to be cast in weaker positions. Such power struggles suggest that children differ when it comes to how expressive they are when defending their rights to participate and express their views through playful modes (p. 212).

The conflict between Jordan and Owen illustrates how they both assert their power: although Owen appears to be in a weaker position, his refusal to leave Jordan alone

eventually pays off and their play transitions into one in which they find a new activity to play together. The sticks afforded a play fight, which transformed the nature of play.

### Self-experience and Motive Affordances

<i>Self-experience</i> <i>(first person perspective on activities)</i>	<i>Motives</i> <i>(Quasi-otherness)</i>
Be a leader	Lead-others-able
Direct activities	Direct-others-able
Show/inform others	Communicate-directions-able
Follow the rules	Follow-the-rules-able
Make the rules	Make-the-rules-able
Sit still	Sit-still-able
Take time out / retreat	retreat-able
Make games/rules	Make-up-games/rules-able
Protect others	Protecting others-able
Rescue self	Rescue-self-able
Fight	<b>Fight-able</b>
Defend	Defend-able
Challenge	Challenge-able

### Interpretation of Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives

**How does the child experience herself as a ‘social other to herself’ (Bang, 2008, p. 131)? How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the classroom?**

Jordan feels indignant that Owen keeps trying to come in to the resting spot; he calls Owen ‘naughty’ when we discuss the filmed episode later (Jordan, VS interview, 23 March 2017). When I ask Jordan if *he* is ever ‘naughty’, he rolls his eyes and says, ‘no’, then laughs. This demonstrates his ability to recognise a kind of irony related to self-awareness. It also may be interpreted that he does not *identify* with being naughty, as he is the one who has established the rules of engagement. His interpretation of Owen’s

behaviour as naughty has to do with Owen not acknowledging the rules that Jordan has created, namely that Owen is not allowed in and certainly that he is not allowed in through the out door.

In this activity setting, Jordan is able to actualise a range of affordances of the self which appear to align with institutional practices in Forest School. Finding a place to retreat from play if not enjoying it, making up games, directing others and inviting others, even the play-fighting; however, not letting others play is not promoted in the FS. However, Jordan's perspective of this seemingly negative affordance is one which *is* in alignment: Jordan describes his behaviour as *protecting* both the space and Owen because they are too small. It is not clear whether Jordan is socially savvy enough to know that this is what he *should* say to me in the interview, thus defending his behaviour with an awareness of what is the 'right' motive – orientation.

In this activity setting, the running, the stick fight, the change of setting from Jordan's special resting spot to Mud Mountain, which is owned by all the children in the class appear to have contributed to the change in not just activity to *rescue*, but in the change of Jordan's self-experience to *allow help* which enables Owen to play with him as the *rescuer*. He is still the centre of play, but has been able to transform the activity to one in which he is no longer on the defensive; now Jordan is able to participate in activity that is more amenable to his primary motive to be *leading*, not necessarily having to be *defending*. It also seems that without a specific play engagement strategy, Jordan's demands of the others are not taken up, which makes him frustrated. Earlier in Part One, he says to Sam, 'Let's play...' and tries to think of an alternative to the stick measuring game. In Part Two, he does not have a clear idea for what his game might be; he only knows that he is the owner of the space and wants the others to follow his directions. Being able to communicate more clearly so that others know their roles, as in the Air Ambulance play, seems to contribute to the satisfaction Jordan feels in the play activity. Additionally, this transformation of activity changes how Owen is able to participate in the activity as well, amenable to his motive to be a play partner.

#### **6.2.4 Summary: Jordan's experience of participation**

The ways in which Jordan experiences his time in the reception year and how he participates in the reception year activity setting(s) can be viewed by observing the nature of the child-environment reciprocity. For Jordan, the affordances of social others provide the greatest developmental opportunities in this year, as these are the interactions which can be observed as conflicting. His loyalty to his mother's directives about with whom he is allowed to play is being challenged in the school setting, where he is expected to play with anyone who wants to play with him (see 5.2.3). He also perceives the class display of ages – detailing those who have turned five, which he calls 'better' (VSI, 23 March 2017) – as a directive from adults on how to behave: he explains his exclusion of Owen at the resting spot as protective, perhaps in order to excuse his behaviour which challenges the 'play with anyone' rule. While the teacher's perception of

Jordan is that he always has to be the leader, with which his own self-perception is aligned, it is clear that he also recognises the authority of adults and is working within the parameters set by them. His competency in this area is such that he may even be learning how to manipulate these parameters by using certain arguments that he knows apply to one field as an excuse for something else, in order to achieve his goals. He seeks adult intervention when 'things aren't going his way' (interview with teacher), precisely because events are challenging his motive orientation. This conflict is an entanglement of influences: his mother's instruction, the classroom pedagogy, the teacher's directions, and his own desires.

The collaborative practice of shared activities in both the classroom and the Forest School setting contribute to Jordan's self-experience and the way in which he perceives himself within a community of learners. Medina and Martinez (2012) found that children's participation in peer conflict could be seen to reflect the societal values of their respective cultures, both in how conflicts began and how they were resolved. Adult life, therefore, influences both directly and indirectly on how children negotiate and appropriate conflict resolution within their peer cultures. In his VSI, Jordan says that he will only play with Owen if Owen is not 'being naughty'. This could be seen to reflect the rules of his mother; however, it may also be related to his wanting control over his playmates and appropriation of adult power over those 'being naughty'.

The teacher's perspective was that he is trying to control who plays and what they play. This perspective can illuminate ways in which perceptions of Jordan by others are being developed in relation to his appropriation of perceived adult power relationships: 'Typical him, stamping authority on who can come in, no room for Owen, although there *was* room for him' (CRT, *VS interview*). These skills of working with one's peers and allowing peers to have their own ideas were competencies that the classroom teacher was working on with several of the pupils. Wood (2013) asserts that '[n]egotiating power relationships in play requires complex interpersonal and inter-subjective skills, such as realising when you can get your own way, and under what circumstances. These skills are crucial to determining whose choices take precedence, and how the play is managed – specifically, who can enter and be involved' (p.13).

Reviewing my field notes and video data, I could see that the following week at Forest School, the children had opening activities and free play in a new location – a site near their usual site. Jordan found a little shelter in the rhododendron trees in which he sat down to 'rest'. He called it his 'rocket' and was joined there by Owen, who also sat down and by Bence, who stood to chat with the others. Later, when the activity moved back to the usual site, the three boys continued playing together in the same ditch which Jordan had claimed for his 'resting spot', the week before. It now had now become the children's 'house'. Each child had a space within the ditch, allocated for their own bedrooms and they were painting them (the tree branches) with water and mud, using brushes and buckets. During that day, Owen again disturbed the boundaries by painting on Bence's branch; Bence shouted: 'This is my room!' but Owen continued and Bence acquiesced. On

that day, when asked what his favourite part of the day was in the closing circle, Jordan said: 'My favourite thing was watching people climbing and being silly and watching them play nicely' (field notes, 26 January, 2017). It appears that Jordan does not yet have skills of self-reflection which might enable him to transfer what he knows is expected of others to what is expected of *him*; it seems that in matters of power, he would like to identify more strongly with the adults than with the children.

The use of the sticks brought from the previous activity still predominates the play between Jordan and Owen. Owen uses the stick to express frustration by digging it into the ground and banging it against the tree; in this context it also creates a distraction from the conflict and provides a 'third person' in the sense that Jordan's attention is drawn from Owen to the stick. Jordan also has a stick which he uses to bang into the ground, other trees, and create a barrier to the entrance. In this play activity, the stick is an object, the meaning of which changes during the play (Vygotsky, 1933/1967). Each stick has its own properties and actancy (Latour, 2007) with which the boys are engaging. Although the boys seek help from me in the conflict, it could be argued that, in fact, it is the sticks which come to their rescue ultimately. The sticks play an active role in 'liberating' each child from the 'situational constraints' by providing a pivot for the production and communication of the rules of play (Vygotsky, 1933/1967, p. 11).

Within this example, I interpret the conflict that arises during this activity setting as instigating from tension between Jordan, his motives of creating and directing the activity, and the goal-directed behaviour of others who are displaying their own ways of participating in the play. The analysis is informed by the children's transformative activity, which includes peers, space and the use of sticks as mediating objects. Vygotskian theory considers the use of objects through meaning and symbolism in activity as transformative. Objects or toys, for instance, can afford imaginary play in which the 'development of a play scenarios is transformed when the constraints of the play scenario, such as the perceived possible uses of an artifact or the rules, are transgressed and children's motives and imagination lead the activity' (Møller, 2015, p. 325). The boys held the stick(s) throughout the entire episode. They used the sticks as tools for communication, for digging, for hitting, for threatening, for support, for barriers. The sticks afforded these immediately present interactions (the *present present*, according to Bang, 2009), but the children were able to co-create with each other *and* with the sticks the cultural and historically present affordances (what Bang, 2009, calls the *absent present*), which is the availability of sticks in the Forest School and the potential and promoted affordances of these loose parts.

## 6.3 Lee

### 6.3.1 Overview

Lee is five years old in March of reception year. The younger sibling of two, he enjoys playing video games, superheroes, Transformers and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. *The Karate Kid* is his favourite film. Lee has told me that he wakes up in the middle of the night often, because he has nightmares. This is a problem that his mother discusses with the teaching staff and me one day; she is concerned and angry at his behaviour. For example, when he gets out of bed in the middle of the night, he does things that frighten her, like cutting up a whole watermelon with a large bread knife and unlocking the door and going outside. Because of this concern, Lee has been referred for behaviour assessment for early intervention at school. There have also been particular actions that are considered problematic by school staff, such as urinating on the floor of the boys' toilets, and lying to staff about his actions when confronted following particular activities.

In the classroom, he appears well-liked by his peers; he is friendly and communicates with many different individuals in the class. One of the more physically robust boys in the class, he tends to play with the other active boys; however, he also appears to be happy sitting anywhere, beside anyone and plays with whomever is doing something that is of interest to him. He also seems to be very interested in whatever is going on with his classmates, and chats with those sitting next to him. However, he does pay attention to the white board during whole class activities, interested and engaged with his attention on the teacher, although he can become distracted by other activity, particularly that involving his peers.

Lee eagerly accepted other children joining in his play and actively seeks to join others in theirs. Lee makes suggestions, but does not attempt to control the play, which is a popular move. He also makes intentional attempts to communicate both verbally and non-verbally with the other child/ren. He plays happily alongside both boys and girls as well as with children who speak English as a first language and those who have limited English. During an interview session with Sylwia and some other children, he actively engaged with Sylwia by reciprocating her speech, which is delayed, and laughing when she did, by imitating her laugh; he showed her his coloured picture and looked interestedly at hers. He was equally reciprocal in an interview with Tyler, in which Tyler asked him to help him draw certain superheroes. He quickly showed him how he did it and helped Tyler to make the same drawings. However, when Tyler was poking him in an attempt to be playful in a whole group activity about caterpillars turning into butterflies, Lee told the teacher in order to make him stop. This may have been because he wanted to concentrate or because he was rejecting Tyler's approaches.

### 6.3.2 Classroom episode of conflict

In this classroom episode Lee's activity was in conflict with the expectations of classroom practice. The class had an incubator in which several baby chicks had just hatched overnight. The class had been waiting excitedly for chicks to hatch from the eggs in the incubator in the classroom. They finally did so overnight; fortunately, the children were able to see the last stages of the process for one or two that took place in the morning when the children arrived at school. The teaching staff and the children were very excited about the hatched chicks. The teacher explained how delicate they were now, but when they were bigger she might be able to take them out and the children could stroke them. The children returned to their lesson of literacy work and play activities.

Following the morning break time out on the yard, some of the children ran over to see the chicks. Lee was one of them. The adults were busy getting children inside and preparing for the late morning session. After some conversation with other children, Lee quickly climbed onto a chair and knelt on the table, so that he could reach his arm inside the incubator and stroke a chick. Immediately, several of the children called, 'Miss! Lee is touching a chick!' and he jumped down. When the teacher arrived, she asked him if he had touched a chick. 'No,' he replied, shaking his head. 'Are you lying to me?' she asked. 'No,' he replied again, looking down.

'Yes, you did! He did,' said some of the children. Others moved away from the conflict. The teacher got down on one knee and looked him in the eye. 'Did you touch a chick?' she asked. 'No. A little bit, not really, I couldn't reach it,' he responded.

'You know you are not allowed to go into the incubator – and definitely not to lie, Lee! You'll miss play time this afternoon and do school work with Miss Jones instead,' said the teacher. 'Now, go sit down.'

'All right, Miss,' said Lee and went to sit down in the circle, doing a little leap to land on the floor. He spoke quietly with the person sitting next to him.

#### Affordance perspective

##### Things and Their Affordances

<i>Things</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Incubator	observing [the chicks] Separating [from the chicks] protecting the chicks
Hole in the top of the incubator	<b>Reaching into</b>
Table	<b>kneeling</b>
Chair	<b>Climbing</b>

## Interpretations of the Affordances of Things

### How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?

Lee actualises the affordances of the hole in the top of the incubator by reaching his arm in to touch the chicks. In order to do so, he has to actualise the affordances of the chair and table to climb upon in order to get his arm through the hole in the incubator. Lee's perception of these classroom objects and what they afford relate to his motive to get closer to the chicks. Although the incubator is intended to protect the chicks by keeping them warm and separating them from the children, for Lee the hole in the top of the incubator also affords meeting the inside of the incubator. The other things nearby, such as the chair, are not intended to provide a climbing affordance, although this is how Lee uses it. Lee's interactivity with these are at odds with their promoted affordances, as artefacts of the classroom practice. However, the perceived, functional affordances of these things enable him to reach his goal. His use of these tools to achieve the goal of *reaching* the chicks is not necessarily the same as a motive to go against the rules. However, in doing so, he is out of alignment with the motive orientation of the institution.

### Social Others and Their Affordances

<i>Social others</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Teaching Assistant	instructing/being instructed; punishing/being punished; watching/being watched; speaking/listening to; giving directions/following directions; intervening/receiving intervention; <b>arguing/being argued with</b> ; listening/lying to; punishing/being punished
Me, the researcher	watching/being watched
Peers	watching/being watched; telling/being told upon; supporting/not supporting; defending/not defending.
Chicks	<b>Touching/being touched</b> ; watching/being watched

### Interpretation of the affordances of social others

#### How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?

Lee is actualising affordances in his interactive experience with others that allow him to test the boundaries of the rules of the setting and space. Lee does not act according to



the constraint set by the teaching staff, which is that it is against the rules to touch the chicks. Instead, he responds to the affordance of *being watched* by his peers as he climbs up and reaches in to do so. One boy keeps an eye out for the teacher *defending*, but others look for a teacher to tell, *not defending*, indeed, *telling upon*. When his peers start to shout out for the teacher to ‘tell on him’, a negative social affordance, he quickly responds by climbing down. He then actualises the social affordance of *defending* himself, in this case, by lying about touching the chick. In this event, my presence was peripheral and I did not film it. I do not think he saw me watching, as it happened very quickly after the break time.

When he is told to go to the other room to work instead of having free play, he goes without argument, cheerfully accepting his fate in a way that suggests he is eager to resolve the conflict that has arisen between him and the teaching staff: ‘Ok, Miss!’

The chicks afford Lee an opportunity to demonstrate his bravery, which is an important characteristic for him and demonstrating this to the other children appears to be his leading motive. He has to climb upon the table, reach through the small opening and stretch toward the chick. Yet, he also relates that he ‘couldn’t help it. The chick was so fluffy!’ This suggests that the chick itself has an attraction that may be stronger than the rule of not touching; a pull or actancy which Bennett (2010) describes as vibrant matter, to indicate the draw of something that compels us to act.

### Self-experience and Motive Affordances

<b><i>Self-experience</i></b> <b><i>(first person perspective on activities)</i></b>	<b><i>Motives</i></b> <b><i>(Quasi-otherness)</i></b>
Be brave	Be-brave-able
Avoid punishment (‘lying’)  Reconcile?	<b>Lying-able; avoiding-able;</b> reconciling-able
Follow instructions/ not follow instructions	Follow-instructions-able  understanding-instructions-able
Be punished/disciplined	Punish-able/disciplined-able

### Interpretation of Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives

**How does the child experience herself as a ‘social other to herself’ (Bang, 2008, p. 131)?**  
**How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her**

### **social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the institution?**

The classroom presents affordances for self-regulation and following instructions. Lee does not actualise these affordances, which would demonstrate his capabilities and developing motive orientation in alignment with institutional practice. Instead, Lee actualises the affordances of the incubator and the chick in ways that are out of alignment with the institutional motive orientation. Thus, he appears to attempt to avoid being punished by lying. Avoiding and lying are not motives or capabilities that are promoted in the classroom; therefore, he is punished. Yet, it is also possible to consider this from the child's perspective in another way: is it (also or otherwise) likely that the motive orientation is to continue to be *liked/like-able* by the classroom staff? Can lying be re-considered as a way in which children attempt reconciliation, rather than simply avoiding punishment? In Lee's case, it seems that he has a strong inclination toward wanting to be liked.

Similarly, actualisation of the incubator's affordance to reach in and touch the chick allows Lee to meet his need/desire to touch the chick, as well as to consider himself *brave* or *capable* in front of his peers. Whether his bravery lies in overcoming the rules or in overcoming anxiety about touching the animal is difficult to interpret as they appear to be entangled in this risky event. His lying about touching the chick appears to support his desire to not be on the wrong side of the teaching staff, however, rather than in a deliberate attempt to challenge the rules. In considering this episode in context of Lee's overall behaviour, it is likely that had another child done this, he may have reminded them of the rules not to do it and/or even told the teacher himself. Certainly, it is conceivable that perhaps he might have also tried touching the chick himself, overcome by this tantalising opportunity, before telling the teacher. These possibilities are supported by Lee's patterns of behaviour in class, which indicate that he has a genuine desire to be liked by everyone – both staff and students – and enjoys following the rules, sitting in front, and contributing to the smooth running of the classroom. He also has been observed telling other pupils to stop doing something that he knows is wrong if the teacher looks at them; his primary approval seeking is from the teacher.

Following this episode, I asked him, 'Why do you think you got into trouble?' He quickly replied, 'I wasn't supposed to touch it. Do you want to see my karate kick?' swiftly changing the subject.

For Lee, the draw of social others, or vibrant matter (Bennett, 2010), interferes in his motives aligning with that of the institution (the classroom in this case). However, when confronted by teaching staff, he is very quick to accept his punishment and be reconciled with the adults. Similarly, another event occurred, which I did not witness, in which Lee urinated on the floor of the boys' toilet while joking around with peers. When I asked him if he knew why he had done so, he shrugged and said, 'I don't know. I won't do it again!'

It appears that the indoor space, for Lee, presents a troublesome surface against which his activity collides. Actions that in the indoor space present a problem, such as touching animals, urinating in a way that challenges the rules of the institution, do not present such tensions in the outdoors. I argue that they do not, because Lee's motive is not to cause or to be in trouble. Following his urination episode, I was in the classroom and he was drawing. I asked him why he had not attended Forest School that morning and he replied, 'I was bad' and told me about the episode. His motive is to engage with his peers in particular ways, which are characterised by being brave, perhaps 'showing off' to some extent, but also motivated by being accepted. When an adult intervenes, he is quick to switch his focus to the adult, in order to be accepted by her instead. This demonstrates his motive orientation toward *being liked-able*.

### 6.3.3 Forest School episode of conflict<sup>11</sup>

In this episode, Lee is playing in a puddle with two other boys. Children often transported water and mud from this puddle to another area. Prior to the start of this episode, Jakub had been digging in mud and painting trees with mud, using a paintbrush and bucket. Ben had been walking back and forth between the puddle and the other digging site. Lee had been playing with Sam, digging holes with sticks in the clearing and cooking around the fire. They have all converged upon this mud puddle for a variety of purposes, not because they have been playing together previously. I have been filming Lee's activity this morning; however, he has gone for a 'wild wee' in the woods, so I watch Jakub leave the copse of trees where he has been playing to go to the puddle with his bucket and spade. Ben is already there. A few moments later, Lee runs over to the puddle and shouts, 'Muddy Puddle!' as he jumps in; Jakub sets down his spade and says 'Muddle Puddle!' There is a Forest School leader standing nearby, who smiles and then walks away to attend to something else, indicating that this kind of play is acceptable at Forest School.

The puddle in which they are playing is the boundary of the site. Today the puddle is deep enough to leak over the top of the children's wellington boots. This is signalled by a rope that extends across it, which is intended to act as a warning to the children. However, the rope's affordances that are actualised by the boys include *holding onto* and *going under*, rather than *stopping*: indeed, it seems that the puddle itself is the goal, so although the children do not *stop* before the puddle, they do not venture beyond the middle of the puddle.

In this episode, Lee and Jakub interact with the muddy puddle (feature) and its constituents of water and mud, as well as each other and the other participants. Their activity is verging on conflict with the rules concerning the site boundaries for the day. The rope indicates that although they are allowed to play on the edges of the puddle, wading through it will get their socks wet, since the water depth is over their boot height.

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<sup>11</sup> Full transcript in Appendix 3

The affordance of the rope as a barrier is not actualised by the boys. Instead, Ben uses it to swing upon, hide behind, grab for balance; Lee and Jakub primarily use it for balancing, go under it, play beyond it. Lee and Jakub begin to splash each other, kicking mud up into each other's faces. Lee several times chases Jakub out of the puddle by kicking water at him vigorously. Conflict that exists previously between the boys could be potentially played out under the auspices of rough and tumble play (Hughes, 2012). There is an edge to this play, at least on the part of Lee, as he pursues it relentlessly. Although they may have started out collecting mud for another activity, the affordances that they perceive transforms their play into one of splashing, which leads to play fighting.

This play fighting appears edging toward real fighting, in the sense that the boys appear to be getting closer to each other, in each other's personal spaces, until they are holding each other in a wrestling grip. Lee also is pursuing the fighting by following Jakub, who turns his back and walks away from the centre of the puddle (Figure 6.2.1).



Figure 6.3 Lee (centre) splashing Jakub out of puddle

Lee also continually chants 'muddle puddle' at Jakub, who initially transformed the phrase 'muddy puddle' into the phrase 'muddle puddle'. Jakub, however, continues to meet the play and proves an equal match for Lee's physical strength. Lee appears to understand that he is on the verge of something, in relation to school practice: going too far, getting too wet, getting hurt. He looks at me and makes pre-emptive comments or checks to see if I am still watching, signifying that he knows what the rules may be around both getting wet and fighting. Also, he tells Tom that *he* cannot come in as he could get wet. When the teaching assistant approaches, he jumps out of the activity first, quickly exclaiming that he is getting out of the play and puddle, while also ensuring that the adult understands that he is not the only child undertaking the activity.

### Affordance perspective

#### Things and their actualised affordances

<i>Things</i>	<i>Afford</i>
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Mud	Splashing; kicking; sticking; jumping; sinking; sliding
Water	Splashing; kicking; wading; sinking; jumping; wetting
Shrubs	holding; hiding
Rope	Holding; swinging; crawling under; stepping over, wiping hands upon, separating
Wellies	Resisting water and mud; wading; splashing; protecting; participating
Waterproof clothing	Resisting water and mud; protecting; participating
Clearing	Crossing; going toward; going away from
Camera	looking at/being looked at

### **Interpretation of the Affordances of Things:**

#### **How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?**

Lee actualises the affordances of the muddy puddle that suit his purposes to play boisterously with Jakub. The rope, which has been set up to indicate out of bounds by the Forest School staff, appears to have ambiguous meaning for Lee and the other boys. While the rope signifies out of bounds, it is still considered ambiguously by both staff and students in respect of activities. For instance, it seems to be understood as acceptable to use the puddle for digging some mud and /or gathering muddy water in buckets for transporting elsewhere (a common use for this puddle). The rope is, however, also intended to signal to the children that the water is too deep, i.e., over their wellies, for wading today. Certainly, Lee actualises of the affordances for splashing and wading, using the water and his big arrival with a splash as a tool to initiate interaction with the other boys. He also actualises the affordances of the personal protective equipment (PPE) that he is wearing, in alignment with the rules of FS setting, using the PPE as a tool to mediate his play.

However, the statement he quickly makes to me: 'I like getting my socks wet!' (section 2) indicates that he realises the ambiguity of his entering an out of bounds puddle which is too deep, so that water may go/is going into his wellies making his socks wet. It seems that my attention on him has suddenly made him aware that his personal protective equipment (PPE) may not be working as it should; or, that this is the kind of thing adults will notice! He is actualising an affordance presented by the combination of personal protective equipment and the deep muddy puddle, yet this affordance seems challenged when I enquire what he is doing. He is quick to let me know that it is acceptable.

The water and mud afford Lee physically robust, risky play (Sandseter, 2009) with a peer, who is also willing to actualise these affordances. The depth of the water, the weight of the mud, and the confines of the puddle afford an opportunity to play fight, extending the sensory splashing play toward a play type that is more complex. In this situation, it appears that the features of the space contribute to the transformation of the activity from the usual one of *collecting* and *transporting* water and mud to an activity in which sensory stimulation is extended by Lee to the playing out of physical rough and tumble play verging on aggression. Lee actualises the affordances of the space that allow him to be physically assertive and physically engaged with a boy who is his physical equal. The affordances of the things actively contribute to the mediated interactions with his peers, as discussed in relation to social others and actualised affordances. This intra-activity (Lenz Taguchi, 2010) between the boys and the vibrant matter (Bennett, 2010) of elemental features of the FS setting contributes to an encounter (Duhn, 2015) in which Lee can explore his desire to do karate star or be a superhero (Lee, VS interview, 7 July, 2017).

### Social others and actualised affordances

<i>Social others</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Teaching Assistant	Instructing/being instructed; organising/being organised; controlling/being controlled; watching/being watched; speaking to/listening to; giving directions/following directions; intervening/receiving intervention
Me, the researcher	Watching/being watched; speaking to/listening to; asking questions/answering questions; showing/being shown; intervening/receiving intervention; <b>giving/receiving permission</b>
Peers	Bumping into/being bumped into; splashing/splashing with; showing/being shown; <b>fighting/fighting against</b> ; laughing/making laugh/laughing at; watching/being watched; competing/competing with; helping/being helped; advised/taking advice; instructing/being instructed; <b>pushing/being pushed</b>

### Interpretation of the Affordances of Social Others

#### How does the child relate to the affordances of social others and how might that reveal small novelties?

Lee is actualising affordances in his interactive experience with others that allow him to test the boundaries of play, as well as the rules of the setting and space. With Jakub, he actualises the affordances that Jakub offers of fighting, bumping into, kicking, splashing,

pushing, all of which allow him to engage fully with the affordances of the things available, and which seem to be in alignment with Forest School as no one is being injured. Lee begins to shift the play from splashing when he becomes vocal, repeating Jakub's phrase 'muddle puddle' over and over, using the words and the water to move toward Jakub, causing Jakub to retreat. Lee does not allow Jakub the safety of retreat; instead, he presses toward him. They co-create a wrestling match eventually and do not stop the play fighting even when Lee has mud in his eyes. He continues to smile, as does Jakub, which indicates that this is still play fighting rather than real fighting. This pursuit of physical conflict is within the boundaries of what seem to be Lee's motive-orientation toward rough play, yet stop short of actually hurting someone.

He does not splash water on Ben, who is not interested in directly being involved in rough and tumble play, and he instructs Tom not to come into the water as it is too deep. This shift from pushing Jakub to safeguarding the other boys and instructing Tom demonstrates that he considers the play in which he and Jakub are engaged has certain rules. One rule is that you have to be dressed appropriately to join in completely. Another rule may be that you want to play.

When the teaching assistant approaches, Lee quickly responds to her earlier request to come out. He actualises the affordance she presents which is control and direction. This resolves the emerging conflict between the boys and their play becoming too rough, and it also resolves the conflict between the boys' activity and pushing the boundaries of the institution.

### **Self –experience and Motive Affordances**

<i><b>Self-experience</b></i> <i><b>(first person perspective on activities)</b></i>	<i><b>Motives</b></i> <i><b>(Quasi-otherness)</b></i>
Be a member of a group	Be-a-member-of-group-able
Be a member of an <b>elite</b> group	<b>Be-a-member-of-elite-group-able</b>
Make others laugh/entertain	Make-others-laugh-able/entertain-able
Tell others	Communic-able Expressing-oneself-able
Follow instructions	Follow-instructions-able
Do what one is asked to do	understanding-instructions-able
Rough Play	Rough-play-able
Make/follow rules	Make-rules-able; follow-rules-able

Splash/Push/kick	Splash-able, Push-able, Kick-able
<b>Fight</b>	<b>Fight-able/Fight-others-able</b>

### Interpretations of the Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives

**How does Lee experience himself as a ‘social other to [him]self’ (Bang, 2008, p. 131)? How does his participation at the muddy puddle reveal small novelties about his social position, performance, values, etc. in relation to the motive orientation of the institution?**

The event transcribed above does not seem to be a conflict from a Forest School perspective. To begin with, FSL1, who was standing by the puddle at the beginning of the event, walked away, thus giving permission for the splashing. And, later, in a video-stimulated interview, I presented the footage to FSL2.

FSL2: Your voice! [to me; laughs!] [00:02:30]

RES: I was feeling worried and guilty, like maybe I shouldn’t be letting this happen or it was getting out of control.

FSL2: Really?! I wouldn’t have, I would have just been like, ‘get on with it.’ That’s how they learn, isn’t it? I mean rather than falling over and cracking their heads on that [points to a big stone in the middle of the puddle]; now that would worry me, I’d be watching to prevent that.

*[in video, Tom arrives and kicks a bit of mud, and Lee kicks a huge splash of mud on him, although he does not have waterproofs on. He is covered in mud now with a huge grin on his face]* [FSL2 laughs out loud again]

FSL2: He’s just remembered he doesn’t have waterproofs – another lesson learned!

Oh, this is great. That is brilliant!

RES: Does it seem like they aren’t respecting the rope that is there for out of bounds?

FSL2: What? Oh, well, they are though, aren’t they? They aren’t going beyond it, I mean far, are they? And, they know they are only allowed in there if they have on the waterproofs and wellies. I don’t see any problem with that. Looks like great fun! (*VS interview, 28 June 2017*).

Lee’s play in the water and his transformation of splashing to the activity of play fighting with Jakub allows Lee to try out fighting at Forest School. He actualises *fight-able, splash-able, push-able, kick-able*, all aspects related to physical resilience, primarily because he is



able to act these out with the social affordances that Jakub provides. There is a balance in their strength and participation, which seems to lend itself to Lee's experience of himself as *being a member of an elite group*, of boys who are able to fight or who value fighting. This is the impression that I received when I showed him the video in an interview, and in which he told me how he loved karate. Although Lee kicks mud at Tom when he approaches, Lee changes his mind and says that Tom cannot play as he is not wearing the right equipment. Lee's actualisation of making/enforcing rules signal his competency in making-rules-able as well as following-rules-able. This and the expression of physical resiliency that is afforded by the rough and tumble play contribute to his motive orientation to be part of an elite group – the boys who are strong, who can play fight, who can look out for others, who can be leaders and the self-experience of perceiving of himself in that way. This is in alignment with his great interest in superheroes and ninja warriors.

His initial comment to me that he likes getting his socks wet and later his quick response to the teaching assistant and exit from the play indicate that his motive orientation is to appease adults in order to avoid getting into trouble. He does not consider himself as someone who is intentionally *trouble-making-able* or *rule-breaking-able* (VS interview, 23 June 2017); however, here he is pushing the boundaries, as he did in the classroom. Although he is protective of Ben and Tom to some extent, and is quick to stop breaking the rules when the teaching assistant arrives, there is a tension between his intentions. Like the chick episode indoors, it appears that he may be aware of the motive orientation of the institutions and knows the expectations, but when faced with attractive, playful affordances, considers the possibility of ambiguous rules which might be possible to break. This is especially true at Forest School, where rough play and risky play are acceptable. Also, it is unclear whether getting one's socks wet are against Forest School rules or the school rules. The teaching assistant's comment to Tom at the end suggest that it is something that the school will have to deal with; but, the rope suggests that the Forest School has a similar expectation for children to keep themselves dry and 'safe'.

### **6.3.4 Summary: Lee's experience of participation**

The concept of activity settings is one in which there is a degree of interdependence and some established routine and behaviour. The muddy puddle is an activity setting in which there is some boisterous play accepted, splashing and jumping, and which is used for its resource of water and wet mud for transporting elsewhere. It is considered a puddle for jumping over and wading through when transitioning from the outer field to the inner site, it is often a place where children jump, pretend to get stuck and seek help from others.

Lee is negotiating the rules between settings: play fighting may not be acceptable on the school yard or in the classroom, but he seems to be interested in finding out if it is acceptable here in the woods. 'Actions are situated relative to place...In that way, the child learns that "this is the way 'we' behave in this place or that place.'" (Heft, 2018, pp.

116-117). Lee is learning how much he can do within the parameters of the institutional demands. The 'invitation character' (Lewin *in* Gibson, 2015, p. 130) of both things and people attracts Lee to activity that may be on the edge of the rules. In conjunction with the interpretation of the classroom episode, it is possible to understand how Lee has difficulty controlling his impulses, which lands him 'in trouble' with adults, especially in the classroom. His behaviour is more acceptable in the Forest School. This behaviour is beginning to present as a small novelty with the potential to become a pattern contributing to great developmental novelty (Bang, 2009). From the institutional perspective of the reception year classroom and Forest School, he is 'pushing boundaries' (FSL, interview). These motive conflicts are of a mainly physical nature, in response to his perception of the affordances of things and social others.

Lee's interactions with his peers appeared usually to be free of conflict, which is one reason that I was alerted to the conflict in the puddle as something I had not seen before. He appears to enter into the play of others by asking and by contributing carefully until accepted in. He approaches other children with enthusiasm and smiles. He is not afraid to say no, however. If someone is doing something that he does not like, he is quick to speak up for himself. In particular, I observed him in circle time in the classroom being poked playfully by another boy; because the lesson was about caterpillars and Lee was very interested, he quickly raised his hand to tell the teacher that he was being disturbed. His activity with Jakub in the puddle felt to me like something verging on being not in control, in the sense that he seemed to *pursue* Jakub. In the follow up video-stimulated interview, however, he said that he liked Jakub, who was nice, and in fact, it was Tom he did not like because Tom hits him outside of school.

Lee's interactions with adults are also amiable, even if he is 'having a row' as he put it in our interview. He argued very briefly with the adults if accused of misbehaving, in an attempt to tell his 'side' of the story, but not as sustained opposition. As the Forest School episode illustrates, and the classroom episode, he is quick to leave the scene of misbehaviour and get back on side with teaching staff.

Lee confidently takes his place within the space of each setting. He does not just enter the room and sit gently on the carpet. He enters, approaches the carpet and does a spin in the air to sit down. When watching video recordings in my data, I noticed how often he literally leapt into the frame. In both settings his choices of activities were widely varied. He played with LEGO, in the imagination corner and with trucks. He also enjoyed writing and drawing, when it was part of the interviews I did; I did not notice him choosing to draw during free choice play. He like to draw superheroes and transformers.

In order to guide Lee to consistently choose alignment with the motive orientations of the classroom, it would seem that tapping into his motive to be a superhero or karate expert would be useful. Karate was an activity which he told me he was desperate to pursue, but he was not allowed to go when he got into trouble. Then he admitted that he never got to go. An activity like karate, which is focused upon discipline and self-regulation has the

potential to tap into his existing interests. Both in the classroom and at Forest School, he was able to concentrate and self-regulate when interested in the activity; but, his behaviour is felt to be 'pushing the boundaries' and beginning to cause problems in the classroom for the staff and at home for his mother.

## 6.4 Sylwia

### 6.4.1 Overview

In this section, I present findings in relation to the conflict experiences of Sylwia, who turned five years old in the January of reception year. She is the oldest of two children, with a brother who is three years younger than she; both live with their mother and father. The family speaks Polish as a first language, which is the primary language in the home. According to the classroom teacher: 'Dad works a lot so does not do the drop off and pick up times. He sometimes comes to parent meetings and out of the two parents, he has the most English and is more confident. Mum has very little English, appears quite shy and often relies on the other Polish-speaking mums to support her with communication' (*Classroom teacher, personal communication, 26 January 2017*). Although I met with Sylwia several times to watch her videos and see the photographs, in addition to informal interviews, her mother was unable to join us to participate in video-stimulated conversations.

Sylwia has been receiving speech and language therapy in school. She appears to understand some English; however, she communicates primarily by squealing and laughing and making sounds which mimic speech patterns. The Polish speaking teaching assistant who works with her says that her speech in both Polish and English appears equally delayed.

Her activity in the classroom during free playtime focuses on art activities, writing and drawing rather than the LEGO play or dress up play that the other children also enjoy. She is happy doing these activities on her own; although, she also dips in and out of the others' play. The other girls accept her into their fantasy play of princesses and dressing up, as she enters in and drops out of the play benignly. They also occasionally join her when she is drawing or doing craftwork at one of the small tables. Being at a table seems to be her preferred activity, working in a writing or numbers book, either on her own, with one or two peers, or with an adult. She most frequently plays with Filip, who also speaks Polish as a first language; he is less physically active than the other Polish-speaking boys, who usually play together.

In large group activity, Sylwia is consistent in her focus on the teacher and the white board. She remains undistracted by others, except to share pleasure in something happening in front of the class, i.e., occasionally turning to laugh or smile at a peer. She enjoys helping the teacher and handing things out, being *helpwr a dydd*. When she does this, she communicates directly with each child, asking questions. For instance, at Forest

School, she helps to take orders for drinks and hands them out, asking each child, '[J]us? Hot toclat [chocolate]?' She repeats their requests: '[H]e wan noclate,' as she comes to them in the circle.

In the Forest School sessions, Sylwia's play is varied. In addition to using the notebooks and chalkboards, she uses the loppers for cutting undergrowth and the spade and bucket for playing in the mud. Playing with muddy water is one of her most frequent activities. However, by summer term, she begins to spend more time attempting to climb trees and Mud Mountain, often alongside others, actualising the affordances of features that require her to rely on her own body as a tool. She also goes on the net swing and the rope swing, and has a go at the rope ladder that hangs from a branch, with support from the teaching assistant. The CRT and FSLs all remark on her growing confidence at undertaking more risky play and its positive impact on her verbal and play interactions with the other children. As she begins to play more actively with others, the need to communicate verbally increases, particularly in moments of conflict.

For Sylwia, the moments of conflict that I observed were when she was unable to fully join in physical play activities with her peers, due to not understanding the rules of the game, or when the rules of the setting that she did understand were not being observed by her peers. In these moments she required and sought the intervention of an adult.

#### **6.4.2 Classroom episode of conflict**

Sylwia's choices during free play sessions centred upon 'school work' play. Due to this, she was most often seated at a table enjoying craft, drawing or writing, or moving around the room to find materials to engage in these activities. Although she was self-motivated in her activity, she actively interacted with others at the table. This was suggested by the way in which she observed others' work and by responsive noises with those who spoke to her.

In the following classroom episode, Sylwia is unhappy that a classmate is using the felt tip pens in ways that do not align with classroom practice.

Across from me, Sylwia sits at a table with a group of other children and me in one of our interview sessions. We are using felt tip pens, which are held in a plastic container, paper and mini-beast stickers that I have brought to make pictures. Sylwia is very focused on her drawing project; next to her is Alina, who is also focused on her artwork. When they have completed these pictures, Alina gets up to change activity; and, Sylwia finds a numicon worksheet on the back of some of the paper and begins to complete it. Kyla approaches and sits in the seat Alina has just left. Sylwia looks up at her, then goes back to her artwork. Kyla grabs several pens out of the container and takes the lids off each one. She then makes a different coloured dot with each pen on each fingertip. Sylwia notices this out of the corner of her eye; she stops working to turn and watch. She then returns to her work.

Next, Kyla takes all of the felt tip pens out of the container, a handful at a time and drops them on the table in front of Sylwia. Sylwia’s eyes widen and she opens her mouth. She says, ‘Mi-iss!’ and looks at me. She stands up and says, ‘Miss’ again to get my attention and looks at Kyla out of the corner of her eyes, indirectly. She picks up her work from the table, which is now very disorganised and messy, and says to me, ‘Look’, pointing down at the pens on the table. She gets up and walks towards me. Her friend Filip is using one of my notebooks, so Sylwia asks for my small notebook, which she often uses. I point to its location on the middle of the table. Sylwia puts down her numicon sheet, picks up the notebook, shows me the disturbed felt-tips again by pointing and tilting her head to one side, and then sits down in a new seat next to Filip and away from Kyla. She begins to make marks in the notebook and chat quietly to Filip.

### Affordance perspective

#### Things and Their Affordances

Things	Afford
Felt-tip pens	Marking
Paper	Drawing
Numicon worksheets	Problem-solving
Notebook	Mark-making
Table	Working upon, moving around
Chair	Sitting
Empty chair	Sitting/moving to

#### Interpretation of the Affordances of Things

##### How does Sylwia relate to the affordances of things at the working table and how might that reveal small novelties?

For Sylwia, the chair and the table provide a stable workstation. These afford working comfortably on her practicing *writing*, *drawing* and *problem-solving*. The multiple sides of the table and an extra chair also affords *moving* around the table and *changing* seats when Kyla’s behaviour disturbs Sylwia. She utilises the pens, paper, notebook and worksheets in the way in which they are intended by the classroom practice, as artefacts for mediating the classroom learning objectives. She also uses the affordance of the notebook Filip is using as an object to change her perspective; this reminds her about the one she likes to use. She picks it up and begins to draw again. She has utilised the affordances of the things at the work station in order to do her work and also to resolve conflict with Kyla, in ways which align with the motives of the institution.

## Social others and Their Affordances

Social others	Afford
Peers: Alina and Filip	Working next to/being worked next to Sharing communal space / being shared with Sharing resources/being shared with Watching/being watched
Peer: Kyla	Watching/being watched <b>Disturbing/being disturbed</b> Challenging/being challenged
Researcher /me	Watching/being watched Telling / being told Asking/being asked

### Interpretation of the Affordances of Social Others

#### How does Sylwia relate to the affordances of social others at the working table and how might that reveal small novelties?

The group of peers at the table initially provide companionable company for Sylwia, in which she is *working* on her own projects but *sharing* space and resources with the others. They are all sharing the resources at the table, contributing to Sylwia both *sharing with* others and *being shared with*. This activity supports the motive orientation of the classroom in regard to working together in peer groups. When Kyla arrives and begins to use the felt-tip pens in ways that do not align with the classroom's intended affordances for felt-tip pens as artefacts, Sylwia finds this *disturbing*. She utilises what I afford her - my *watching* - for the affordance of *telling* on Kyla and *seeking help*. When she looks at me, Sylwia notices, *noticing*, what Filip is doing next to me, using a notebook; she moves herself to another seat at the table where she will not be disturbed by Kyla, where she may sit by Filip, and asks, *asking*, me for a small notebook, which she uses to transform her activity.

Sylwia's motive orientation is in alignment with classroom practice. When a peer disturbs her, she tells an adult, but also solves the problem herself. She finds another peer to work alongside who is focused on his own work in ways that correspond to the motive orientation of the classroom as well. From her actualisation of these socio-material affordances, it is possible to interpret how Sylwia is appropriately meeting the

expectations of the classroom in both social interactions and in using the things in the classroom as intended.

### Self-experience and Motive Affordances

<b>Self-experience (first person perspective on activities)</b>	<b>Motives (Quasi-otherness)</b>
Be quiet and focused	Be quiet-and-focus-able
Be creative	Be-creative-able
Share space and resources	Share-communal-space and resources-able
Use tools as intended	Use-tools-able
Do work	Working-able
Tell an adult	Seek-help-able
Move seats to resume work	Appropriate-response-able

### Interpretation of Affordances for Emerging Capabilities and Motives

How does the child experience herself as a 'social other to herself' (Bang, 2008, p. 131)? How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the institution?

### Discussion of event in relation to conflict, motives and meeting institutional standards

Sylwia's motive orientation is directed toward the object of classroom practice, whether that is paying attention to the teacher, working with a teaching assistant, playing with peers, or undertaking her own directed activity during play time. During periods of freely chosen play, she continues to be involved in schoolwork-related activities, such as writing and doing number worksheets. These are activities in which she can have one on one communication with either adults or peers. Much of the time, this is with her close friend Filip or an adult; however, during an interview in which she and Lee were drawing and watching their video episodes, he initiated engagement with Sylwia by imitating her laughter. She liked this and laughed more and they had a conversation of laughing and throwing their heads back. Then he looked at her drawing and imitated that, which she also liked and they collaborated on a piece of work together.

When she was displeased in the classroom activity, it was related to other children not seeming to follow the rules. The episode above with Kyla is one example. Because Sylwia was observant, she did notice what others were doing. If children were 'messaging around'

during circle time, for instance, she would try to get closer to the front and project her body forward toward the teacher and the whiteboard. The one time that I noticed her 'messing around' herself was when she was sitting next to two other Polish speakers, waiting for their names to be called to go home. They were sitting in a circle on the carpet and they were rolling up their homework papers into horns to blow through. She enjoyed being playful in this way, and was not reprimanded as it was the end of the day and time to go home. There were no other expectations for her than to wait patiently until her name was called to go home.

Sylwia's response to Kyla's actions of dumping all the pens on the table was an approach that was aligned with class protocol for conflict resolution. She told an adult, then she moved seats quietly and resumed working. From this, it appears that her competencies for classroom behaviour and self-regulation are developing in alignment with the expectations, demands and values of the classroom. Her displeasure at Kyla's behaviour with the resources of the drawing table suggest that she is able to resolve discomfort by seeking out an adult's help, and if it is not immediately forthcoming, she is capable of finding something else to do to take her away from the problem. These abilities to work, recover from disturbance and seek help demonstrate her experiencing of herself as a student who focuses upon her work.

### **6.4.3 Forest School episode**

The first time I met Sylwia was during the Forest School field work; we were on the same team playing a traditional Forest School hide and seek game, called '*1, 2, 3 Where are you?*'. In my field notes, I have written:

Sylwia was squealing with frightened pleasure and laughing while we hid under the camouflage tarpaulin with the rest of our team, The Squirrels. Unable to control her enthusiasm and stay quiet, as hiding dictates, she had to keep putting her hand over her mouth when the others 'shush'ed her. Her excitement made me laugh along with her, and I, too, held my hand over my mouth. We watched each other and widened our eyes when we heard the others approaching. She screamed with excitement and jumped up from under the tarp when they found our group (field notes, 26 January 2017).

Later, during the children's free play session, I brought out a small notebook in order to take field notes. Sylwia noticed, approached me and said: 'I wan piece.' I handed her a piece of paper and a pen. She rested the paper upon a tree stump and drew. Then she said to me: 'Draw picture of daddy.' I drew a stick figure man in my notebook.

She said: 'Gimme one more. Tank you.' She took the piece of paper and drew her daddy also. Then she said to me: 'Draw leaf.' She looked up at the tree branches overhead and watched a leaf float down. 'Dump [jump]. Up and down. Up and down.'



We look from the trees where leaves are falling to the ground where they have fallen. I repeat her words, up and down, and jump when she jumps. She laughs and keeps it up for a few moments: her acting out her words and me imitating her movements. We laugh together. We draw the leaves in my notebook. We look up at the canopy of the oak tree and watch as the late-falling leaves occasionally flutter down toward our faces. The classroom teacher approaches us, and asks me incredulously: 'Can you understand her?!' I said yes (Field notes, 26 January 2017).

That day we spent another ten minutes or so walking around the site during free play and drawing what we saw: children playing, and the FS staff. We observed people using tools and spent some time kicking leaves on the woodland floor.



*Figure 6.4 Sylwia using a stump for a writing table*

Sylwia's conflicts at Forest School were characterised by her not understanding the rules of games or how to communicate her needs to peers successfully, such as letting someone know when she wanted to stop being pushed on the swing by saying stop, rather than screaming. One day, I observed Sylwia being chased by Shannon. Sylwia seemed anxious, although she is also smiling nervously as she runs around the clearing in between the adults, looking over her shoulder. Shannon was smiling, as she chased Sylwia. Shannon caught Sylwia and grabbed both of her arms. Sylwia squealed and whined, 'aa-ahh', trying to pull away, looking frightened. She looked toward the Forest School leader.

FSL2 says, 'You're supposed to run, Sylwia! Run away! Run, run, as fast as you can!'

Sylwia giggles and pulls out of Shannon's grip.

The FSL calls, 'That's it, Sylwia! Run, run!' Both girls are smiling and Shannon catches Sylwia again and puts arms around Sylwia.

FSL2 says to Shannon, 'Come on, let her get away; let her go, so you can chase her again. There you go!'

Shannon releases Sylwia, who runs away.

'Yay!' says the Forest School Leader.

Shannon catches Sylwia.

'She's caught you! Now you chase Shannon!' calls FSL2.

Sylwia chases Shannon, who runs to hide behind the FSL2 (figure ...). 'Oh, where's she gone?' says the FSL, laughing.

Sylwia reaches around the FSL and tags Shannon, then runs away again. Shannon chases her.

'That's it,' says the FSL, watching.

Shannon catches Sylwia. They are both exhausted, but continue taking turns chasing and catching each other. Sylwia is laughing.

After tagging Shannon, Sylwia says, 'now you do dat to me!'

The game continues with them running toward the rhododendrons, where they begin to walk side by side.



Figure 6.5 Sylwia learning to play 'Tag'

## Things and Their Affordances

<i>Things</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Standing trees	boundary setting; running around
Ground	running, walking and standing upon
Space	Running; shouting
Copse of trees in distance	Walking toward, changing activity

## Interpretations of the Affordances of Things

### How does the child relate to the affordances of things and how might that reveal small novelties about the child?

Sylwia begins to use the things in the Forest School with help from the adults: she develops skills in *using* loppers, *climbing* trees, *hiding* and *playing* on the swings. These are activities which she is able to observe other people doing and imitate successfully with support from others. Using buckets and spades to play in water and mud is one of her favourite activities, which she is able to undertake successfully on her own. This game of tag appears to be unfamiliar to her; however, with support from the FSL, she is able to engage with it and use the ground and space for *running*. She, thus, appropriates the expectations of the Forest School to be physically active and use the space for *playing chasing* and *running* games. Her continued engagement demonstrates that she enjoys being playful in a risky kind of activity in which there is some fear of being caught and excitement in chasing.

## Social others and their affordances

<i>Social others</i>	<i>Afford</i>
Me, the researcher	Watching/being watched; filmed/being filmed
Shannon, peer	Chasing, being chased; touching / being touched; hugging/ being hugged; laughing / being laughed with ; scaring/being scared
Forest School leader	Helping/being helped; hiding/being hid; instructing/being instructed; encouraging/being encouraged; protecting/being protected; laughing/being laughed with; challenging/being challenged

## Interpretations of the affording of social others

### How does Sylwia relate to the affordances of social others at the working table and how might that reveal small novelties?

The Forest School Leader in this situation used observation of the girls' play to inform her intervention in their play. Recognising Sylwia's discomfort but attempt at play, she suggests a solution by initiating a small change in the play in order to help Sylwia understand the play better and thus enjoy it more. In doing so, she also helps Shannon to understand that Sylwia is not finding all the running pleasurable, at least until she begins to understand it. Løndal and Greve (2015) call this 'an initiating and inspiring approach' in which the adult 'initiates and/or inspires the children's play without direct participation in the activity' (p. 469).

By using this play approach, the Forest School leader is able to also keep an eye on the conflict that Sylwia is experiencing and make a judgment about the learning that may be facilitated and what Sylwia needs. During the video stimulated account interview, the Forest School Leader remarked that had Sylwia not begun to enjoy the play, the FSL said that she would have stopped the activity by intervening and explaining to both girls that 'when someone does not want to play, you have to stop. And it's ok to say "stop"' (FSL2, interview, 4 August 2017).

By *being helped*, and *being instructed* by an adult, Sylwia is accepting the affordances of social others to *be encouraged*, *be challenged*, *laughing*, *hugging* and *scaring*. She begins to laugh and enjoy the game as her understanding grows. By taking the thrilling, yet scary challenge of this risky play – *running*, *chasing* – she develops a motive orientation that is in alignment with the expectations of Forest School for physical, risky and social play.

## Self-experience and Motive Affordances

<i>Self-experience (first person perspective on activities)</i>	<i>Motives (Quasi-otherness)</i>
Chasing	chase-others-able
Be chased	Be-chased-able
Catching others	Catch-others-able
Being caught by others	Be-caught-by-others-able
Following the directions/rules of the game	Follow-the-directions/rules-able
Seeking help when confused and/or afraid	Seeking help-able
Play games with rules Not understanding the rules	Playing-games-with-rules-able Not-understanding-the-rules-able
Being physically active	Being-physically-active-able
Taking turns	Taking-turns-able
Being silly/ having fun	Be-silly-able; having-fun-able

## Interpretations of the Affordances of Self

**How does Sylwia experience herself as a ‘social other to herself’ (Bang, 2008, p. 131)? How does her participation during the activity setting reveal small novelties about her social position, her own values, and her motive orientation in relation to the motive orientation, values, and expectations of the institution?**

Sylwia was able to expand her interactive experiences with others in the Forest School setting by joining in more physically active play. In the playing tag episode, Sylwia was uncomfortable with a game that she did not know the rules, thus she experienced herself as *not knowing how to play-able*. In the classroom, the rules were very clear, but in the outdoor setting with running games and more physical games, she seemed less certain. During our video-stimulated conversation, Sylwia said, ‘She silly! We silly!’ and laughed when she watched the game of tag. This seemed to indicate that ‘being silly’ was a funny thing to be; it was a phrase she used when watching other children play on the videos we watched together. She did not seem to be ‘silly’ on her own, or to instigate silly behaviour, so she enjoyed joining in with others when they included her in their playfulness. In accepting the affordances of Forest School in relation to physical and challenging play, she was developing a sense of herself as a playful participant. This event

may demonstrate Sylwia's growing self-experience as she experiences herself as being able to join in boisterous *games with rules, understanding rules, and being silly*.

In May I returned to the FS setting and the children were running around playing a game called 'tickle tag'. In the game, the person who is 'it' runs after the others and tickles them when caught. That person has to freeze. They then become 'unfrozen' when someone gives them a hug. I noticed that Sylwia was joining in happily and chasing after she had been caught and running when it was her turn to run. In this particular area, the small novelty of her experimenting with fitting into the institutional practice after some guidance for expectations seemed to have become a great novelty, a pattern of successfully matching her motive orientations with those of the institution.

There were many other incidents in which Sylwia increased her physical and playful activity with peers with the intervention of an adult. This had the effect of her joining in and communicating with her peers rather than being solely absorbed in parallel play. Since Forest School valued children directing their own activities, Sylwia was able to divide her time between transporting water and mud and playing with buckets; drawing, writing and observing; using tools such as loppers to cut brambles and bracken; play on the swings; climb trees and Mud Mountain without any specific demands on *how* she engaged in those activities. She expressed pleasure and joyfulness when she was able to participate in slightly scary and challenging physical activities, particularly when she was in playful connections with other children or adults. Additionally, she expressed great pleasure when something vaguely 'naughty' happened, such as watching someone throw a bucket of muddy water, after which she gasped, looked at the teacher, copied and laughed delightedly at herself. The opportunity of Forest School to expand her conceptualisation of herself and who she was allowed to be and how to behave allowed her to take more risks, physically, and in response to institutional expectations.

Lenz Taguchi (2011) says that 'Different kinds of matter make her competent in different ways. She becomes a *confidently climbing girl* only because she has the opportunity to form an assemblage with the climbing frame. Without the frame she would not be able to become such a girl (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Hultman, 2011)' (emphasis in original, p. 38). Similarly, for Sylwia, being in the woods at Forest School provided a range of new activities and resources that challenged her. As her physical competencies grew, her interactions expanded both socially and with diverse materials. In doing so, her communication skills were developing; she seemed to be socially interacting with a wider range of children.

In both the classroom and Forest School, it seemed adults were focusing upon her language skills, but from a *deficit* perspective (Kliever, Biklen and Petersen, 2015). Sylwia's stage of communication was behind expectations for reception year, although she was engaging in what Vygotsky (1978) referred to as symbolic representational activity for communication: 'The child's self-motion, his own gestures, are what assign the function of sign to the object and give it meaning' (p. 108). Therefore, she was often



encouraged to 'use [her] words' when she had a conflict, such as being pushed too high in the swing by one of the boys and made a loud noise. She often screamed for both pleasure and to stop, so it was sometimes difficult for the other children to tune into her intention. While this support in learning the tool of verbal communication that would be understood by a wider range of individuals would enable her to engage more consistently with other children, it appeared that her existing commitment to communication - and emerging literacy - was often overlooked. When I first met her and we were playing 'up! Down!' and watching the leaves, the CRT was surprised that I could understand her.

Yet, I noticed that Sylwia was always very engaged with communicating. For instance, she always sat at the front of the class if she could. She mouthed the words and followed along with the teacher. She volunteered to help pass out drinks at Forest School and repeated everyone's requests/orders back to them: 'hot toclate [hot chocolate]' or 'dus [juice]'. Both Forest School and classroom had expectations for communication, which Sylwia was actively engaged in appropriating.

#### **6.4.4 Summary: Sylwia's experience of participation**

Hedegaard and Fleer (2009) assert that 'everyday practice in institutions has to be seen as knotting cultural traditions and values with personal motives and competences' (p. 255). Sylwia's leading motive was in alignment with classroom motive orientation: she appeared to come to school eager to *be a student*. Her primary choices of activity included writing and mark making, and numeracy paperwork, which align well with school practice. In whole group activities, she chose to sit near the front – a position for which she did not fight. She simply got into place as soon as the direction was given. If the front was not available, she sat near the front around the sides of the carpet. While she paid attention to those seated next to her, she mainly focused on the teacher or the white board.

Sylwia in the classroom chooses 'play' activities related to the classroom theme when I am watching, i.e., writing, tracing letters and numbers as well as colouring and art. Sometimes the girls engage her in their fantasy play, which as her communication has improved, she joins in more often (which seems to make Filip sad, as she is his only playmate). However, in class she is a 'student'. She sits in the front row if possible to look at the whiteboard, her concentration rarely faltering (field notes, 11 May, 2017).

In her interactions with peers, she concentrated on their faces and watched what they were doing. Although she joined in with playful group activities which were structured by the adults, and she enjoyed playing with peers, she usually chose to concentrate on writing and drawing and activities associated with *being a student*. In the Forest School, Sylwia was developing a motive orientation toward robust, physical play; team work, games and communication; and getting dirty, which she enjoyed and which were helping her practice her communication skills with peers (Figure 6.6). Yet, the Forest School also

provided opportunities to support her existing motive orientation toward *being a student* and *being a helper*, by enabling her to use chalk and chalkboards and be involved in handing out hot chocolate to her peers, which also strengthened her communication skills.



Figure 6.6 Sylwia climbing from tree to Mud Mountain

## 6.5 Bence

The following two descriptions of events for Bence and Tyler do not include the analytical templates in order to explore ways in which to present the findings for the reader without use of tables and in an attempt for brevity. In Hedegaard's, Bang's, Fler's and other cultural-historical theorists' writing, such descriptions are used in this more fluid, narrative way to present the case for the child's perspective. I present the descriptions and interpretations in the same order as the previous children's presentations, however. Affordances in the text are indicated using italics, as in previous descriptions.

### 6.5.1 Overview

Bence turned five in the February of the study. In March, I asked, 'When is your birthday?' to which he replied: 'When my mummy says.' Then his face lit up as he remembered: 'Feb-roo-ary! I'm five!' He was physically small in comparison with most of the children in class and spoke English quite formally but fluently. He also spoke Hungarian, which he spoke with his mother at home who speaks very little English. The youngest of two children, his older sister is in her early twenties and a mother herself, so he enjoys a kind of 'only child' status. His cousin is two years younger than he.

In the beginning of the study when I told the child about it and asked who would like to be involved, he declined. However, he soon changed his mind when he decided that he would like me to take photos and audio-visual recordings of him engaged in his work, which was very important to him. Bence demonstrates a preference for activities that have the characteristics of practical tasks and real life working. He enjoys accomplishing



purposeful tasks and participating in shared activity, although he is more often playing on his own to complete a task which is his focus. He likes his own activities the best, and prefers it if others join in his tasks under his directorship. He occasionally 'lets loose' and might join in a games like throwing mud at a tree, but he soon leaves this kind of play to join in a game with other boys under a tree, which has become a rocket, or to pursue his own task, such as painting a tree with water 'painting his room'. When I admire his work and ask if he is available for hire, he is quick to tell me that it is only pretend.

His participation in the home setting may be that of performing real-life tasks. In the interview with his mother, their conversation suggested that he enjoys being helpful and 'helping too much', as she put it (interview with mother, date). For example, he describes his participation in cooking different types of foods. His communication with peers during play, in which he often supports them with comments like, 'Good job, Joseph' and 'Good work, Cleo', suggests that he takes his role as a leader seriously. Perhaps it is reflective of language used in the home and/or at school, in the form that adults use to 'structure' participation (Rogoff, 2003; Rogoff et al., 2016). In one of the video-stimulated group conversations, one girl turned to him and said: 'You're funny, Bence.' She did not mean that he was someone who made jokes; instead, she was referring to the way he spoke more formally than the other children. She did not say it in an unfriendly way; she seemed curious.

He seemed to like structure and rules, which supported clear rules and boundaries; in this way, he was similar to Sylwia. Once in the woods, while waiting to use a pair of loppers, he repeatedly asked the child holding them, 'Can I have a go?' and later complained to the Forest School leader: 'I asked nicely three times!' (field notes, 7 February, 2017). This demonstrates his motive orientation in alignment with behavioural expectations of the institutions, but which may not always be reciprocated in peer culture.

### **6.5.2 Classroom episode of conflict**

One event in the classroom caught my attention because I thought it was going to escalate into a dramatic episode of conflict; however, Bence displayed capabilities which demonstrated his handling of conflict, which was in alignment with the classroom values. Therefore, I describe it as a conflict to exemplify both his motive orientation and developing capabilities for self-regulation.

In the classroom, Bence is building a complex tower of blocks, right behind the door. Kyla enters the room. Around his play area, he has stacked small plastic traffic cones.

Kyla walks straight to the cones and starts to pick them up, 'I need these.'

Bence: 'No, I'm playing with them.'

Kyla: [starts stacking] 'I need 4.'

Bence: notices that there are only 3 left, so he puts those 3 behind him.

Kyla walks around behind him and says, 'I need 3 more.'

Bence: 'You can have 2.'

Kyla picks up 2.

Bence then simply adds the last one to her pile. Kyla takes them all and wanders around the room trying to figure out what to do with them, presumably since she asserted that she needed them!

Just then Bence's tower falls down for the third time. I gasp.

'It's ok; I'll rebuild it,' he tells me, reassuringly.

Two weeks later during a VS interview with Bence, in which I bring up this event, he just says matter-of-factly, 'Yes' and nods. 'Yes,' he says, 'that happened.'

Then he tells me how excited he is that Kyla is coming over. 'Kyla is my friend. She's coming to my house tomorrow. My mum is looking after her baby sister.'

### **Discussion:**

In considering the affordances of the building activity, the *stacking* of the blocks and *building* a tower were important to him; and *making a barrier* with the traffic cones appeared to be a good idea for *protecting* his creation. He explained that since he built his tower right behind the door, which is where the building blocks are stored, he needed to do what he could in *preventing* an accident. This play is in alignment with classroom practice, in which he plays self-sufficiently in an engaged and focused manner, and creatively uses the artefacts of the classroom as they are intended. However, Kyla's entrance and *taking* the cones creates a conflict in which she is not participating in a way that is in alignment with the values of the classroom, to which Bence is attuned.

Bence tries *sharing* first, which is rejected by Kyla. Then he tries *resisting* and *negotiating*, which are also rejected. Finally, he seems to decide that *allowing* her to have her way is more important than *fighting* over the bollards, so he employs *giving* to minimize conflict. These social affordances are both effective in peer social relationships and for aligning with classroom motive orientation of social skills.

These choices that he makes demonstrate his developing competencies in self-regulation which is valued in the classroom. Bence's initial participation with someone who refused to follow classroom protocol demonstrate his *conflict avoiding* and *resolving* capabilities. These social skills are valued in the classroom. Also, he did not seek help, but tried to resolve it himself. Not only is being a capable builder, *planning-able* and *building-able*, important to him, but sharing, *sharing-able*, and making a friend, *friend-able*, is as well.

This also allows him to continue with other affordances which he values, and which align with classroom values: *continuing* his work in spite of the interruption, *focusing-able*, *self-control-able*. It seemed that Bence was able to balance building his tower and also ensuring his friendship – or a potential friendship - was intact. He even hands her the last one.

The act of giving the last cone away is a sensible strategy: he appears to understand she is not to be resisted, that conflict will not help him to achieve his aims and his main concern is his building. By giving her the last bollard, it appears he understands that this will end the problem and satisfy her, which is a competent means of *problem-solving*.

His reaction to his building falling down demonstrates his *self-regulating* and *problem-solving* in situations of frustration. Being resilient, *resilient-able*, displayed by his *reassuring* me that he can build it again is in alignment with the objectives of the classroom practice for self-regulation and conflict resolution. His motives also align with classroom values of *friend-making-able* and *sharing-able*.

If these affordances of motive-orientation formed a pattern over time of *giving in* to others, it could indicate that Bence needed to learn how to stand up for himself and develop other capabilities in relation to boundaries. However, Bence seems to understand that the path of least resistance in this situation with Kyla is the best way to meet his own needs for being a friend, as well as to stay in alignment with classroom protocol, thus getting his needs met. For, as the Forest School episode will demonstrate, Bence was also capable of vocally communicating his displeasure with others and their activity when it conflicted with his desires.

### 6.5.3 Forest School episode of conflict

In this episode, Bence is in the big clearing in the middle of the Forest School site. He is making cement with a bucket full of water and mud, holding a stick for stirring. He calls me over.

Bence: 'Come watch me. I've been making some cement.'

Me: 'What does a cement mix need?'

Bence: 'We need some mud for the cement. Looks over his shoulder at approaching children. Ah, there they come!'

Me: 'What are they getting? Water or mud?'

Bence: 'Muddy Water. Looks toward the boys and says: Great job, Joseph! Great job, Lee! He continues stirring the muddy water with a stick.'

Bence: 'We need more cement for the water. We are making cement for the hole!'

Joseph tells me: 'We use some flour to make special cement. That's how you mix it. He tells Cleo, who is walking toward them: We are making special cement.'

Lee approaches: 'More cement for you. I'll help you mix.'

Bence: 'We don't need some more now.'

Lee: 'We just need one - Just one more. Pours his bucket of water.'

Lee says to Bence: 'I'll help you mix it now.'

Me: 'Lee, I know you said you didn't to be filmed today, but Bence has asked me to film him doing this.'

Lee: 'I think I want you to film me now.'

Cleo: 'I'm not in it.'

Me: 'Do you want to help out?'

Cleo nods and kneels down by the boys.

Bence shouts: 'Action!'

Me: 'Can she join in?'

Bence: nods. 'First, I make new cement!'

Lee asks: 'New cement?'

Bence nods, 'Yeah, Joseph's got that idea.' Says to Lee: 'Smash it, don't circle [stir] it.'

Cleo picks up a small twig.

Lee: 'Cleo, that's a teeny stick, you need a big stick!'

Bence says to Cleo: 'That's a tiny stick. You need a big stick.'

Lee tosses her a more substantial stick. Then Bence hands her a different stick. She pokes the mud carefully.

Bence stands and shouts to Joseph: 'We don't need any more cement here! No more, please!'

Joseph calls: 'I'll make some more somewhere else!'

Bence: 'OK, great job, Joseph.'

Bence squats back down and says to Lee: 'You still smash it, no circle it.'

Cleo lets go of her stick and wipes her hands on her waterproofs and sits back.

Lee says: 'Let's put this back in,' and picks up Cleo's stick.

Bence says: 'Yes.'

Joseph brings his bucket of muddy water and puts it into a container that is to the side of the boys and Cleo. Joseph says, 'Cleo, you help here, like this.' She picks up her stick and starts to stir his Tupperware bowl of mud; he demonstrates how he would like it done.

Bence watches Joseph and Cleo.

Lee gets up to reach for a bigger stick. When he leaves the circle, Shannon who has been watching with another girl, takes his place and tries to pick up a stick to start stirring.

Bence pushes her arm away and says loudly, 'No, Shannon! We are making a cement circle!' [holds his arm out to keep her at bay]. Lee returns with two sticks and squeezes back into this place.

Lee says, 'Cause this is our builder thing, just boys allowed.' [He glances at Cleo] 'And girls.'

Bence says, 'No more girls! Just boys.'

Lee: 'Just one more.'

Bence: 'No! Only boys!'

Lee: 'Just one girl [nods and looks from Cleo to Bence], innit?'

Bence: 'Yes, no more!'

Lee: 'See, there is a sign that says "no girls" [he nods his head to the right].'

Shannon looks around, confused: 'Where?'

Lee says: 'Look over there - a sign says "just one girl", innit?' He points into the distance with his stick.

Lee and Bence continue pounding 'cement' and Bence reminds Lee: 'No, you mix it again, just smash it!'

Shannon crawls over to the other container into which Joseph has poured his muddy water. She pokes it with her stick. 'Can I do this one?'

Bence looks over: 'Not... I mean yes. You can help with that one. Good job.'

The other girl crouches down to help stir as well. The girls are stirring their pot (Joseph has left to dig more mud) and the boys, Lee and Bence, are smashing their mud/cement.

Lee goes to get more mud.

Bence says: 'This is fun, right, Shannon?' (Figure 6.7)



Figure 6.7 Bence and co-workers making cement

### Discussion:

In this activity setting, Bence is excited that he has rallied two boys to join him in making cement. He is less happy about the girls joining in, which creates a moment of conflict as it was not how he had envisioned the activity. My presence and the filming of the children at play co-constructed the conflict. Because I was filming, Cleo joined in and perhaps the other girls also were drawn to the activity based upon the fact that I was filming. We were all in the middle of a clearing. However, the nature of play at Forest School was that children moved in and out of activities all the time, based upon what piqued their interest or other instigators of activity transformations. The large space and the availability of loose parts and features encouraged roaming; the children would alternate between becoming absorbed in one activity, or moving around to see what others were doing.

During this activity Bence utilises the affordances of the ground for *working*, the bowls and spoons for *smashing*, and the mud and water for *mixing*. These affordances contribute to his motive intention to direct the activity setting of *making* cement. The direction of his instruction is focused on the 'right' way to mix cement, according to Bence, by using the available things in specific ways: *smashing* not *circling* [*stirring*] the mud, *holding/grasping* the right size stick, *bringing* materials in bowls, and *creating* a work space on the ground. These motive orientations are in alignment with Forest School, in which creative play with things, including mud, water and loose parts is encouraged and supported.

Socially, Bence is very happy about the other boys *engaging* in this activity that he has undertaken with the boys; so much so, that he wants me to be *filming* it. However, he is not happy initially with the girls *joining* [institution perspective] in with the activity; he considers their involvement *interfering* [from his perspective]. He changes his mind once

he is sure that the activity will still afford his motive orientation related to the affordances of social others: *leading, encouraging, creating, overseeing, instructing* and *directing*. He is *asserting* his role as the leader of the activity by *forbidding* and *pushing*, then finally *negotiating* who is allowed to play. As part of the *accommodating* the girls, he directs their work as he does with the boys' and uses his common strategies in peer relationships, *instructing, praising* and *encouraging*. He utilises these affordances for *directing* how he is *expecting* the others to *be undertaking* the task. Although he is initially not *accepting* of the girls *joining* in, which is not in alignment with institutional values of being inclusive, he chooses to be *accepting* rather than *fighting*, which demonstrates alignment with the expectations of the institution. He also is skilful in *switching* from *excluding* to *including*: 'This is fun, right, Shannon?' demonstrating his social competencies.

Bence's self-experience, or first person perspective on the activity, include motive affordances for being *lead-able, direct-able, instruct-able, encourage-able, creative-able, negotiate-able, exclude-* and *include-able*. These demonstrate both his challenges and his capabilities. Although he initially finds himself wanting to exclude Shannon and also be demanding in how everyone else participates, he also values playing with other harmoniously. It seems that his desire for friendship and working partnerships is balancing with his motive to have everything on his own terms. This is a social skill which will serve him well and likely need to be supported to balance his need to control. This conflict within his own motive orientations exemplify the crisis of transition between institutions.

At home, he may only play alone or with a younger nephew or older mother and sister, in which he is able to direct the play activity. There is also a crisis occurring as he is expected to expand his understanding of gender roles in the building trade. Here, I present an extract from our video-stimulated interview that Bence attended with his mother, in which we watched this footage of the cement mixing together.

Researcher (R): 'What are you doing here?' [points to laptop screen].

Bence (B): 'We are making cement. That's me and Lee and Joseph. And that's Cleo.'

R: 'You seem to know what you're doing.'

B: 'Yes, I do.'

R: 'How do you know how to make cement?'

B: [shrugs] 'I just know.'

R: 'It sounds like you don't want the girls to join in?'

B: 'No, it was only boys. But Cleo is helping too.'

R: 'You didn't want Shannon to join in?'

B: 'No. that was too many girls. Not enough place to make cement.'

R: 'What? In your circle?'

B: 'No. I mean yes.'

R: 'Can girls be builders too, though?'

B: [Laughs.] 'No, girls aren't builders.'

R: 'They aren't?'

B: 'No.' [shakes head.]

R: 'Well, I think some girls build houses. [FSL1] is building a house, remember?'  
[referring to conversation he and I had at Forest School with FSL1 who is building her own home].

B: [looks thoughtful, by tilting his head to one side] 'I didn't know that girls could build houses.'

R: 'Yes. Maybe you'll work with some more women builders someday.'

B: 'Maybe. Yes.'

R: 'You seem to be a very hard worker.'

B: 'Um-hmmm.' [nods]

R: 'Do you work very hard at home too. Do you help your mother? Does he help you?' [directed to mother]

Mother (M): 'Yes, too much.' [laughs]

R: 'Too much!? Is that possible?' [laughs]

M: 'Yes, he is cooking everytime.'

R: 'Really? You are cooking a lot?' [to Bence]

B: 'yeah.'

M: 'yes, yes.'

R: 'What do you like to cook?'

B: 'All things.'

M: 'Cake, cake, yes, everything, yes.'



Later in the conversation, when watching another video, his mother called Bence a 'little boss'. Being the only child in the house, as well as an uncle already, and living alone with his mother and doing translation for her, as well, may have all interconnected with his own dynamic personality and practical skill inclination. Hedegaard (2012) asserts that the child's own activities cannot be looked at in isolation, but across institutions to see how motives are being acquired in reciprocity with culturally-historically located values. Being engaged, creative and working hard are characteristics valued across all the institutions in which Bence engages; being 'bossy' is not necessarily valued, unless tempered with leadership and social skills. In order for Bence to acquire socially valued leadership skills, his natural inclination toward kindness, generosity and wanting friends can be encouraged.

In the challenge of girls, it appeared that it depended on whether he needed someone to play with. If only a girl was available, he preferred to play rather than not. Both the classroom and the Forest School encouraged mixed-gender play; however, it was more usual at Forest School as the artifacts were less/not at all gender-specific. This exemplifies how institutional values can become personal values: by working at Forest School with girls and meeting female role models that did not fit in with his expectations (e.g., builders, cement makers), he is beginning the process of a transformative shift in his perspective toward gender roles, by considering thoughtfully that which challenges his own beliefs. He was also very happy when he was invited to a girl's house to play and when asked who his friends were, cited two girls. It was perhaps, therefore, very important to him to do the cement-making activity with the boys, as often in the classroom those boys did not necessarily play with him.

#### **6.5.4 Summary: Bence's experience of participation**

Bence seems to like things to be a particular way and to be in charge of the play activity. He spends much of his time playing activities and inviting others to join him, in that they can do a task, 'I need someone to help me dig this, to fix this' and so on. His change of heart about my filming him may have had something to do with the fact that although I did not join in his play, my presence and my conversation allowed him to be sociable while also undertaking his concentrated tasks.

He did join in with others' play; however, he was vocal in expressing his dissatisfaction with an activity if aspects not suit him. For example, in one imaginative play episode, he was annoyed that the other boy pretended to take off Bence's seatbelt for him on their pretend motorcycle taxi. He shouted, 'I can do it myself now!' Also, he was not keen on very wild play or muddy play: once another boy threw mud on him for fun when a group of boys were throwing mud at a tree. Bence responded by roaring and then pushing the boy over. Another episode happened around the fire circle, when Tyler started howling like a wolf and Jordan joined in. Bence did not like it and repeatedly shouted, 'Stop!' (field notes, 24 May 2017).

This appeared to be a kind of resistance to play which was disorganised or which he did not understand. For instance, one day when one of the Forest School leaders instigated a game of ‘Cowboys and Indians’. Some of the children had been playing with a rope and threw it toward the leader. She picked it up and shouted ‘Yahoo!’ and twirled it like a lasso, ‘roping’ them (26 April 2017). They squealed and laughed and ran away. The play scenario was ‘transformed’ (Møller 2015, p. 325) by the leader using the rope in a way that was new to the children. She put leaves in the hair of some of the children to make feather headdresses for the Native American side. A wild game ensued with the cowboys chasing the others and tying them up to a big tree in the centre. The rope was loose and those tied up escaped and more running around and chasing occurred.

Bence initially just watched the game. It seemed that he was not sure what was happening; however, after a brief period of watching, he joined in. He played for a short time, enjoying it, then went back to his own activity which he had been pursuing over the course of several weeks: mending a bridge. He seemed to prefer activities in which he was able to work and follow his own rules and understanding.

Joking was another kind of unstructured challenge for him: when the children were sitting around the fire circle eating Oreos one day, some of the children were offering funny ideas for new Oreo flavours, such as sausage Oreos and bacon-flavoured Oreos. Bence did not understand; so, the teacher explained why and how it was a joke. He thought for a moment, then got up and said, ‘I don’t have time for jokes’ and went back to work on his bridge (field notes, 17 May 2017).



*Figure 6.8 Bence and co-worker repair a bridge*

One day in the hallway outside of the classroom, I ran into Bence, who was getting his coat on to go outside for break on the yard. I asked him what he was planning to do outside. He said, 'nothing.' I asked, 'You mean you stand around and do nothing?' He replied, 'No, nothing means you just run around.' (field notes, 28 June 2017). Bence appeared to enjoy activities which had a purpose. For him, running around was 'nothing'. At Forest School, however, one day he organised a race with other boys. In this activity there was a purpose – it had begun with a fantasy play about working at McDonalds and making burger deliveries to customers very quickly. It may be that when the children ran around on the yard, it was more about the act of running than the imaginative play.

I did not observe a conflict between him and an adult or the practice of either institution. Adult agendas appeared to suit him, perhaps because he was able to perceive what the purpose – or at least the outcome – was to be: to sit quietly one was called upon for play time, to line up as asked one was allowed to go outside, to tidy up suggested a new activity was going to take place. Thus, from the perspective of institutions, he is developing motive orientations in alignment with expected motive orientations, taking his work seriously, using things as intended by practice and developing good social skills with peers, in which he is learning that compromise is a strategy that leads to particular favourable outcomes. Conn (2013) notes that friendship 'may be less of a fixed and stable phenomena and more a working out of what it means to be a friend while locating oneself in the discourse as someone who 'has friends' (James, 2001)' (p. 153).

## **6.6 Tyler**

### **6.6.1 Overview**

Tyler turned five in March. An only child, Tyler lives with his mother, and has extended family nearby on the same council housing estate. His mother was anxious to get a diagnosis of autism for him and received support from the classroom teacher to help her 'cope'; she explained that she 'was at her wits' end' most of the time and felt like it was 'always Tyler who's doing something wrong' (Tyler's mother, VS interview, 15 June 2017). She explained that he was 'bunctious [sic]. He is naughty sometime, but people look at him in a wrong perspective and they don't see the problems' (Ibid.).

In class, Tyler was very active and sought interaction with peers and adults. During activities such as phonics lesson, during which children were expected to concentrate on the white board, he often either sat to the side with a learning support assistant or other adult, or stood by the teacher at the front of the room. When seated, he preferred to sit at the front of the class, so that he could communicate directly with the teacher during whole class activities. Frequently, he would get up and stand next to her when she was seated at the laptop near the whiteboard delivering a lesson, seeking extra input and asking questions directly, then sit back down. He had a fidget spinner that sometimes he played with when seated in group. When seated next to peers, he tried to engage with

them by poking and trying to make jokes; however, these advances were sometimes rebuffed.

He enjoyed playing with LEGO and cars in the classroom, although most often alone. Yet, in one on one interview sessions with other boys, such as Lee, he would strike up a rapport, draw superheroes together and get along well with others. He enjoyed more social play with others at Forest School and engaged in imaginative role play, particularly, where he could be very active 'catching baddies' and wielding 'swords'.

### **6.6.2 Classroom episode of conflict**

Tyler starts to play with LEGO during the midmorning free play session. He is called over by the classroom teacher (CRT) to do a numeracy activity. He goes to the table where she is sitting and begins to play a 'mini-beasts' dice and board game one on one with Mrs. Gordon. The player rolls the die, moves his/her counter that number of spaces, then colours in the mini-beasts which is landed upon. At the end of the 'spaces', the player counts up how many insects of each variety he/she landed upon. The activity lasts for 5 minutes.

Tyler rolls the die.

CRT: 'What did you get?'

Tyler: '6!'

CRT: 'Only 2 more to go!'

When Tyler reaches the finish, the CRT asks, 'Which bug did you find the most of?'

T: 'Butterfly and ant.'

CRT: 'Which bug did you find the least of? Least means the smallest amount.'

Tyler has his head in his hand, elbow resting on the table, watching the teacher write.

CRT: 'Did you find more ants or more ladybugs?'

T: 'Ants.'

CRT: 'Da iawn. How many more ants did you find?'

T: '4!'

CRT: 'Well, there were 4 ants and 1 ladybug. Count with me. There's not 4 *more* because they both had at least one. There was [sic] 4 ants and 1 ladybug, so you have 1 ladybug and 1 ant, so count how many more after 1.'

Count with me. 1, 2, 3, [they count together]. So there were 3 more ants than ladybugs.'

Tyler looks at her. 'And then they both have 4 then!'

CRT: 'They both started with 1, then there was 3 more ants.'

Tyler rubs his eyes like he is tired.

CRT: 'Well done. Did you enjoy that?'

Tyler nods. Starts to get up.

CRT: 'Well done.'

Tyler runs off to play.

He goes over to the LEGO blocks where he was working prior to having to do the numeracy lesson. His board has been taken over by others, but he asks them to give it back and grabs at it. The boys walk off to do something else, thus avoiding conflict. Tyler continues to create the building that he had been doing and rearranges the blocks that the other boys had added. A few minutes pass and it is 'tidy up time'. He continues to play with the LEGO, although other children come over and start to put away some of the LEGO. Tyler receives a warning from the TA to put it away. After a second warning, this time by the classroom teacher, he takes apart the LEGO and puts it away. However, he is not happy; he crosses his arms in front of him as he sits in the circle and is frowning. Now, it is time to go outside for play time and the teacher asks the children to get their coats on and line up at the door.

Tyler goes back over to the LEGO box and takes some LEGO back out and begins to work. The teaching assistant gently taps him on the back and says, 'It's time to go outside, now, Tyler; go get your coat on.' He recoils his shoulder away from her and ignores her demand. The classroom teacher notices him (he is half hidden behind the toy tables) and says, 'Tyler, put that away and get your coat on now, please!' He is angry and starts to throw the LEGO in the box. He then folds his arms across his chest and turns to sit down at the table where I am sitting with my camera.

The classroom teacher says, 'Everyone, be quiet before we go out.' [turns to Tyler]: 'Tyler! Get your coat on and line up!'

He looks at my camera and leans in to touch it and talk to me, as though using me as a decoy; so, I say, 'I'll film you and time how long it takes you to get your coat on and get in the queue.'

Tyler jumps up and runs to the hallway to get his coat. 'Well done, Tyler,' says the teacher as he goes out the door to get the coat. He comes back in, struggling as the sleeves are inside out. The classroom teacher helps him to get his arms in the sleeves and he runs toward me. The TA gently turns him toward the queue and he steps in between two

children. I call, 'Thirty seconds!' He smiles and walks out to the yard with the rest of the class.

In this episode, Tyler's motive orientations align with teacher's and classroom practice in the first section. He stops playing with LEGO and goes to work with the teacher as asked. The things presented here correspond to *being a student*: the bugs, the worksheet, the table and so on. The social affordances of the teacher also function as *instructing/receiving instruction, evaluating/receiving evaluation, listening/being listened to* and other affordances related to the numeracy lesson. Therefore, Tyler experiences himself as *instruct-able, being-praised-able*. However, it is apparent that Tyler is confused by the 'less than/more than' lesson, and also impatient to get back to his LEGO work. The Bug Maths is a purposeful and playful lesson, but it is abstract compared to the purposeful play he was previously engaged in. Bang (2008) recognises that the child might not 'experience the value of [the] artefacts in ways hoped for by the teacher. Some children even reject what things afford if the functional value they have to the child is a negative one; such as, if the child feels that she is forced into participating in activities that are experienced as meaningless or emotionally painful to her' (p. 127). For Tyler, the activity appears to be a distraction from his play; yet, he enjoys one on one time with the teacher and works hard to please her and try to understand. He does the work as asked, then returns to his chosen activity of building with LEGO.

Unfortunately, play time is nearly over and he is soon asked to tidy up, which leads to the conflict. Although he does tidy up, he is angry about it. Although his actions are aligned with expectations and demands, he is resentful at having to stop playing. Therefore, when asked to line up to go outside for 'play time' on the yard, he returns to his LEGO, in an act of defiance. Playing with indoor toys is an activity setting not in alignment with the motive orientation of the classroom at break time. This play time on the yard is something that all of the children need to engage in, so that the teaching staff may have a break. Thus, the conflict arises in which Tyler wants to stay behind and play with the indoor play toys, specifically his LEGO. My camera distracts him from his new motive which is to refuse to do what is asked. When I suggest a new game: 'timing how fast he is', his motive to play is engaged and he gets ready and goes outside.

Tyler uses the affordances of the things in the second sequence of activity to meet his motive orientation which is play. He wants to continue playing what he wants and not be told he has to stop. Once his need for playful engagement is met, he aligns himself with classroom practice once again. In order to have aligned his motive orientation with those of the numeracy lesson, thereby avoiding conflict, this episode brings into question whether the teacher may have been able to use his chosen activity to assess his numeracy skills for the demands placed upon her to assess those skills. The classroom teacher was very aware that the day's routine, in which play, as well as other aspects of the day, were a continual matter of 'stop and start', was not useful for either her or the students:

[I]t's not sustained enough – it's all stop and start. They don't get long enough to do things and be engaged. They can't build on things. It's fascinating how in the forest they go back week after week and build on what they did the previous week – they retain it and build on it. They just don't do that in the classroom... they don't have long enough to establish it strongly, they are more flitting. In the forest, they go back week after week and build on what they did the week before. It's amazing really. I see a huge difference for that reason. And the adults are more relaxed. We can step back and watch what's going on, what they're doing, without thinking about what the end goal is – in the classroom, you're always doing something and everything has an end purpose in order to tick some box on their developmental progress! It's terrible (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

The teacher felt the expectations to assess specific activities did not allow for a way to apply this more spacious outdoor pedagogical approach to the demands of the classroom.

### **6.6.3 Forest School episode of conflict**

Tyler sits astride upon a fallen log, holding a large rabbit hand-puppet. Bence approaches with a stick in his hand, speaks to Tyler and climbs onto the log behind Tyler. Bence makes a motion across his chest, as if putting on a seat belt. Tyler take his hand out of the rabbit puppet, and turns the rabbit so that it is facing forward while he grips it with both hands.

He shouts, 'Bunny Bike!' He turns to face Bence and asks, smiling, 'Do you wanna go super-fast?'

Bence nods, smiles and says, 'Yes!'

Tyler says, 'Let's go, Legendary' and taking a hand from the puppet, makes a motion to 'do up' Bence's seatbelt, using 5 strokes in the air across Bence's chest: 'Dee, dee, dee-dee-dee!'

Tyler turns to face the front, grips the rabbit again, and shouts: '100 fast!' and makes a racing motorbike noise. Suddenly he stops, turns back to face Bence and says, 'We're here.'

Bence gets up to leave and Tyler says, 'No, no, I gotta take your legendary [inaudible...]I have to take your seatbelt off.'

Bence sits back down, and Tyler makes several quick motions with his hands in the air across Bence's chest, saying 'zwish, zwish! There.'

Bence gets up again. As he walks away, he says, 'I take mine own seatbelt off now', and walks away, still holding his stick.

Tyler has put the rabbit puppet back on his hand, and he calls after Bence, using the puppet to speak, '...super [inaudible]'

Bence replies, 'I do, I do the superseatbelt now. I do mine own' and walks out of range of the camera.

Tyler faces forward and calls, 'Bunny bike!'

Bence runs back over, still holding the stick, and says 'Hello!' He gestures to Tyler as if handing Tyler pretend-money; then Bence says, 'Let's see if we can [...] dumptruck!' and sits down behind Tyler again. He imitates doing up a seatbelt.

Tyler sees him do this, but says 'Aw, seatbelts', and makes his tripling motion in the air, but Bence pushes his hand away and says, 'no, no!'

Tyler: 'You need the super-seatbelt cause we go super-fast.' He turns sideways and puts his hand in the rabbit puppet.

Bence says, '[inaudible...*don't go?*] so fast.'

Tyler: 'Why? We did it before when you came here.'

Bence: 'I know.'

Tyler turns to face the front and starts up the 'Bunny bike'. There are 'revving' noises, then the sound of 'brakes' squealing to a stop. Tyler's hand reaches behind, making the motion of taking the seatbelt off.

Bence calls, 'I get some money for you' and walks off to the bushes. Tyler is playing with the rabbit puppet, feeding it grass.

Bence comes back, 'I got some money for you at the dog shop' and hands him some pretend money.

Bence gets on the back of the 'bike', says 'I did the seatbelt now!'

Tyler turns around and motions with his hand, swish/swish/swish in a quizzical manner, with his eyebrows raised; Bence says 'Yes' and nods. They zoom off again.

Bence gets off, another boy comes over and sits down. Tyler turns and asks the new boy if he wants a ride on the bunny bike. The new boy nods yes. Tyler does up his 'seatbelt'; then Tyler murmurs to the rabbit, the rabbit 'speaks' in his ear, he nods and he and the bunny resume their taxi service. Tyler turns around and says, 'What's your name?' to Tomas. Tomas replies.

Tomas gets up from log and wanders off, so Tyler gets up and walks into the rhododendron wood with his puppet. Lays it down on a log, then climbs on a tree. At this point Shannon and Sylwia run into the trees. Shannon picks up puppet, and uses it to continue her game of tag, using the rabbit to tag



Sylwia, who squeals. She does this to Tyler who does not like it and he is not happy that she has the rabbit. He goes to tell the Classroom Teacher that Shannon 'hit' him.

CRT listens to him speak into her ear. 'Did she?' He nods.

'Do you think she was playing tag?' CRT asks.

Tyler says, 'No, she whacked me with it.'

'On purpose?'

He nods.

CRT: 'Let's go find out what she thinks.'

Tyler: 'She's over there.'

'Shannon. Did you hit Tyler?'

'No! I was playing with him and I went like that.' Shannon shakes her head and holds the puppet up.

CRT: 'Tyler thinks that he's been hit.'

FSL2 approaches: 'I witnessed the whole thing, and this is exactly what happened.' She gets the rabbit puppet and rubs the rabbit on his cheek. Tyler smiles and cringes, steps back, rubs his face.



*Figure 6.8 Tyler and puppet*

CRT: 'There we are. Now, that, Tyler is ticklin'. Not hittin'. She tickled you.'

Tyler: 'It didn't tickle.'

CRT: 'Well, if you don't like it, just say no. Use your words and say, please don't do that again. Unless you use your words, people aren't going to know.'

Shannon tickles FSL2, then reaches to tickle Tyler again.

He shakes his head and runs away.

CRT: 'Shannon, I don't think he wants you to tickle him. Go and find someone else to tickle.'

'A me! Me, me!' cries Sylwia, grabbing for it. Shannon tickles her cheek; Sylwia points to me.

Shannon rubs it on me – it's wet and muddy.

The FSL2 and CRT come together to chat about Tyler's behaviour.

Tyler has gone off to the other side of the field, where boys are throwing mud at a tree and running in and out of their 'rocket' / den in the rhododendrons. He wanders back over by himself to the rhododendrons where he had been playing with the rabbit and approaches the other FSL. Then he comes out of the trees shouting, 'We're going back! We're going back!' [Back to the other site.]

He follows Shannon and he speaks to her about the rabbit puppet, 'Shannon, can I have rabbit?' but she shakes her head, no. He runs to the other site.

In this episode, Tyler is using the rabbit puppet to play a game, to which other children are attracted. This is not a very usual situation for Tyler, and he is enjoying driving the 'bunny bike', having playmates who will join in his imaginative play. Tyler uses the puppet as a tool for communication with the other children and as an object to create a communicative play situation. However, the puppet also has its own role as a playmate for Tyler. He is not unhappy when Bence asserts his independence about doing up his own seatbelt; indeed, he seems to consider it and check that Bence has done it correctly. And, when Tomas arrives, Tyler uses the rabbit as a consultant to create a three-way conversation. When he 'loses' the rabbit to Shannon, he becomes unhappy and wanders around looking for some resolution, rather than joining in with Shannon's new game of the rabbit as tickler. When the teacher calls him over to show him a picture of an insect on her phone, he uses the opportunity to solicit her help in getting the rabbit back. He seems to know that it is not enough to just want the rabbit back and Shannon is not prepared to give it up; so, he uses the strategy of *telling on* Shannon in order to try to get it back.

In discussing peer disputes, Maynard (1985) notes that:

What works is when one of the collaborators seeks help from an outside authority. Children thus not only know how to solicit and offer collaborative alignments among themselves, but also how to utilize other powerful resources in pursuing particular ends, particular forms of social organization. Regularly, participation by

an outside authority is not sought to "end" conflict or "settle" disputes as a first priority. Rather, in a political move, children solicit that participation to promote whatever position they have taken during the dispute process (p. 216).

When Tyler's strategy is rejected, he again wanders around looking for something to do, but it is clear he is still brooding about the loss of the rabbit and how the tables were turned, so that he ended up being told off by the teacher *and* not getting the rabbit back. He appears happy when the FSL says it is time to change sites and shouts to tell the others. It appears that he needs this adult intervention to change the situation in which he has found himself. On the way to the other site, he asks Shannon for the puppet back, perhaps hoping that she will let it go now that there is a change of routine; when she rejects his request, he runs to the other site following the direction of the whole group activity.

Tyler is doing what is expected of him to engage purposefully in the Forest School: *playing* with friends, *seeking help* from an adult, *listening* when he told that he was wrong, and *asking nicely* for a toy. His inclusive 'bunny bike' activity created a situation in which he was in charge of play, but also *being a good playmate* to the other boys and *compromising* some of the rules of the game to be *accommodating*. He is learning how social situations are negotiated and that negotiation does not mean one gets one's way all the time; although in the bunny bike activity, he can compromise while still controlling the game and holding his puppet.

The interaction with Shannon, on the other hand, requires negotiation, as she is not willing to meet his need to hold the rabbit. While interviews of adults during the audio-visual recording-stimulated interview indicated that the adults interpreted his going to the teacher and saying that Shannon had 'hit' him with the rabbit as *lying*, an interpretation from the child's perspective is to see that he is appropriating classroom demands to *discuss with an adult*, rather than responding to the situation with *fighting*. This demonstrates his developing competencies, even though his assertion of hitting was a manipulative way of getting the teacher's attention and trying to ensure that the situation went in his favour. Importantly, the teacher responded to the incident not by accusing him of lying or over-dramatising, but by encouraging him to communicate his feelings and needs, and also letting him know that he has to respect those of others. This gentle guidance supported his continued development in how to have his needs met, but also how to get along with others and know when to refocus his attention if he does not get what he wants.

The spaciousness of the Forest School setting also allows Tyler to move on to another activity easily, in this case supported by the entire shift of the group activity to another site. He uses this opportunity to ask Shannon for the rabbit one more time; when Shannon refuses, he appropriates the physical move of the site to transform the whole situation to a new play activity, in which he and Bence begin to play 'fighting the baddies'. This transformation into an activity where he can use his imagination, find a special stick

as a weapon, and exert physical energy support his continued engagement in social play with peers.

#### **6.6.4 Summary: Tyler's experience of participation**

Tyler is learning how to be a student and draws upon teaching staff to support him and to be his friends. He is also learning, however, to more comfortably belong to peer groups in both the school and the Forest School. At Forest School, with fewer routine demands and fewer toys, he seems to find it easier to engage other children to play imaginatively with him for extended periods of time.

The Forest School is very important to him, according to his mother; he demanded that they go visit one weekend so he could show her 'his' Forest School. Unfortunately, when they got to the woods, he was unable to find the path leading to the specific site and was very upset, saying: 'This isn't *my* forest!' This connection with place may indicate that for Tyler there are good memories associated with Forest School. He was able to act out his role play scenarios, for one, using swords and guns (sticks) and leap from tall buildings (hills) and across rivers (ditches and streams). He was also able to create imaginary friends, such as the rabbit puppet, and find living creatures to play with, such as insects and caterpillars.

However, he also enjoys school with its routine that he is getting used to and the consistency of the teacher's expectations. The way in which he performed the 'More than/less than' bugs lesson with patience was characteristic of his interactions with academic expectations and also his secure relationship with the teacher. In one fieldday in the classroom, I watched him tease another boy for still being on the '4' age list displayed on the wall. He, like Jordan, appropriated these signs in the classroom indications of superiority over others and was not always patient in play situations with peers in the classroom.

He was also less patient with adult demands that insisted upon his self-control in more open-ended situations, such as play-time and transitions between activities. While he wanted to please the teacher during one-on-one moments, and when in a whole group, he was capable of focusing on her expectations. However, when he did not want to meet peer or adult demands, he was oppositional about negotiations, which often ended in violence toward peers or outrage toward adults. During these challenges, he was given one-to-one support for learning how to make choices that had more happy consequences for everyone, or as the teacher put it: 'he has understood that he needs to play this game so he can get what he wants ultimately' (CRT, interview, 24 May 2017). With the support of such an understanding teacher, he was being gently guided toward more accommodating behaviour that would enable him to have more pleasant play times with peers and become a supportive leader in his own right. Importantly, he valued this relationship with the teacher, so he most often sought her approval as he seemed to

understand that in doing so, he would also win the approval of his peers as she helped him learn to get along better with others.

## 6.7 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter were collected in order to consider the research questions:

How do developmentally, linguistically and culturally diverse children participate in activities in and across institutions?

What is the child's experience of their participation and their developing motive orientation in relation to the demands of institutional practice from the *child's* perspective?

All of the children are learning what kinds of participation may be considered socially successful in the classroom and the Forest School, in relationships with both peers and adults. They are also exploring what affordances are available and valued in each space in relation to how to use the things in the classroom and in the woods, what other people with their own diverse agendas afford and who they are and are becoming in relation to the expectations of others. Events of conflict provide a lens through which to consider how children negotiate, challenge and appropriate the demands and expectations of the institutions. These detailed event descriptions provide a glimpse into how the children's motive orientations may shift toward those institution's motive orientations as the children begin to learn what is positively valued in the institution and where they fit into the community of the school or the woods. In many episodes of conflict analysed in this study, the inclination to appropriate the motive orientations of the institutions often had to do with *being liked* and *being accepted*. Winther-Lindqvist (2012) highlights how children's social identity formation is interlinked with motive orientation, and asserts that 'the development of a motive towards learning ... is influenced by the child's possibilities for creating or sustaining a positive social identity among peers, friends and teachers' (p. 129). For teaching staff, these existing motive orientations for social inclusion were best aligned with learning as a motive orientation when they were recognised as such and supported with guidance in how to ensure best possible outcomes for everyone – both as an individual and as a group.

From a children's rights perspective, it is essential to consider children's multiple modes of participation in everyday activities (Bae, 2012). However, by considering feedback children may receive for their participation, from peers or adults, it becomes possible to understand how children may begin to shift their motive alignments toward particular peers or adults who value who they already are and whose expectations are based upon goals that are achievable with support. Whether these motive orientations are in alignment with institutional values depends upon the institution with which they are compared, i.e., home, peer culture, Forest School, or school, and, indeed, whether the motive orientations across institutions are similar. The values of the Forest School staff and the classroom teaching staff, as representative of their respective institutions, were

in alignment, thus contributing to the children receiving similar messages in regard to what competencies were valued. Chapter 7 discusses the findings of the previous two chapters in relation to each other and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

## Chapter 7 Discussion

Chapters 5 and 6 presented findings concerned with the conceptualisation of an activity setting for considering what activities the children co-construct with available resources, the interactivity with agentic others with their own motive orientations and agendas, and the 'possible and available cultural positions' (Bang, 2009, p. 175). These positions shape the child's view of him/herself as a participant in activity settings across institutions. In this chapter, I synthesise the findings presented in Chapters 5 and 6 in relation to the research questions:

What are the expectations and values of the institutions, as characterised by the socio-material affordances of practice?

How do developmentally, linguistically and culturally diverse children participate in activities in and across institutions?

What is the child's experience of their participation and their developing motive orientation in relation to the demands of institutional practice from the *child's* perspective?

### 7.1 The expectations and values of the institutions

The expectations and values of the institutions, as characterised by the available affordances, were explored in Chapters 5 and in relation to children's motive orientations in Chapter 6. Here, I surface themes of spaciousness and relationships to discuss the institutions and their affordances for children's participation.

#### 7.1.1 Space and spaciousness

There is a discourse within early years literature concerning pedagogical settings and the interactivity therein (Bae, 2012; Goouch, 2009; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Waller et al., 2010). Bae (2012) and Angier and Povey (2005), in particular, refer to a sense of pedagogical space and spaciousness. In Bae's (2012) study of verbal and non-verbal interaction patterns between child and adult, she describes teacher-child interactions in terms of *spacious* and *narrow* interactional patterns. In doing so, she argues that 'everyday interactions must be critically analyzed in terms of how adults allow space for children to express their thoughts and experiences' (Bae, 2012, p. 55). Bae characterises spacious interactional patterns as those in which the teacher demonstrates the following: attention on that which is of interest to the child, openness and attunement to the child's emotional mood, and tolerance for mistakes and lack of correctness. While this study did not base its analyses on Bae's analytical framework as it did not consider communication specifically, the concept of spaciousness is

relevant in order to reflect upon children's participation as shaped by the social and material environment. Massey's (2005) conceptualisation of space as a 'product of interrelations...[continually] constituted through interactions' (p. 9) creates a definition of space, in which she asserts there is a sense of 'openness, heterogeneity and liveliness' (p. 10). This conceptualisation of space may be used to view the material and social aspects of learning environments within which the child participates.

The findings demonstrate that spaciousness, as a term that includes human qualities such as liveliness and openness, as well as physical qualities such as roominess, could be seen in this study in relation to how institutional tools such as scheduling, pedagogical approach and physical area shape the child's participation. In the findings presented in Chapter 5, notions of time and the timetable co-constructed the daily activities and how the classroom teacher felt she was able to implement the pedagogy of the FP as intended. The Foundation Phase was conceived as an alternative to the 'transmission' (Rogoff, Matusov and White, 1996, p. 390) or traditional school model, in which adult-directed activity is directed toward children's demonstration of retained information. Yet, the classroom teacher echoes the findings of Siraj (2014), who suggests that the outcomes-based requirements of the FP contributes to pressures on teachers for results, thus limiting their engagement with child-directed play.

As the findings in this study demonstrate, while outcomes-based requirements may not inhibit opportunities for children's play, they did restrict adults' observations of play as learning processes. Within the classroom, a strict routine based upon short blocks of time was followed, due in part to the demands of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework and baseline assessments, as well as the reception year's inclusion in primary school activities, such as assemblies. The classroom teacher was often struggling with time in multiple ways, as she describes in this interview:

Researcher: Do you feel that you get enough time to speak with each child since you have such a big class [36]?

CRT: No, and there are some kids who demand a lot of time, behaviour wise. I think because I am working to a tick list of getting kids through a focused task I engage with them then, but I don't have time to engage when they are playing or watch each child in a playful situation. I did last year, I think. Last year with only 24 pupils, I had some pockets of time where I'd finished our focus tasks, and I could play with them or observe them playing. But not with this many. I haven't done any of that this year. In order to get all 36 through their focused tasks, hasn't left me with any time to observe them *not* at my table, doing specific skills for numeracy or mental recall or whatever (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).



The classroom teacher felt real frustration with her ability to implement the range of aims that are articulated in the Foundation Phase objectives within the confines of the schedule that came with being part of a primary school:

I think [the FP] needs to be separate from school and not considered school. Then you could be free from certain assembly times and scheduled play times and so on. You could be autonomous and create a space in which children and teachers could all work together being creative and imaginative and learning without pressure to be a certain way, and meet a certain criteria... it's not sustained enough – it's all stop and start. They don't get long enough to do things and be engaged. They can't build on things. It's fascinating how in the forest they go back week after week and build on what they did the previous week – they retain it and build on it. They just don't do that in the classroom... they don't have long enough to establish it strongly, they are more flitting. In the forest, they go back week after week and build on what they did the week before. It's amazing really. I see a huge difference for that reason. And the adults are more relaxed. We can step back and watch what's going on, what they're doing, without thinking about what the end goal is – in the classroom, you're always doing something and everything has an end purpose in order to tick some box on their developmental progress! It's terrible. When you can see it happening at Forest School – I do take it on board, and I notice their language and imagination there, which feeds into my evaluations that I do back here (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

Although some Forest School provision can be less alternative and more about taking the curriculum outdoors (McCree, 2019), the expectations of this particular Forest School practice were based upon immersive exploratory play in nature and more in line with informal learning (Coppens et al., 2014; Rogoff et al. 2016). This impacted upon the quality and quantity of time to be engaged in play, which was more sustained play across weeks, providing more time for adults to observe and interact with the children and more space to share with each other as colleagues (5.3.2). Each Forest School session was one and one-half hours, with at least fifty minutes devoted to children's chosen play activity. While a similar amount of time was available in the classroom throughout the day, it was usually in twenty-minute time periods. The schedule in the outdoors, therefore, had fewer transition times, so the children were able to sustain their self-directed activity for longer time periods (5.2.1; 5.2.3; 5.3.2), contributing to the sense of spaciousness in time management on the part of both adults and children.

Not only was time for uninterrupted play important to both teaching and Forest School staff, but the FS supported multiple affordances for play choices that were less accessible in the CR due to physical space, i.e., robust physical play and risky play, retreating from socialising, and emotional restoration (Kyttä, 2003; Sandseter, 2009). For instance, at FS, fighting was more likely to be considered rough play and observed for emotional and physical safety issues, rather than 'shut down' immediately (6.2.3; 6.3.3).

The indoor setting in a school classroom had external demands on noise levels and physical demands on space, both between children and in how the room was arranged, which required more specific rules for participation. These demands, along with those of the timetable, meant fewer opportunities for the teaching staff to observe the children's play for learning affordances (5.2.1) and more pressure to control children's activity. Therefore, the weekly trip to the woods was a welcome break from the over-crowded classroom in order for adults to observe children as a smaller group – usually between 15-18 pupils – in a bigger space, with the benefit of additional responsible adults. The ratio of one or two adults to four children meant that the children had the opportunities to engage in play with increased affordances for risk-taking, physical activity and self-directed learning and the teaching staff had increased affordances for observing, supporting and joining in the children's activities on the children's terms.

However, the teacher's perception that she was unable to provide for playful experiences in the CR for the children in the ways in which she wanted or felt aligned with the aims of the Foundation Phase demonstrates her worry, but not necessarily the experience of the children, from their perspective. For instance, when I asked a group of children at the beginning of the study if they preferred being in the classroom or at Forest School, one of the girls replied: the classroom. 'Here we can paint and be helper of the day!' (Field notes, 25 January 2017). While there may have been a lack of space and time for the teacher to observe the children playing, or for the children to engage in particular types of play, that did not necessarily mean that the children felt disadvantaged by their activity in the classroom. These activities, helping and painting, however, could more easily be transferred to the woods than the rough or risky play transferred into the classroom.

Sylwia, for instance, chose to do activities in the classroom that corresponded with the values of *being a student*, found in the pedagogical space of the classroom (6.4.2). She seemed to find playing in the woods exciting, but novel (6.4.3). She connected with me immediately while playing hide and seek, but became *very* interested in my activity when she discovered that I had the resources from the classroom that she liked: writing and drawing materials. Rather than using sticks and mud for writing and drawing, she associated artefacts similar to those from the classroom with these activities. Once this was noted, the Forest School leaders purchased chalkboard and chalk for the children to use in the woods, following the children's interests, as asserted in FP pedagogy. By having these resources, Sylwia was able to have artefacts that made her feel secure and created an opportunity for communication with adults. However, the spontaneous social and material affordances available in the woods, such as mud play, created opportunities for her oral communication to develop with peers (Bateman and Church, 2017). Additionally, for Sylwia, social support was needed to participate fully in rough and risky play opportunities. Having space in the schedule – considering schedule as an artefact of institutions – and the social and physical affordances, as observed at Forest School, supported Sylwia's developing competencies in communication and social skills, as well as physical development.

Additionally, the social and physical spaciousness of the Forest School created an affordance for the children of having more choice about who they played with or, indeed, simply getting away from others, which in the classroom was only available when the children went to the toilet.

FSL1: I mean, the important thing is to have access to this [gestures to the woods] and [to] have a link with somewhere on their doorstep is really important and they might discover that this is a place where they can come and have some breathing space. I mean literally it is a breathing space. If someone wants to go off and be alone there is space for them to do that (5.3.1).

Jordan's activity, for instance, often involved finding special spaces, over which he then wanted to have control (6.2.2; 6.3.3). He was experimenting with his autonomy and social competencies by negotiating the social and material affordances of both settings. In the outdoors there was the physical, social and pedagogical space for him to experiment, however successfully or not, with being the boss over other children, which might not be allowed within the classroom. He enjoyed the spatial affordances of Forest School, in which he could choose with whom to play and where, although this was in continual negotiation. In play, interactions are fluid and dynamic, as Russell and Lester (2017) argue:

Playing might be understood as the desire to create worlds where life is better, in opportunistic ways and from current conditions. It emerges whenever conditions allow. Children are alert to possibilities that exist at any given moment to form connections in-between other bodies, materials, imaginations and so on, in ways that enhance being alive. In this way, playing can be understood as mo(ve)ments that disturb rational orderings of time and space, lines of flight away from the plane of organisation, a deterritorialisation of the dominant order (p. 6).

Geographers Fielding (2000) and Gagen (2000) write of the social control exerted in space inhabited by children in places such as the school and the playground. For instance, Gagen (2000) describes the motive orientation of reformers who created playgrounds in Massachusetts, USA at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: to 'tame' wild children, to bring them in where some social control could be exerted in a contained space. This notion of 'taming' could be seen in the classroom and to some extent, at Forest School, in that both spaces were held by boundaries, with particular demands for behaviour therein. The Forest School leaders mentioned both physical space, as well as pedagogical space, for children's autonomous and group activity:

It works here – there is just enough space – they feel free and there's enough space, but they also feel safe as they can see the boundaries. They don't feel hemmed in, but they also don't feel like they've been dropped into a vast forest (5.3.1).

We had a plan that we were going to do a fire, but we noticed the rhododendrons [had bloomed] and decided we would collect the flowers with buckets and make

magic carpets [from sticks and flowers laid on the ground]. If you get hung up on making the picture frame, it kind of defeats the objective of creativity. We let them turn it into their own activities (5.3.2).

Nonetheless, certain rules of behaviour also applied at Forest School. The rules were few and specific, however: Do no harm to yourself, others, the 'kit' (resources brought in) and the woodland itself. When these rules were broken, children were gently guided toward the expected behaviour with a sense of tolerance by the adults. Even the teaching staff, who were aligned with the Forest School pedagogy, admonished more gently the children's infringements in the outdoors (6.3.3; 6.6.3), due to the less stressful environment.

The sense of 'taming' (Gagen, 2000) playful behaviour both within and outside of designated play time(s) was more prevalent in the classroom. These moments of taming appeared to be considered essential to develop self-regulation and contribute to school readiness; however, King and Howard (2016) argue that 'the very social nature of the [play] activity involves making choices, relating to other people (both children and adults), and developing skills that help them take some control of their lives' (p. 58). While the demands of the classroom created more formal structures, in which the teaching staff felt responsible for specific measurable outcomes, at Forest School the adults – both FS leaders and the teaching staff – felt just as strongly their responsibilities. However, the Forest School staff notions of outcomes were more aligned to play pedagogies (Siraj-Blatchford, 2009a; Wood, 2008) and ecological or place-based pedagogy (Gruenewald, 2003). These pedagogical framings impacted upon the spaciousness of their provision, thus shaping the relationships between the adults and children while in the woods.

### 7.1.2 Relations between adults, adults and children

The mutually supportive relationship between the teaching staff and the Forest School staff created an environment in which the children and adults could engage in a range of activities in a peaceful atmosphere with negligible conflict between pedagogical practices or practitioners. This contrasts with Maynard's (2007) findings of the conflict between FS and CR staff in her study from over a decade ago. This may be related to better understandings of CR staff for benefits of outdoor play for FP, or to personalities and understandings between individual adults. The longitudinal nature of the project (by the end of the fieldwork, there had been four years of year-long, weekly sessions) had ensured that there was a level of trust and respect between the adults, which contributed to their confidence in promoting and supporting the actualisation of a range of affordances for the children, including those that may be perceived as risky, such as tree climbing and fire lighting (FSL1, interview, 14 June 2017).

The relationships developed between adults and children at Forest School as a community of learners (Rogoff, 1994) in which social roles were less defined than in the classroom. The relationships between adults and children at Forest School were more fluid, contributing to

what Fisher (2008) calls ‘the negotiated classroom’ in which children have input into curriculum – what is to be learned, organisation – when and how things are to be learned, and context – where and with whom learning takes place (p.154).

Forest School, which followed an informal approach to learning, was characterised by less outcome-driven approaches to play, as well as learning, which impacted on the adult’s role and the relationships between adults and children. The leaders did teach children particular skills, but these were skills in which the outcome could be seen immediately, e.g., making a fire or using tools (Figure 7.1), so children’s success was quickly achieved and supported. They soon became experts and were able to tell others, including adults, what the expectations were for tasks. The Forest School leaders were more likely to allow the children to get on with tasks after having some instruction than continually watching in order to assess the children’s progress. They created space for children’s experimentation and considered the children competent until they needed support.



Figure 7.1 Children enjoying hot chocolate while monitoring FSL’s fire-making skills

The effect of confining affordances for self-regulation and playfulness to specific moments and spaces in the classroom, as mentioned in section 7.1.1, affected the teacher’s participation and interactions with the pupils at school. It seemed that the pressures adults felt in the classroom of teaching the children to conform to specific behaviours, curbed their own playfulness with the children. When the adults did become playful in the classroom, such as wearing funny Christmas jumpers which played music, the children appeared to enjoy it as did the teaching staff. Wood (2013) reports that the well-being of children is ‘evident in their relationships with adults, enthusiastic participation in these structured activities and willingness to abide by rules (at least some of the time). This is consistent with Tzuo (2007) who argues that teacher control and children’s freedom can be balanced, and ‘can be played out in continually interactive ways’ (p. 38). The CRT was more able to relax in the woods, even allowing herself to be tied up by the children in game of Cowboys and Indians (5.3.2).

King and Howard (2016) argue that children pick up play cues and can tell who is playful and who is not. At Forest School, the adults were more likely to be playful themselves. This

extended to transitions and regulatory activity settings, such as queuing to get on the bus. When it was time to go, children left the site by queuing single file and giving one FSL a high five as they marched past. Children focused on the leader, lined up in a straight line waiting their turn to jump or go low for a high five, some giving hugs goodbye; this playful approach to lining up thus aligned motive orientations for playfulness and well-being, and contributed to meeting an adult objective for leaving the site in an orderly manner. This contrasted to the constant negotiating and challenging that took place in the classroom by staff trying to get the children to line up after lunch to go out on the yard, in which children were focused on playing with each other. Recognising children's motive orientations toward playfulness – or seriousness – and responding to these appears to make relationships more easy, as well as meeting mutual objectives.

'Within communities of practice in which the practitioners from different work cultures have come together in shared settings to work with children... actions will have different meanings' (Anning, 2009, p. 71). In the study, the school group came to the woodland where the Forest School practitioners were waiting for them. This spatial boundary crossing appeared to impact upon the classroom staff in ways that were conducive to the pedagogy of the Foundation Phase. While Maynard's (2007) study found conflicting positions between teaching staff and Forest School staff, for this group of adults, there was little conflict between the value orientation of the classroom teacher and the practice facilitated by Forest School staff within the FS setting. This was primarily due to the Early Childhood-trained classroom teacher feeling her own conflict with the demands on her classroom practice, which did not allow for uninterrupted flow of play activity. Child-initiated play was the main motive orientation for the FS leaders. Rather than curriculum outcomes, they said that their aims were linked to holistic development. This supports the UNCRC (2009) without placing adult-centred responsibilities on the children: children had the right to play, but did not have to promise to play in a prescribed way, although the primary rule was to not hurt anyone or anything. The woodland setting provided loose parts which could be broken, i.e., sticks and leaf litter, cut and trampled, i.e., brambles. The mud often became 'overused', according to FS staff, but then they just moved away from that area to let it 'rest' (FSL1, interview, 14 June 2017), and the children created another mud play area.

Rather than attempting to 'bring the classroom to the woods', the teaching staff allowed the Forest School practitioners to run the sessions, to be responsible for the boundaries, rules and activities therein. This enabled the teaching staff to use the sessions to observe the children without having to do on-the-spot assessments. Maynard (2014) asserts that teachers may feel less constrained by curricular demands when using the outdoors for learning and play. This was evident in this study. The findings showed that Mrs Gordon was more likely to join in the children's play, observe children's play, record children's play and discuss their play with colleagues in the Forest School setting. In the classroom, it was the teaching assistant and support assistant staff who monitored children's play; however, their engagement was usually limited to craft requests, i.e., drawing unicorns and negotiating arguments over resources.

The Forest School leaders felt their role was to follow the children's lead and provide the material and pedagogical support for the activities in which they were interested. Hawkes (2018) explores the tension felt by play workers who have to work within a childcare framework, yet who also want to follow the Playwork Principles (2009), which argue for the child's right to play freely without adulteration by adult agendas. The Forest School leaders in this study commented that they felt their role was to strike a balance between allowing the children some sense of freedom, supporting the teacher's needs and providing the opportunity for children to develop relationships with the natural world in their locality (Forest School staff, group interview, 14 June 2017).

### 7.1.3 Relations between children and things

Place-based pedagogy is centred upon principles of environmental education and contextually-based learning (Sobel, 2005). Concepts from outdoor and environmental education expand conceptualisations of sociocultural approaches, such as cultural-historical theory and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory, to include human relationships with non-human nature in their locality. McCree (2014) found in her study of Forest School Leader trainees that they had previously or were beginning to develop eco-social identities, in which they perceived humans as only a part of the whole ecological community in which humans inhabit with non-human species. This value system also guided the practice of this study's Forest School Leaders, in which their ecological values, in addition to their commitment to play in the outdoors, shaped their goals for the sessions. In fact, the ecology of the site was considered to also shape the children's activities, as well as being shaped by the children, in ongoing, reciprocal interactivity. As one FSL remarked:

So they [the children] kind of create the space or it's created by the environment itself really and we all work with that. It changes throughout the year as well, like them noticing things, like it feels more enclosed now [with leaves] and in winter it feels more open (FSL1, interview, 14 June 2017, 5.3.1).

Different things in the classroom and in the Forest School had different properties and afforded different activities. These activities are considered to be part of a 'culturally developed pattern of activities' (Bang, 2008, p. 126). The children engaged in activities such as building with LEGO and driving toy cars, dressing up and drawing during their free time in the classroom. These resources were not available in the woods. Yet, the children used the resources that were available to create activity settings such as being painters and decorators, fighting the bad guys, and engaging in the same types of play as in the classroom, but with more fluidity of play partners and exploration of different types of play. For instance, Sylwia who enjoyed playing school and doing school, wanted to bring that to the woods and use pens and paper; however, she also experienced games which had new kinds of rules and had elements of risk. While her muddy play was schematic rather than imaginative, she was experimenting with new ways of being in the outdoors. The children,

therefore, engaged in physical play such as running, climbing, sword fighting using the features of the woodland, and used loose parts brought in such as buckets and paintbrushes for both schematic and imaginative play. They did not replicate the indoor play, such as using rocks to be cars; instead, they used the materials found to create imaginative activities that empowered them to *be* builders and *be* car drivers.

Forest School fits in [the Foundation Phase] because it gives you the true freedom for children to lead their own learning, really... it's sort of FP in its truest sense. Open ended resources, they aren't prescribed how to use it. No set tasks – you might do a little focus activity for a very short time, which is what the FP says to do, but then the rest of the time, the children are open to explore (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

While the children enjoyed the toys in the classroom and the variety of activities afforded in the resources available, the woodland did have things not found freely in the classroom, which provided social affordances as well as learning opportunities: non-human species. The non-human animals in the classroom afforded primarily *being observed/observing*. In the classroom, the teaching staff provided opportunities to observe caterpillars become butterflies and eggs become chicks. In the Forest School setting also, the children were able to observe a naturally-occurring pond and track the frog spawn turning into tadpoles, and look for frogs later on in the spring. The children could also observe birds and squirrels in the trees above them. Additionally, however, at Forest School they also found wildlife, such as spiders, caterpillars and woodlice, which afforded the children *finding, picking up, touching* and *protecting*. These episodes provided a source of deep engagement for the children. They observed the animals, shared their observations, and argued about who would be able to care for them better.

The episode of conflict in which Lee broke the rules and touched the newly hatched chick was a particular point of drama, in that it conflicted so strongly with the code of *not touching* which characterised most interactions with animals and invertebrates in the classroom. This code was an affordance both perceived and shaped by the children in their interactions with wildlife. In the woodland, children often shouted at each other to touch carefully, as the insects or bugs were so tiny. If one child did pick anything up, they would use a stick to hold it or gather it gently with their fingers, while the others gathered around. This experience of exploring affordances of wildlife, also contributed to children's ability to self-regulate and to regulate each other without overt measures in place. Therefore, the outdoor environment afforded the self-experience of both *being protecting-able* and *being brave-able*, as well a sense of expanding community to include live and wild creatures encountered while playing. The Forest School staff discussed this in an interview:

FSL: We were up there playing '1, 2, 3, Where are you?' [hide and seek game], and instead of counting we were just listening to the birds, and the children were imagining what they might be saying, and someone said, 'I want to play with you'. So, they are aware of what's here.



FSA: That's funny, because when we [her team] were hiding, someone found a little spider in the bark of a tree and we were talking about why it might live there and why different species choose certain habitats.

FSL1: There are chances for incidental encounters – just as well, you know, if you tried to set up bug hunting, it would be too dry or you couldn't find any [laughs]. But, if you stumble across something, everyone is like, wow, look at this! That's really nice, because it's that sense of wonder; it's the wow factor and the sense of discovery and finding something unexpectedly that they really engage with. Not that bug hunts can't be like that, but you can then introduce something else they have to deal with, like not finding anything and being discouraged. They are really into the robins who have been here all year. And, last week, the squirrels got into the raisins but only at lunchtime when the kids weren't here – because, of course, that's what happens – the animals come out when everyone goes away (interview, 14 June 2017).

Indeed, the class had been waiting for caterpillars to emerge as butterflies from their cocoons in the classroom and learning about the life-cycle of a butterfly (Figures 7.2-4). The children were very excited about it; when I asked the teacher after the summer half-term if the children had seen it happen, she explained that the butterflies had emerged and died over the holiday, so the children never did get to see it. When Lee touched the chick, the conflict arose in which his enthusiasm was in conflict with caring for the creatures, which led to his negotiating the affordances of the protective incubator, challenging the rules of the classroom, in order to actualise the affordance of touching a living creature.

Importantly, however, the classroom's indoor features such as the whiteboard and internet access allowed the children to see the caterpillar's life cycle and take up the affordance of the artefacts in the classroom in order to learn more about their encounters in the woods. The complementarity of the classroom and the Forest School for educational opportunities.



Figure 7.2 Finding a caterpillar 'in the wild' at FS



Figure 7.3 Closer inspection



Figure 7.4 Learning about the life-cycle of a butterfly in classroom

## 7.2 Children's participation

### 7.2.1 Negotiating and challenging the affordances of social others

Gibson (1979, 2015) asserted that social affordances provide the greatest opportunity for information in relation to one's own activity. Affordances of social others are considered to be 'the first functionally meaningful features that are noticed in infancy, and they remain a lifelong preoccupation for all of us. To varying degrees, we receive information about the efficacy of our actions through social sources' (Chawla and Heft, 2002, p. 210).

The affordances of peers in both the CR and FS held possibilities for *watching/being watched; helping/being helped; showing/being shown*, and so on. However, the outdoor space provided opportunities for more boisterous physical activity, which allowed affordances for physical contact, e.g., *bumping into/bumping* and *touching/being touched* as in the classroom, and expanded this range into affordances for *fighting with/being fought* and *pushing/being pushed* which were not necessarily constrained. There was space, both physically and socially, for the adults to accept these affordances of more risky play and observe what direction they took. At some point, they might be constrained, but

pedagogues from both settings watched first before acting. Within the classroom, it appeared necessary to act quickly before anything escalated. By having the space to explore these affordances, the children also had an opportunity to work out 'risky' scenarios in a supportive environment, which may contribute to greater risk management skills when away from adult gaze (Sandseter and Kennair, 2011).

Some of the play fighting seemed to reflect the boys' fascination for fantasy play figures, such as superheroes and Transformers. To be seen as brave and a good fighter may have been valued or was beginning to be valued in peer culture. Tyler, Jordan and Lee were already finding the tension between the motive orientation of wanting to be held in high esteem by their peers or held in high esteem by the adults. These did not always align in the classroom. Certainly, to be funny and make classmates laugh or be the centre of attention or a good fighter is not in alignment with the demands of the institution and may be considered disruptive (Barnett, 2018), unless confined to sanctioned 'play time'. Behaviour like this was called 'silly' by Sylwia (VS interview, 4 July 2017). Even Jordan already considered boys in his class to be 'naughty' and had been told by his mother to stay away from some boys (VS interview, 23 March 2017).

Tyler, on the other hand, was not able to negotiate rough play well, although he was trying. He sometimes tried to joke with the other boys, or smack them on the bum, while smiling in order to imitate perhaps what he considered jocular peer behaviour between boys. The other boys usually rejected this from him. The Forest School Leader who saw some of the video recording of this behaviour said that the other boys probably knew it was going to 'go too far', or had already decided that to align oneself with Tyler was not a good idea, as he got into trouble often (FSL2, interview, 28 June 2017). Pellegrini (1988) suggests that the affordances for risky play require social skills as well as physical skills to actualise and that popular children tend to be able to negotiate playfulness better than less popular peers.

Bence also was learning how to successfully negotiate the affordances of peers. For instance, although he was not sure about girls doing particular tasks, he was beginning to recognise the value of allowing girls to play as they became play partners, and he was meeting new people who challenged his beliefs about what grown women could do, by discussing building homes with a Forest School leader. Certainly, Bence found Forest School practice especially suited to his motives to do active, practical tasks; however, he often had to encourage others to play with him. He tended to want to tell them what to do and direct activities like a supervisor on a worksite. He had clear ideas about how activities should be undertaken (rules of play). Although he used positive feedback with phrases such as 'Good idea!' and 'Great job!' when working on projects with peers, during one group interview session, when he communicated like this, one of the girls imitated him, saying to him, 'You talk funny, Bence.' She seemed to be referring to both his Eastern European accent as well as the way in which he expressed his pleasure with peers; perhaps among peers commenting upon the work they do is considered too adult-like, as she used the word 'funny' to indicate 'different'. For him, peers afforded *instructing, encouraging and accommodating*, which may not be in alignment with peer expectations.

### 7.2.2 Appropriating the affordances of social others: Being like the adults/ being 'liked' by adults

Children were often considered 'bossy' or 'wanting it their way' by the adults watching the video-recordings of conflict episodes between peers. When discussing the same episodes with the children, it appeared that those children strongly aligned with or sought alignment with the teacher / adult. In analysing the affordances of social others, children's affordances with peers often reflected the values of adult communication and the institutional values toward them, i.e., *instructing, praising, controlling*. This connection between children's behaviour and its reflection of adult positioning has been considered by Corsaro and Rizzo (1990) and Medina and Martinez (2012).

The position, the way of behaving, and the degree of engagement of children in everyday practices can transform the practices substantially, playing a leading role how these practices are developed. By focusing on peer interaction without direct adult supervision, we are able to analyse the active role of children acting in a setting in which they take over the values and norms of the adult world (Sanchez Medina and Martinez, 2012, p. 97).

For some children, it seemed that the classroom itself provided an unintentional guideline for the children's growing awareness of social order. There was a birthday and age chart on the wall of the classroom with the numbers 4 and 5 and photos of each child on their age. When it was a birthday, the child's photo was switched from the 4 to the 5. This seemed to indicate for the children that becoming five was valued in the classroom. 'Five is better,' said Jordan (23 March 2017). Tyler, too, was noted teasing another boy that he was not five yet, and was still 'only little', as he pointed to the chart for evidence of his claim (field notes, 7 June 2017).

The children also brought into the classroom their value systems from home and from the wider community of which they were a part. For instance, Jordan often experienced conflict in peer relationships, which were related to a conflict between the rules at home and the rules at school. In the VS interview (23 March 2017), he mentioned that he is not allowed by his mother to play with certain children who are in his class, but the teacher is 'always' telling him to play with everyone, including those children, whom his mother has said are 'naughty' and should be avoided. He was torn between identifying with the teacher and her demands, or his mother and hers. Thus, participation may be considered in relation to the affordances of others and things as well as the affordances of the child's experience of self, as their motive orientation begins to align – or not – with the motive orientations of the different institutions within which they are active.

### 7.3 *Being and becoming*: the child's self-experience

Bang (2009) argues that an 'affordance perspective on self throws light on emerging and developing interests and motives for actions as well as on feelings and values in a child' (p. 176). From a cultural-historical perspective play is an activity setting which provides

opportunity to observe the motives and goal-directed action of the individual child (Fleer, 2009). Affordances of self-experience allow for consideration of the how emerging capabilities and motives in the child may be considered relational to participation in institutional practice. Bang (2009) presents affordances of self as a way to chart the 'phenomenological double-ness' that is subjectivity. The analytical framework presented in Chapter 6 demonstrated how the first person perspective of oneself participating in activities (e.g., *sitting still*) lends itself to developing a sense of what Bang (2009) calls 'quasi-otherness', a third person perspective of self (e.g., *sitting still-able*) (p. 176).

This third person perspective leads to the development of motive-orientation which will either align with institutional motive orientation or not depending on the experience of the child: whether they feel capable and skilled in what matters to both them and the institutional practice. And, importantly, whether their existing capabilities and skills are *valued* by the institution. Bang (2009) argues that capabilities or skills develop 'if a child experiences the *quasi-otherness* of self as something positively valued; if the first-person perspective merges with the third-person perspective' (p. 176). Institutional practice seeks to bring children's motive orientation in alignment with its own 'culturally available positions' (Ibid.) in order to achieve particular outcomes or objectives, which makes an understanding of this psychological process important from an educational perspective.

Children's existing motive orientations that may be in alignment with the home orientation may or may not align with institutional motive orientations. For example, Tyler and Bence were only children living at home with lone parents, and were accustomed to directing their own play, according to their mothers in VS interviews. Bence's mother said he 'was helping too much' and Tyler's mother called him 'bossy'. Both parents appeared to consider these competencies ambiguous, as they can present challenges for adults (as well as peers). Bence, however, had less conflict in classroom practice than Tyler, because his motive orientation to *be a worker* and *to be supportive of others* in his role as a leader fit in with the demands and competencies appreciated by the adults at school and Forest School. Guiding Bence toward channeling his motive to be a leader in line with the demands of institutional practice motive orientations presented the adults with fewer concerns than did Tyler's developing motive orientations. In this respect, Bence's participation in the classroom was similar to Sylwia's, whose dominant motive orientation was focused on *being a student*.

Bence was also mastering competency in the expectation of sitting quietly on the carpet with his forefinger against his lips and his legs criss-crossed, in order to be chosen quickly for tasks and activities. He could often be observed still sitting this way long after the other children had begun to wriggle around and shift, as he waited to be chosen. This suggests that his capabilities for mastering self-regulation, by considering long term goals over short-term discomfort, are developing as valued competencies in reception year.

Recognising children's existing competencies and those they need to develop in order to achieve social and academic success was recognised differently by the CR and FS staff. Both

had expectations for learning new skills, but the Forest School staff had fewer demands for specific skills related to learning outcomes in subject or key skills areas. For instance, the FS staff attributed their expectations for self-regulation to emotional intelligence rather than competencies for engaging in classroom learning. Yet, adults from both settings felt that the child's well-being was their primary aim in order to support children's learning, development and continued engagement. Mrs Gordon, the CRT, asserted:

In a school like ours you've got to make the children feel they are amazing, regardless of where they are on that developmental continuum, it's your job as a teacher to make those children feel skilled in what they're doing and then say, 'now you've got those skills, here's what we can do next!' And make them feel like they can achieve it! You've got to be highly skilled to teach in a school like this – because you have to forget outside expectations and judgements and get to know each child and what they need to accomplish and follow what children need. Luckily most of our staff see that and try to get the most out of our children.

And, people don't realise how important that is in the early years – getting kids on board and engaged and feeling good about school and themselves... If you don't get it right now, it will impact them for life. If they think, 'I'm no good at anything' or 'I can't learn anything' or that kind of self-identity, then they do act out and push people's boundaries... it can be self-perpetuating (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

This awareness of the relationship between the child's experience in the early years and their engagement with education echoes the emphasis Hedegaard (2008a) places upon aligning motive orientations in order to support children's sense of identifying with institutional values. Gibson (1979/2015) states that not all affordances are necessarily perceived as positive. For instance, the availability of affordances toward self-regulation goals, such as *sitting still/sitting still-able*, may be available; however, when a child is *unable* to do this, they may become upset because they cannot do what is valued, or they may not care because they do not value it – or the approval of the adults.

Indeed, over time their motive orientations may find alignment elsewhere where different capabilities are valued. For example, in the situation of Lee and the chick, his interactions with the chick were in conflict with the school practice of observing animals and small creatures without touching them, as well as his act of lying about it to avoid being in trouble. Into this space of conflict, his motive orientation can be interpreted both in light of the positive and negative affordances of the episode (Gibson, 1979/2015). From a negative affordance perspective, his activity contributed to the self-experience of *getting into trouble/being punished*. However, from a positive affordance perspective, his activity afforded him the opportunity of *being brave* and *touching*, perhaps even *impressing* his peers. These affordances may become important motives, developing in line with his fascination for karate and super-heroes, and his emerging self-identity which is seeking to be like his karate heroes. From our conversation after the event, it seemed that Lee felt ambiguous about getting into trouble over the thrill of touching the chick and the opportunity to be brave. Thus, the standards of the institution may begin to lose their

power as children discover their motives being fulfilled even when out of alignment with institutional practice, particularly if the child perceives the value position from another perspective more important.

Harré (1993) notes: 'In the expressive aspects of social activity we make a public showing of skills, attitudes, emotions, feelings and so on, providing, sometimes consciously, the evidence upon which our friends, colleagues, neighbours, rivals and enemies are to draw conclusions as to the kind of person we are' (p. 26). For many of the children, it appears to be crucial to be in a good relationship with the adults. However, the peer group becomes increasingly important as children begin to negotiate social structures (Corsaro, 2005). Within the school situation, the value positions of adults and those of peers may not always align with each other, particularly as children get older and gain independence. However, the Forest School setting appeared to have a value position was more in alignment with that of the emerging peer culture: to be brave was valued, to take risks was supported.

The school situation, understandably, has more tight controls and regulations around what kinds of activities and affordances are possible from a physical perspective. Clearly, the number of children and the constraints of space limit many affordances. The Forest School environment supported more affordances for risky play, not only due to space and features and number of pupils, however; the FS pedagogy was more conducive to the self-experience that risky play afforded. For instance, when watching the videotaped episode of Lee and Jakub play fighting in the muddy puddle, the Forest School leader laughed. She also laughed at my nervousness about the fighting. For her, this was an episode that resembled the 'real-life' affordances that children might encounter in a play setting *without* supervision, which she considered in alignment with her practice. This perspective on play – a kind of 'when I was a kid' motivation is both rooted in nostalgia as well as an evidence base that children have fewer opportunities for outdoor and/or risky play (Gill, 2007). Watching the risk-taking activity unfold, argued the FS leader, enabled her to observe more closely the children's behaviour, scaffold learning and prepare for future sessions. Her scaffolding strategies, she explained, might include anything from teaching a child to climb a tree safely – keeping three points of contact – to teaching them to use a tool correctly, so that they could achieve their goals.

Barab and Roth (2006) argue that 'while an affordance network may be specified in the environment, it is available and of interest only to certain individuals who have particular goals and the requisite effectivity sets' (p. 5). At Forest School, the adults' focus was on helping the children with 'particular goals' to develop the 'requisite effectivity sets' they needed to accomplish the task that the child had expressed an interest in undertaking. This process was the same in the classroom; however, the tasks had been predetermined. If a child asked for help in play, such as drawing a unicorn or princess, the adult was more likely to just draw it for them rather than see it as a learning opportunity; the child's solicitation was out of context of the learning situation. Yet, in either location, with time for chosen play activities, children had opportunities to find affordances that enabled them to be what they wanted to be: e.g., *being a student, being a builder or being brave*.

The classroom provided more opportunities for the children to experience themselves as students, although both institutions had affordances for *being a learner*. They sat at the desks, did their work, and experienced *being a student* by undertaking the tasks set before them, using the artefacts of the classroom. Arguably, they may have preferred to play, as work and play were delineated by the schedule and routine of the day; however, the children did take pleasure in doing schoolwork – and in receiving gems and stickers and other rewards for aligning with the demands of the classroom institution. There were fewer external rewards at Forest School; yet, children appropriated the affordances of Forest School which contributed to students self-experience of *being a learner*. They experienced *focusing-able, being independent-able, listening-able and listening-to-able, problem-solving-able* – all of the skills and competencies required for school readiness and, more importantly, identifying as a learner.

Identities become visible in people's actions when particular persons are engaged in different activities, pursuing projects and carrying social histories. Identities are always relationally defined between someone (person/group) in action and dialogue with another (person/group, imagined/real in action) in particular concrete socio-cultural practices (Winther-Lindqvist, 2009, p. 19).

Forest School may have provided a more expansive sense of being a learner, which was not tied to specific artefacts of the classroom, such as sitting at a desk and doing a worksheet for ticks. While the classroom also provide opportunities for learning through play, in practice, this was not given feedback to demonstrate aligning with the values of school in the same way as the desk-based activity. At Forest School, the identification with adult roles, including the use of modelling (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), occurred primarily around the fire or doing practical tasks. In these moments, the children's motives to do the activities that the adults were doing, to participate in valued activities could be observed. Both Jakub and Lee demonstrated their alignment with the adults' role and the practice demands in the muddy puddle episode when they warn the newcomer that he is not able to join them since he does not have on the right personal protective equipment. Although they are play fighting, they stop to warn him before they resume their play. Jakub also pauses the play fighting in order to pick up the spade that Ben has dropped and remove it from the puddle, which demonstrates an alignment of values and motive orientations.

Kindermann and Skinner (1992) argue that children's intrinsic motivation 'remains stable (as opposed to decreasing across time) in classrooms in which teachers provide more choice and latitude in selection of learning activities, explain the relevance of the activities to children's goals, and do not try to control or coerce children through threats, sanctions, or rewards (Deci & Ryan, 1985)' (p. 161). While this characterises Forest School provision, the children also enjoyed aspects of the 'coercive' classroom, such as rewards and responsibilities, in which they could be helpers and be proud of themselves, when their motive orientations which aligned with school's were honoured and acknowledged. The



blend of Forest School and classroom-based activity provided an enriched experience of the reception year for the pupils in the study.

Different institutions will afford opportunities for participation based upon their values, traditions and goals. If the values and traditions between the institutions that a child participates in are similar, the child's participation and development may be supported in similar ways across both/all of the institutions; however, children's participation may also be appraised differently based upon these elements of institutional practice (Fleer, 2009).

Additionally, Hedegaard (2005) points out that frequently institutional values may be based 'as much on imagination as on experience from everyday practice' (Hedegaard, 2005, p. 188), taken here to mean that conflicts may be inherent *within* institutions as well as between them. For instance, an institution may value child-initiated play in theory, but not (be able to) provide for it in practice. Conflicts within institutions, between policy, values and practice, may present increased conflicts for the child to negotiate. 'It's just all contradictory messages really' (CRT, interview, 4 July 2017).

While Bang (2008, 2009) relates self-experience primarily to the social affordances, a material turn suggests that the conceptualisation of self-experience may also be attributable to the material affordances of the setting. Lenz Taguchi's (2011) asserts that the child's identity is an assemblage of 'multiple encounters and inter-relations' (p. 38). Bang's perspective articulating the affordances of the material and the social – and the culturally and personally valued – draws the attention to the values dialectically emerging and the socio-material affordances available for both *being* and *becoming*.

The concept of self-experience Bang (2009) utilises to consider how the child might experience *being* a participant in particular activities, through a 'phenomenological double-ness of participation', in which motives and capabilities emerge (p. 175). It is this concept of being a participant and how the child experiences that which contributes to the child's developing competencies and orientations toward institutional practice as a positive or negative experience. This experience, made up of the child's exploration and appropriation of *things*/artefacts and cultural tools, interaction with social others, and the child's sense of self in relationship with others, institutional practice and activities, contributes to the child's emerging abilities, dominating motives and developmental possibilities (Bang, 2009; Bøttcher, 2009; Pedersen and Bang, 2016). The child's motives, value system, interests and sense of self may be interpreted by observing what affordances are actualised in everyday activity, particularly in relation to the value system of institutional practice.

## 7.4 Conclusion

The Foundation Phase Framework (WG, 2015a) demands of the institution:

There must be a balance between structured learning through child-initiated activities and those directed by practitioners. A well-planned curriculum gives children opportunities to be creatively involved in their own learning which must build on what

they already know and can do, their interests and what they understand. Active learning enhances and extends children's development.

For children, play can be (and often is) a very serious business. It needs concentrated attention. It is about children learning through perseverance, attention to detail, and concentration – characteristics usually associated with work. Play is not only crucial to the way children become self-aware and the way in which they learn the rules of social behaviour; it is also fundamental to intellectual development (p.4).

Foundation Phase practitioners are, therefore, expected to create a classroom that values creativity, self-directed learning, the child's interests and existing funds of knowledge (Hedges, Cullen and Jordan, 2011). Play is asserted to be the means by which these demands may be enacted. However, play itself has particular values associated with it. Play, from the perspective of the FP, is valued for developing perseverance, focus and concentration, and the social skills associated with emotional literacy toward self and others, i.e., self-awareness, empathy and self-regulation. These competencies provide a foundation for life, as well as preparation for participating in primary school and beyond. Intellectual development, such as cognitive and communication skills, are also associated with play-based activity.

Chawla and Heft (2002) assert that 'an assessment of the affordances available to children can provide researchers with one source of information about the opportunities a community provides for competence development across a wide range of domains. The particular competencies at issue in any particular case are setting and task-specific' (p. 210). The affordances of both the classroom and the Forest School in combination provided the children with the opportunities to engage in the values-based activities envisioned by the Foundation Phase. Without the Forest School provision, it would not have been possible for the classroom teacher to provide such opportunities with a class of thirty-six and with the physical and material affordances of the classroom – even with the outdoor classroom space.

The longer time afforded for adult-supported but child-led play at Forest School supported multiple affordances not necessarily available in the classroom for choosing between socialising and retreating from socialising, between creative, imaginative play and robust physical, risky play (Kytta, 2003; Sandseter, 2009). The woods also provided an expanded set of affordances of social others to non-human beings as well as human beings which expanded the sense of community. These support the aims of the Foundation Phase:

Motivation and commitment to learning is encouraged, as children begin to understand their own potential and capabilities. Children are supported in becoming confident, competent and independent thinkers and learners. They develop an awareness of their environment and learn about the diversity of people who live and work there. Positive attitudes for enjoying and caring for their environment are fostered. As their self-identity develops, children begin to express their feelings and

to empathise with others. They experience challenges that extend their learning (WG, 2015a, p. 9).

While the artefacts and things available to the children in the classroom allowed for creative appropriation of materials, the Forest School setting with its loose parts and natural features empowered the children to create their own 'classroom' and direct their own activities to a greater extent. Zittoun (2016) argues that creativity is a way in which individuals can experience 'the institutions that they come to interact with or in not only as constraining, but also enabling; not only as imposing, but also as providing them with means to express themselves, explore their world, or experience their capacities and skills' (p. 5). When children enter the school grounds, their participation is framed by the expectations and standards of the setting. While it may be understood that children have rights, including having a 'voice', the voice must be 'an indoor voice'. For instance, in the area of 'rights', the 'right to an education' is translated into 'you must come to school every day'. This adult influence, and perhaps agenda, either promotes or constrains the affordances for participation that are found in the whole school and in the classroom practice. Sandseter and Seland (2016) assert that participation in early years settings 'also means being able to express what you do not want to do or participate in among the activities that staff members or other children suggest; this form of participation is what Dolk (2013) and Koch (2012) calls everyday opposition. This is also an important part of having agency, having some control and being able to exert influence on everyday occurrences (Fattore et al. 2009)' (p. 917).

The physical and pedagogical space of the Forest School provided a wider range of affordances for children's expressions of agency, to include moments of refusal or being loud. These affordances were available through the play-based approach to all of the interactive experiences, such as circle time and lining up time, not just allocated times 'for play'. Wood (2013) asserts that '...play is a distinctive form of activity, in which children's motivation to play reflects their need to develop mastery of play, and to enact forms of agency that are often denied to them in other contexts' (p. 6). This conceptualisation echoes Vygotsky's (1933/1976) argument that pretend play provides an opportunity for children to escape from constraints of their situation and act out social roles and skills and events from the world around them:

in play a child creates an imaginary situation [in which] voluntary intentions and the formation of real-life plans [are manifested] and make it the highest level of pre-school development (p. 552).

Social interaction is the basis of the Vygotskian internalisation concept, along with semiotic tools for mediation. Children learn the use of mediation tools through participation in cultural practices and institutions. At the same time, children are active participants with their own emotional and motive-oriented behaviour. The materials, resources and activities within the classroom, the opportunities for children to access them freely, and to communicate with multimodality create affordances for participation; therefore,

restrictions placed upon them is understood to constrain children's agency and participation (Martin and Ewaldsson, 2012).

However, children find ways to challenge and negotiate such restrictions; this kind of participation is considered subversive in a highly regulated environment such as school, in which conformity to expectations is demanded. Tensions between the demands/expectations of the setting and the orientation of the individual can lead to behaviour that might be considered 'challenging'. Cavada-Hrepich (2017) asserts that pupils' resistance to school practices is often conceptualised as 'misbehaviour, a consequence of a deficiency within the student', which contributes to arguments for self-regulation as an important feature of school readiness (p. 205). However, conflict between the pupil and practice may also be viewed as a dialectical relationship between 'societal structures, inegalitarian power relations and students' overt rebellious acts' (Cavada-Hrepich, 2017, p. 205).

At Forest School, such subversions were more likely to be considered an acceptable means of participation demanded by the affordances and seen to be providing an insight into how a child might overcome restrictive situations. The combination of their perspectives and those of the teacher who perhaps understood more fully the challenges that the children needed to overcome to achieve academic success created a collaborative Forest School environment, which afforded the children an alternative space for both *being* and *becoming*.

## Chapter 8 Conclusions

This study was undertaken in order to explore how children participate and display developing motive orientations in activity settings in reciprocity with the socio-material affordances available across institutions. The Foundation Phase in Wales has a commitment to outdoor learning, so the study seized the opportunity to study children engaged in both the classroom and a local woodland with Forest School as two separate institutions. In this chapter, I summarise my concluding thoughts on the findings of the study; the theoretical, analytical and methodological choices; the limitations of the study; directions for further research and the contributions of the study to academic discourse and institutional practice.

### 8.1 Summary of findings

The findings from the research demonstrates how children's self-experience as capable and competent learners and adults' perceptions of them as such, may be enhanced in both the indoor and outdoor settings by encouraging the practitioner to not only look for children's motive orientations, especially in moments of conflict, but to articulate those of their own practice. The findings in response to the first research question, 'What are the expectations and values of the institutions, as characterised by the socio-material affordances of practice?', established that both Forest School and the reception year classroom are committed to ensuring that young children from a disadvantaged community have a wide range of opportunities to support their learning and development. As Hedegaard (2008a) argues 'valuable competencies and motives are connected with what is seen as a "good life" by the caregivers or educators who surround the child and who focus on developing the child' (p.17). Both Forest School and the reception year classroom were organised to deliver child-centred practice, with the Forest School's delivery focused upon play and exploration in the outdoors and the reception year classroom focused upon specific skills development for literacy and numeracy, self-regulation and creative play.

However, the Forest School environment with its high adult to child ratio and deliberate intention to allow children's activity to direct the development of specific skills was better able to create physical and pedagogical space for multiple ways of participating. With both learning and play as leading, simultaneous motive orientations, there was more freedom for the classroom teacher to observe, support and join in children's play. Because of the alternative pedagogy, the Forest School leaders seemed to assume children's competence, rather than assessing for competence. However, they had less focus upon (and no pressure for) academic outcomes in literacy and numeracy; their work was directed toward physical, social and emotional competencies and toward supporting children's relationships with the

more-than-human world. This is not to say that there were no literacy and/or numeracy skills being developed, however; there was simply no 'top-down' pressure to assess for specific competencies. Delivering using Forest School principles, the leaders found the learning competencies located within play competencies and exploration of the woods.

The classroom, on the other hand, displayed explicit motive orientation toward learning using academic tools, then the motive orientation would shift toward playing, without the time or space for the teacher to observe this play to consider what competencies were being developed. The separation of these motive orientations created conflict for the classroom teacher, whose personal motive orientation was to also find the learning occurring within the play. Therefore, for the teacher, being able to access Forest School fulfilled the aims and objectives of the Foundation Phase Framework for 'first-hand experiential activities with the serious business of "play" providing the vehicle' (WG, 2015a, p.3).

The Forest School experience, as a complement to the reception year classroom, created affordances for spontaneous social, as well as physical, activity to develop a range of skills outlined in the Foundation Phase Framework. By having the opportunity to attend Forest School once a week throughout the year, which had a more spacious environment, both physically and pedagogically, the children, who had early interventions in place for behaviour and/or communication, were able to access affordances for experimentation, risk-taking, problem-solving and decision-making, 'individually, in small and in large groups', as suggested in the revised 2015 FP document (WG, 2015a, p. 3). The flexibility of the Forest School leaders and the FS approach created a situated learning environment in which the 'over-structured' (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 69) reception year schedule was relaxed. As a result, the teaching staff, as well as the children, could engage in more playful, spontaneous relationships with each other and with the non-human species in their wider community. This enabled the teaching staff to focus more holistically upon the challenges that the individual children face and the competencies they already have as they engage in activities with their peers, adults and the learning environment.

Forest School alone would not have provided the early interventions in literacy and numeracy skills that many of the children needed, according to their baseline assessments. However, neither did the classroom alone, with its high number of students and low adult to child ratios, provide opportunities for the teacher to feel she could fulfil her responsibilities, as an Early Years professional and in line with the Foundation Phase intentions. This reinforces the importance of high adult to child ratios and low numbers of children in the setting in order to fully interpret and engage with children's playful activity. Certainly, this supports calls to limit the 'dilution' of Forest School principles as occurs when it is used to simply transport the curriculum out-of-doors with a whole class and one or two teaching staff (McCree, 2019). The values of Forest School when upheld create breathing space for both children and adults.

Also, the values of the Forest School staff in this study were aligned with an alternative perspective concerning children's development in the sense that much of their focus was upon the children's developing a relationship with the local community of species in the woodland. This contributed to the inclusive nature of the Forest School practice, which not only included diverse ways of participation, but diverse species interactions in play activities. The significance of both institutions as complementary in the reception year lies in providing opportunities for children considered disadvantaged to appropriate and demonstrate learning as a leading motive. By understanding the learning motive orientation within self-directed playful activity, practitioners may more successfully support children's development toward the competencies necessary for successful, sustained school engagement, including the Forest School ethos of 'caring for self, others and place' in the future.

The study's findings in relationship to the second research question, which asked 'How do developmentally, linguistically and culturally diverse children participate in activities in and across institutions?', demonstrated that children's awareness of the demands and expectations of each institution was developing as they transition between institutions. Whether indoors or outdoors, they displayed leading motive orientations toward working, playing, learning and being socially competent, all of which are valued by the institutions. However, in the outdoor space of Forest School, the children had greater freedom to explore various motive orientations without being in immediate conflict with institutional demands and expectations. Although a small sample size, the empirical findings in this study show that the children studied wanted to be in favour with – to be liked by and *be like* (i.e., have power and control) – the adults, even when their activity was not always in alignment with adults' expectations. When the children found themselves in conflict, they shaped the situation to try to bring the institutional perspective into alignment with their own. They called upon adults for intervention, understanding their potential for support in motive alignment, or they found ways to excuse their behaviour, in order to salvage relationships with adults.

The children's participation demonstrated motive orientations toward learning, playing and being social as leading activities. These findings provide a way for practitioners to reconsider motivations behind behaviour that might be considered 'challenging' from an adult or institutional perspective. By considering behaviour from the child's perspective, and identifying the child's motive orientation, practitioners' perceptions of such behaviour may be transformed. By recognising the child's leading motive orientation, the practitioner can more readily engage in supporting the child's developing competencies in line with those valued by practice. Additionally, such understandings may provide a space for the practitioner to stop and think about how conflicts between institutional values and demands might be shaping both practice and the child's participation and better consider how to proceed in the child's best interests. The children's growing awareness and developing competencies in aligning their own motive orientations with those of

institutional practice creates an opportunity for adults to support engagement constructively with long-term, sustained engagement in mind. Egan (2018) asserts that the 'possibility that students at any point in their learning journey become disengaged, are excluded or lack self-esteem and self-efficacy can all impact on their learning and achieving their potential' (p. 240).

The third research question focused on the child's experience of their participation and their developing motive orientation in relation to the demands of institutional practice from the child's perspective, in order to consider how the child experiences their sense of self in relation to collective values. The Foundation Phase Framework asserts that '[f]irst-hand experiences allow children to develop an understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. The development of children's self-image and feelings of self-worth and self-esteem are at the core' (WG, 2015a, p. 3), thereby indicating that positive *self-experiencing* is at the heart of FP values. Both the classroom and the Forest School provided opportunities for the children to explore and experiment with materials, roles and responsibilities in order to be a valued member of the learning community. However, the Forest School allowed for the children to actualise some affordances that were constrained in the classroom; affordances that might contribute further to their holistic development.

Angier and Povey (2005) argue that 'there needs to be room for students to conduct experiments in the process of becoming the persons they are going to be, to behave at times in ways that are problematic. Spacious educational relationships permit this because they are open rather than tightly controlled' (p. 2017). The classroom provided a wide range of promoted affordances for the child to experience oneself as capable of, for instance, *being a student, being a helper, being a good friend* and, to some extent, *being independent*. The Forest School expanded this range of affordances to include *being alone, being an explorer, being project manager, being a leader, being silly*, and *being strong* included in competency repertoire. While some of the affordances actualised by children were less likely to be valued in the classroom, they were acknowledged as being valued at Forest School; although, there were rules for appropriate behaviour, they were more accessibly framed around safety and refraining from harm. This enabled children to play with and experiment with ways of being that there was not necessarily space – pedagogically or physically – for in the classroom.

Additionally, the conceptualisation of children's motive orientations was more readily supported by the Forest School, the ethos of which was decidedly more focused on the child's current capabilities than a future self, even though children's learning and development was important to the FS leaders. Forest School provided enhanced opportunities for children to engage in activities in ways that provided exploration of how to successfully resolve conflicts as they negotiated their own motive orientations with those of others, including those of the institutions. The 'alternative' space reduced the demands for external regulations, so learners were given more time to demonstrate, as well as develop,



competencies, e.g., self-regulation and experimentation, in alignment with institutional values. Heft (2018) argues that children need to learn to discriminate between settings as their range of activity increases, in order to understand what types of behaviour are encouraged and discouraged across multiple places. The opportunity to attend Forest School one day a week throughout the school year expanded the children's range of activity to include a learning environment in which play was a leading activity, so children's play motive orientation was less likely to be in conflict with institutional expectations.

Wartofsky (1983) asserts that although children must be understood to be active agents, constructing their own peer cultures, their own worlds, we must also recognise that they also come to understand themselves as framed within or mirrored by cultural contexts. In doing so, they not only begin to understand their capabilities as either limited or valued, they perceive themselves as valued – or not. In light of this aspect, the Principle that Forest School is a long-term, regular programme, rather than a one-off session, is significant. More days in the woods, in which particular ways of being are appreciated that may not be indoors, could contribute to children's experience of self as a capable learner and adults' perceptions of them as such.

## 8.2 Theoretical foundations

Hedegaard's (2008, 2009, 2012, 2018) theoretical, methodological and analytical approach to observing children across institutions, along with Bang's (2008, 2009) understanding of how children experience their participation, provided a foundation in this study for exploring what Hedegaard (2009, p. 66) calls a 'diversity of conditions' for children's development as they participate in everyday activity settings. I was unaware of cultural-historical theory when starting this PhD journey; however, once I read Fleer, Hedegaard and Tudge (2009) which include Bang's chapter, I felt I had found a theoretical home with a focus on social justice. In order to fully understand CH/AT perspectives, however, I had to go to its sources in the field of psychology and Vygotsky, in particular.

While I may have been able to give a brief overview of sociocultural theory and left it at that (and the reader may wish I had after reading Chapter 3), once I attended the Cultural-Historical Approaches to Children's Development and Childhood (CHACDOC) presentations at an International Socio-Cultural Activity Research (ISCAR) conference, I was inspired by the approach to researching children's playful activity. Presentations by Marianne Hedegaard, Marilyn Fleer, Jennifer Vadeboncouer and Louise Bøttcher resonated with my personal values in relation to children's engagement and inclusive socio-material environments. Once I began to read of the *motive orientation* concept, I felt that this was the 'gap' in the existing literature in relation to outdoor learning as well as classroom practice. This concept provides an understanding of how children's experiences of self may be framed in dialectical relationship with the socio-material affordances of the institutions within which they

participate. Bang's inclusion of affordance theory supported the ecological perspective I had already begun to take and united it with CH/AT.

Importantly, as a theoretical framework that includes philosophical, ideological, sociological and psychological perspectives, this study's conceptual framework presents practical applications relating to equity and social justice in education. The setting and the individuals in this study are framed within a discourse of disadvantage, characterised by poverty, learning difficulties and learning new languages – both linguistic and cultural – as they transition into the expectations of school. A framework informed by cultural-historical activity theory contributes to the theorising of equity in education and addressing disadvantage and educational outcomes. Stetsenko (2017) claims that these are:

embedded in no less than the perennial problems of how to define the aims of a just society, the mission of education in achieving such aims, and the contingency of these projects on understandings of human development and diversity. It is a social, political, ethical, and economic question at once, and it cannot be addressed outside considerations about the current dynamics, developments, and contradictions in society (p.113).

The theoretical framing used in this study, therefore, provided an understanding of children's social situation of development, and a way to conceptualise how moments of 'small novelty' build across time and across institutions to become patterns of 'great novelty' and potential life trajectory (Bang, 2008). Equity in education as a means of ensuring engagement and societal contribution throughout life is a key value of Welsh Government aims (Egan, 2018). Development is a continual process, as transitions and crises continue throughout life. The theoretical approach in the study provides a basis from which to consider not just development in the early years, but across the life span in order to theorise dialectical processes which are ongoing. Focusing upon the individual within collective and community practice in and across institutions, especially if a longitudinal study could be conducted over time, provides some interpretation of the mechanisms whereby the child meets and participates as an active agent in reciprocity with the expectations and demands of new practices and the individuals therein.

By applying affordance theory to activity theory, this study presents a conceptualisation of how the values, demands and expectations create or inhibit the available affordances for children's participation, in a way that allows practitioners to see how dialectically engaged the individual is with collective practice. Also, Kono (2009) argues that affordance theory enables the educator to address false notions of 'abilities and character traits', by presenting a conceptualisation of behaviour as 'specific to the situation and the partner with whom one interacts' (p. 364 – 365). By considering the affordances that are available to a child in institutions and understanding how the developing motive orientation may be considered as developing dialectically with institutional practice and values, the adult may be better able to understand a child's behaviour as a signposting for existing and developing

competencies. Thus, this study demonstrates how theoretical approaches may be used to complement each other at each stage, from identifying the research aims to formulating research questions to analysis.

### **8.3 Methodological approach**

The theoretical, methodological and analytical approaches taken in this study have been formulated as a holistic approach for studying the social situation of children's development (Hedegaard, 2008a; Hedegaard, 2018). Hedegaard's interactive ethnographic approach clearly acknowledges the presence of the researcher as dialectically engaging in the social situation of research with/of children in their everyday activities. My observations impacted upon the child's activity, even in moments when I tried to be unobtrusive. Hedegaard (2008a) asserts that research which claims to be objective or in which methods for analysis used, such as 'blind coding' of children's behaviour or interactions, results in limited analysis that fails to see the whole situation. She also argues that 'it is not enough to focus only on the societal conditions and values', nor is it enough to only focus on one particular aspect of the individual child (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 4). Instead, the intentional and interactional activities of the child, including the available affordances of the socio-material environment, must be the focus of research activity. Based upon this philosophy, the methodology used in this study addresses the child's perspective, the institutional and societal perspectives and the researcher's perspective, i.e., aims and shaping of the study. Although researchers refer to Hedegaard, Bang and others in the cultural-historical tradition, there are limited studies in the UK in which Hedegaard's methodological approach has been utilised fully to study children's development and none, to my knowledge, that have applied Bang's environmental affordance perspective to consider the affording of self-experience.

The use of an interactive ethnographic approach meant that I observed whole class activity, as well as that of the focus children. It was difficult to only focus upon specific children when so much of interest was going on; however, by undertaking fieldwork using an ethnographic approach, I was able to give my attention to those who asked for it, observe a wide range of interactivity, as well as focusing upon specific children. Being available to the children at times and putting aside my data collection seemed to be of benefit in a busy classroom, as well as benefiting my research aims by simply being a part of the practice, however briefly. Of course, as the school year and my research progressed, I had to become much more focused solely on the aims of my own work. After fieldwork finished and data had been collected, I visited the classroom again and the school for Christmas nativity plays in order to continue a relationship with the school, the teacher and the children.

In undertaking the study, two significant things happened from a methodological and analytical perspective: first, during the fieldwork, I found myself bewitched by the busy classroom. When I began the study, one of my supervisors warned me to be critical of Forest School practice, since outdoor education is my comfort zone, and existing early years

research is fairly consistent in demonstrating the benefits of using the outdoors for learning and play (e.g., Tovey, 2007; Bilton and Waters, 2018; Waite and Davis, 2007). In fact, as the fieldwork progressed, I became beguiled by the classroom! It was so colourful and cosy! So many toys, books, felt-tip pens! So warm and dry! Phonics and interactive whiteboards! I began to doubt that Forest School was actually very interesting at all in comparison; indeed, I became critical of nature-based studies, which started to seem Romantic (Taylor, 2013), 'evangelical' (Waite, 2013), and even neoliberal in the case of reified studies which consider the benefits of a single green tree in the neighbourhood for seemingly helping underachieving residents pull themselves together (Faber Taylor, Kuo and Sullivan, 2002).

However, then the second moment of significance happened: I left the field. Hedegaard (2008c) asserts that the data collected is to be considered as an artefact to be analysed after the fieldwork. This seemed contradictory with her assertion that analysis is also being undertaken all the time. Yet, it became clearer to me as I began writing the findings chapters and the whole dissertation, that I could approach the data in the form of transcripts and interviews as artefacts and look through them with some detachment, based on episodes of conflict, and in relationship to the theoretical underpinnings. This chronological and physical distance between me, the participants, the field work and the writing up contributed to my being able to consider all the perspectives, including my own that had become part of the transcription, as artefacts from which my personal inclinations had been distanced, yet which also held records of perspectives and activity during the fieldwork. I was also able to review audio-video recordings repeatedly in order to develop my initial transcriptions and interpretations by layering multiple interviews for interpreting perspectives. By following Hedegaard's methodology, I was able to align my methodological framework with the theoretical and analytical frameworks in order to present findings informed by theoretical perspectives.

## **8.4 Limitations of the study**

There are three primary limitations to the study as a whole. The first is in relation to somewhat broad research questions, in which I tried to explore the nature of children's interactions with peers, adults, and things (my original research question). I did not understand initially that by wanting to explore 'what's happening here?', as discussed in the introduction, that I wanted to focus upon the mechanisms by which children participate and by which they are judged as competent or not in multiple practice institutions. Not having undergraduate or post-graduate experience in the theoretical basis of the study, which is firmly rooted in the discipline of psychology, I spent a considerable amount of the doctoral time period learning about the theoretical perspectives and engaging in a wide range of literature in order to eventually focus on activity and affordance theories. Now, that this understanding has grown, and I have articulated a conceptual framework, I will take the study forward by formulating specific questions in relation to particular practice situations

in order to contribute further to current research inquiry into children's activity in both the indoor and outdoor socio-material environments.

The second limitation of the study relates to my focusing on a limited number of children. However, by following specific children over a period of time and gathering data that was eventually selected in order to analyse events of conflict, I was able to get to know these children well during the period of fieldwork, which is advocated for this methodological approach by Hedegaard and Fler (2008). While making generalisations about particular children is not the aim of the study, the findings demonstrate the significance of the conceptual framework that may be replicated in future studies of children's activity. Indeed, by following just one child and by including study of the home environment, I could have analysed even further the child's development during transition from home to school, which is also advocated by Hedegaard.

Both of these – to include more children or to study just one – brings me to the third limitation. This limitation stems from the nature of writing up the study: it would have been satisfying to have been able to include more episodes for each child – or to have focused more deeply upon just one or fewer than five – to demonstrate more fully the affordances actualised by each child over time. The capacity of a doctoral study is at once generous and limiting. To have the time and word count to relate more empirical evidence for each child in depth may have contributed to being better able to demonstrate the findings for each child more fully. Equally, it would be gratifying to study the interactions of the children for a longer time period over the course of a whole school year or across more than one school year, and to use the data analysis to discuss the subsequent implications for school engagement and trajectory. It would be a significant contribution to the field of knowledge to be able to follow the same children longitudinally across both their horizontal and vertical transitions at home and school.

These limitations, however, are also opportunities for further post-doctoral research to consider the data gathered in the study in light of current practice-based conversations and to continue to contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of such conversations.

## **8.5 Further research directions**

Developing a relationship with the school and participants has meant that I have been invited back to the school for Nativity Plays and visits to see how the children are growing and developing and to continue a relationship with the teacher. Further research with the same sample of children or with others in the class for whom I have data securely stored would be useful for considering findings in relation to Bang's (2009) concept of 'great novelty' and future trajectories. For instance, Bence was engaged in continuous bridge building activity at Forest School that spanned several weeks. In this activity he was the leader. He also, however, engaged in play with Tyler that expanded his development for sharing leadership. Data gathered such as this had to be filed away, as either it did not fall

specifically into a categorisation of *conflict*, my ‘analysis trigger’, or I had reached word-count saturation in my findings chapters! Therefore, to use the study’s approach to target a more specific research question using existing data and gathering new data would further develop application of the analytical model and generate more substantial findings in regards to trajectories.

Additionally, this study has provided a framework to explore further the relationship between behaviour and the mechanisms of engagement, which could be applied to any group of participants, those in transition, in particular. This study provides a stepping stone for understanding possibilities for how different pedagogical approaches and ‘different professionals contribute to the child’s developmental trajectory in different ways over time’ (Edwards, 2018, p. 3). Building upon this study to develop a taxonomy of the social and self affordances of the Forest School and of the classroom based upon a more generalised account of children’s activity as a whole would also contribute to existing literature and provide a frame for future research directions.

Revisiting the data, focusing more directly on the conceptualisation of ‘common worlding’ (Taylor, 2013) would be welcome as well. To consider the experiences of children from a perspective that encompasses more inclusively the non-human/human interactions in the study’s data is an avenue I would like to take in the future. A common worlds pedagogy corresponds well with the ethos of the FS Leaders in this study whose values aligned closely with Deep and Social Ecology (Bookchin, et al., 1991). The initial remit of the studentship with its focus on children’s academic achievement guided my choice of theoretical approach; however, it would be useful to further consider children’s development within ecological communities from a materialist and post-human perspective (e.g. Taylor, 2013) as a means of foregrounding ecologically inclusive, sustainable futures.

## **8.6 Contributions**

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge and to Welsh Government aims for early years practice. Firstly, the study contributes to existing conversations by researchers considering how video-stimulated accounts and interviews may be used to gather multiple perspectives, as well as how to include the study’s stakeholders in multiple stages of the research process. The use of photo- and video-stimulated methods has been used previously to consider participants’ perspectives (Lyle, 2003; Silfver, Sjöberg, and Bagger, 2013; Theobald, 2012, 2017a; Tanner et al., 2011). However, this study also uses these methods to contribute to assuring more informed consent by developing relationships with parents whose literacy and linguistic skills may impact upon understanding the nature of the research; additionally, these methods allowed for the utilisation of the expertise of a bilingual teaching assistant for clarity in transcribing and writing field notes. While not an original contribution, the study’s use of this methodology study supports conversations by

demonstrating how sharing video and photographic data may address the inequities for diverse participants that appears inherent in research (4.5.2).

Secondly, from a theoretical perspective, the approach used in this study has responded to calls for more theoretical underpinnings in outdoor learning research (Bilton and Waters, 2016; Müller et al., 2017; Waite, 2013; Waite and Goodenough, 2018) and demonstrated how a theoretical framework may be systematically applied to studies of outdoor and experiential learning. As mentioned here in Sections 8.2, 8.3 and 8.6, the deep grounding of this study in theoretical, analytical and methodological approaches has significant potential to be applied to further research as well as for returning to the data gathered during the study. Bilton and Waters (2016) assert that further research is required into the values driving practitioners' use of the outdoors; this study provides a much-needed theoretical framing by which to do so. In addition to this contribution to the field of outdoor learning, Heft (2018) asserts that much research on children's participation and development does not fully consider 'place'. He argues that 'the setting in which research is conducted tends to be taken for granted' (p. 118). This study also contributes to existing research into children's participation in this regard as well, by fully investigating how the sociocultural structures of institutions, as well as their physical affordances, shape how children are perceived and how they perceive themselves in relation to practice values.

Thirdly, in using Hedegaard's wholeness approach, I have joined an international community of activity theory early years scholars, of whom there are few from the UK. Recently, I contributed to to ISCAR-community conversations by presenting at the Cultural-historical Approaches to Children's Development and Childhood (CHACDOC) conference in Norway as well as co-editing a book with these colleagues, to focus on a Welsh perspective for outdoor learning in the Foundation Phase and a UK perspective on Forest School. Much as we in the UK seem to be captivated by Scandinavian early years provision, conference attendees were very interested in the UK approach to outdoor learning, particularly in the form of Forest Schools, as they face the 'schoolification' of early years (Hedegaard, 2019). The appeal of the Foundation Phase, for those outside Wales, lies in its intention to achieve a balance between academic skills, play-based provision and outdoor learning. This study contributes, therefore, to widening conversations internationally, for those who aim to combine such pedagogical approaches to early years education.

Consequently, this study's significance rests in its focus on both the indoors and outdoors in the Foundation Phase. By studying the Forest School provision by an external third sector organisation, it contributes to conversations about alternative pedagogies. However, by not focusing solely on the outdoors, and by its robust theoretical framing, it neither romanticises outdoor activity nor negates the importance of indoor spaces and pedagogical approaches focused on academic achievement. Instead, by focusing upon children's activity across institutions in the early years, this study demonstrates a theoretical and analytical model for investigating the driving values, expectations and demands of any institutional practice; how

these shape the affordances that are available; and, importantly, how children experience their participation as active agents within collective practices.

Finally, early years is one of five cross-cutting priorities named in the Welsh Government's national strategy *Prosperity for All* (WG, 2017b), which aims for children of all backgrounds to 'reach their full potential and lead a healthy, prosperous and fulfilling life, enabling them to participate fully in their communities and contribute to the future economic success of Wales' (p. 23). Unfortunately, there remains a conceptualisation of those from disadvantaged backgrounds experiencing 'persistent under-achievement' (Ibid.) that neglects to consider the whole child in practice as well as theory. This study provides a unique contribution to practical, as well as theoretical conversations. Firstly, the ways in which children's participation – often reduced to being labelled 'behaviour' – in educational settings is understood can be re-imagined in light of this study's theoretical framing and the findings. Practitioner understanding of about how children demonstrate existing motive orientations and develop motive orientations in reciprocity with institutional motive orientations and the affordances therein allows practitioners to reconsider how to most effectively support children's motive orientation development in alignment with institutional values. Being able to interpret the *child's perspective* of practice is essential for educators, in order that children may be viewed, not as lacking, but as rich in already existing as well as developing competencies. In doing so, educators may recognise children's existing engagement and self-experience as learners and built upon these, whether indoors or outdoors.

Viewing children from a deficit perspective contributes to pressure on adults to achieve results in both behaviour management and learning outcomes. However, viewing the child as a capable learner and viewing the child's activity as indicative of their motive orientations, developing across multiple institutions, creates a pedagogical space that allows the practitioner to identify and channel the child's motive orientation toward collective values. It may also contribute to recognising the multiple values and demands that children meet across institutions. An understanding of the concept of motive orientations also allows space for the practitioner to act as an active agent in bridging what may be the often conflicting demands of the Foundation Phase Framework, which call for both academic skills development and opportunities for child-directed play.

Secondly, the study demonstrates how playfulness as a pedagogical approach can support this bridge-building between existing, developing and future competencies. The spaciousness of the FS pedagogical framing contributes to the practitioner's ability to playfully engage with learners, allowing opportunity to develop relationships, find out what the child's interests are, what drives and motivates them, and what strategies may be employed most effectively for the child's learning and development. It enables practitioners to see activity from the child's perspective. Bae (2012) argues that adults engaging in play with children contributes to democratic relationships and 'fosters vitality for both adults and



children' (p. 66). Thus, playfulness, as an approach to learning and developing relationships, needs to be seen as an essential characteristic of early years practitioners to be fostered in continuing professional development and be more highly valued by those who line-manage early years practitioners.

As the findings indicate, playfulness, as an attitude and characteristic to be valued in classroom environments, reduces the pressure on practitioners, yet may only be attainable if systemic modifications are put into place to reduce the sources of stress on both adults and children. Moyles, Payler and Georgeson (2014) assert that maintaining or improving quality provision with limited resources reduces the well-being of educators, which seems unlikely to be conducive to a spirit of unreserved playfulness. In this study, the Forest School provision, which was so appreciated by the classroom teacher, was funded externally, thus limiting its sustainability. While teaching staff often train to be Forest School leaders, it is difficult for them to replicate such an alternative-pedagogically focused practice, due to timetabling and curricular demands (Leather, 2018). Yet, as this study demonstrates, acknowledging the importance and value of such an approach could contribute to educators' well-being and create enhanced relationships between adults and children, thereby supporting Welsh Government aims for successful futures and well-being for all.

## 8.7 Final thoughts

Welsh Government and schools face the challenge of both supporting children's well-being and ensuring academic success in order contribute to their communities and achieve economic sustainability. The children in this study were disadvantaged in that their baseline assessments starting the reception year put them behind their peers from more advantaged communities. Due to this disadvantage, the children had the opportunity to participate in local Forest School provision on a weekly basis throughout the year, provided by funding for the partnership between a charity and the school. This conceptualisation of the pupils' needs impacts upon the significance of the findings from this study. While much outdoor learning research only considers the benefits of outdoor play, children from disadvantaged communities also need the targeted intervention that an outdoor-based programme may not be able to fully support. Additionally, the findings from this study demonstrate that children *enjoy* the structure and opportunities for literacy and numeracy that are provided indoors, which contribute to their experiencing of self as *learning-able* both indoors and out. This study, thus, supports the assertions of Maynard et al. (2013), who state:

Programmes adopting sociocultural pedagogies may result in long-term benefits in relation to social development and motivation to pursue higher education, so addressing any concerns about pupil disaffection. However, teacher-initiated approaches involving 'explicit teaching' ('practitioner-directed' approaches) can reduce knowledge gaps in young children's literacy and numeracy skills, which are strong predictors of children's later academic success. These approaches may be

particularly important as an intervention for young children who are disadvantaged by poor home learning environments. It may therefore be prudent to ensure early childhood programmes include some practitioner-directed activities alongside largely child-initiated activities (p. xiii).

The combination of the classroom and Forest School, especially as a programme provided by outside practitioners with different expectations and fewer pressures for outcomes, created a range of inclusive affordances for developing motive-orientations that were in alignment with the values envisioned in the Foundation Phase Framework. By utilising the conceptualisation of everyday niches, as specific sets of affordances (Gibson, 2015), the study demonstrates how the provision of Forest School, particularly delivered off-site in a local woodland and by focused practitioners, expands the reception year niche to encompass a larger community of human and non-human species, with a new set of social, material and elemental affordances not necessarily found in the classroom.

Importantly, the study of activity settings in these niches demonstrates how children are engaged continually with the affordances of multiple environments, participating across a range of institutions each day and throughout their lives. The values, demands and expectations of these institutions, both directly and indirectly, provide the standards against which significant adults, such as parents, teachers and educators, 'evaluate a child's competence and motive appropriation in relation to their ideas about what such participation in situational practices should lead to' (Hedegaard, 2008a, p. 18). By viewing the child's participation from the child's perspective, the study contributes to practitioner understanding of how to best support children's learning and development as individuals within collective practice, who have existing competencies that have been learned motive orientations valued in other settings. Recognising this creates space for the practitioner to view the child as an already capable learner and to consider the affordances available for the child to learn new competencies. Indeed, Massey (2005) argues for 'not just a notion of "becoming", but for the openness of that process of becoming' (p. 21). Ensuring that all children have inclusive opportunities to have their modes of participation and contributions guided positively by the values and expectations of these institutions is critical to sustained engagement in communities of learning.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Information for participants and consent forms



### Research PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

1 January 2017

**Research Title:** Exploring Children's Interactions in the Classroom and at Forest School.



*Photo credit:*

'There's really good mud at Forest School' by J., age 5, taken with GoPro camera by A., age 4

**Name of Researcher:** Angela Rekers-Power

Email: 0001999@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

1 January 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am doing a PhD research project on children's interactions at school and Forest School. I did a pilot study with Mrs. Gordon's class last term, and I will begin the main study with your child's class this term. I will use various methods of recording the children working and playing, such as chatting with them, videotaping their play inside and at Forest School, and taking photos. Also, in order to see things from their perspectives, I may ask the children to use Go Pro cameras and iPads themselves to record their learning and play and talk about it with me afterward in interviews (as in the picture above). There will be an opportunity at the end of summer term for you to come and see their photos and videos and chat with me more about the project and their activities.

The children will be able to tell me if they wish to participate or not during each session, and they can also withdraw completely at any time. You, too, will be able to stop your child's participation at any time; if you change your mind, just let me, or any member of staff, know. Your child's identity will be kept anonymous and the film footage will be used

solely for the purposes of the research and not publicised in any way without your express permission. All photos, recordings and information will be kept locked securely.

If you would like to have a chat about the research before (or after) signing this, I will be available in the outside classroom on Wednesdays and Thursdays before and after school and I would be happy to talk with you. Please contact Mrs. xxxx or Mrs xxxx, who can put us in touch, if you would rather speak over the phone. I will hold an information session with photos and videos from Forest School sessions taken by Mrs Gordon last term and from my pilot study. This will be on **Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> January, at 9:00 am and again at 2:30 pm**. I look forward to meeting you.

If you are happy for your child to participate in the research, please fill out and return this form to the school by 19<sup>th</sup> of January. You may refuse to take part in this study or to stop your child’s participation at any time without having to explain why, and with no consequences for you or your child. Making sure that your child’s well-being and identity are protected will be my utmost priority, and every practical precaution will be taken to keep their and the school’s identity confidential. All data generated from the study will remain confidential.

Best Regards,

Angela Rekers-Power

**Please read the information below carefully before signing, and tick the box next to each statement:**

<p>I confirm that I have read and understand this letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.</p> <p>I have had time to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.</p>	
<p>I understand that my child’s participation is voluntary and that I am free to change my mind and withdraw him/her at any time, without giving any reason.</p>	
<p>I understand that any information given by my child may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher, but that it will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential.</p>	
<p>I understand that if something potentially harmful or actually harmful to a child is discovered in the course of research it may need to be disclosed to the appropriate authorities.</p>	
<p>I understand that my child’s name or the school name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.</p>	
<p>I agree to my child taking part in the above study by using a camera, iPad, Go Pro etc. to film their own and others’ activities.</p>	
<p><b>I DO / DO NOT CONSENT (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)</b> to my child being recorded, filmed or or photographed by the researcher or other children.</p>	

I understand and agree that I may wish to participate myself by viewing photos and videos and being interviewed by the researcher. This information will also be kept confidential and my privacy protected.

My child's full name: \_\_\_\_\_

My full name: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature: \_\_\_\_\_

My phone number or contact email address: \_\_\_\_\_



Thank you very much for your help.





10 November 2016

**Research Title:** Exploring Children's Experiences in the Classroom and at Forest School.



*Photo credit:* 'There's really good mud at Forest School' by JS, age 5, taken with GoPro camera

**Name of Researcher:**

Angela Rekers-Power

Email: [0001999@student.uwtsd.ac.uk](mailto:0001999@student.uwtsd.ac.uk)

Mobile: 07776 383 429

10 November 2016

Dear Teaching and Forest School staff,

I am doing a PhD research project on the interactions children experience in the classroom and at Forest School, with their peers, with adults and with the spaces themselves. With permission, I will use various methods of recording the children (and you) working and playing, such as chatting with them, videotaping their play inside and at Forest School, and taking photos. Also, in order to see things from their perspectives, I may ask the children to use Go Pro cameras and iPads to record their learning and play and talk about it with me afterward (see picture above). I will also be recording interviews with you and with the children several times throughout the study, if you agree and would like to participate.

The children will be able to tell me if they wish to participate or not during each session, and they can also withdraw completely at any time. You, too, will be able to withdraw your participation at any time; if you change your mind, just let me, Mrs. Gordon, [the headteacher] or [Director of FS] know. If you would like to have a chat about the research before (or after) signing this, I will be available in person, by email or mobile, and I would be very happy to talk with you about the research project.

If you are happy to participate in the research, please fill out and return this form to me by 18<sup>th</sup> November. Making sure that everyone's well-being and identity are protected will be my utmost priority. All personal and sensitive data generated from the study will remain confidential and be anonymized. Your identity will be kept anonymous and the film footage/photographs will be used solely for the purposes of the research, academic presentation and not publicised in any way without your express written permission.

Best Regards,

Angie Rekers-Power

**Please read the information below carefully before signing:**

I confirm that I have read and understand this letter dated 10 November 2016; and, I have had time to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to change my mind and withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	
I understand that any information given may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher, but that it will be kept strictly anonymous and confidential.	
I understand that if something potentially harmful or actually harmful to a participant, adult or child, is discovered in the course of research it may need to be disclosed to the appropriate authorities.	
I understand that my name or the school name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.	
I agree to taking part in the above study by using a camera, iPad, Go Pro etc. to film activities if requested.	
<b>I DO / DO NOT CONSENT (PLEASE CIRCLE ONE)</b> to being recorded filmed or or photographed by the researcher or or children.	

My full name: \_\_\_\_\_

My signature: \_\_\_\_\_

My phone number or contact email address:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thank you very much for your help with my research project.





## Appendix 2: Transcriptions, interviews and video-stimulated interviews (samples)

### Jordan: episode of conflict at FS

Child: Jordan

Venue/date: Forest School 15 March 2017

Conflict episode transcription

Forest School event, part 2 IMG\_1086

1.	<p><i>Jordan descends a short slope (of approx. one foot) which lies between two oak trees, each with a circumference of approx. 1 meter (100 years old). He sits on a fallen tree which is on the far side of the ditch, opposite the slope and 'entrance', certain that this is the place he was looking for.</i></p> <p><i>I am standing about 5 feet away, not in the ditch, but directly in front of Jordan. I say, 'Oh, this is a nice secret spot, isn't it?'</i></p> <p><i>Jordan, 'Yeah. It my restin [s]pot.'</i></p> <p>Ben walks up behind me, holding a fox woodland puppet, and says: 'What he doin' down there?'</p> <p>Me: 'That's his resting spot.'</p> <p>Ben: 'Why you goin down dere, Dordan?'</p> <p>Jordan shrugs, digs his stick into the ground.</p> <p>Ben: 'Why you down dere?' Walks down to join Jordan.</p> <p>Jordan replies, 'tit down' and gestures for Ben to sit next to him.</p> <p>Jonathon then approaches from behind me to where the boys are. 'Can I come in there?' Without waiting for an answer he goes in and sits on other side of Jordan on the fallen log.</p> <p>Jordan says, 'Tit down dere, Donadon.'</p>
2.	<p>I ask, 'Can I take a picture of you boys here?' They pose. (I ask because I am conscious that these two newcomers haven't given me immediate assent to be recording, so I want to ask and also ensure they realise I am filming without intruding too much into their play).</p> <p>Owen approaches from behind me.</p> <p>Jordan: 'No, Owen!' Points as gesture to STOP. Looks at me.</p>

'Dat only enough! Dat only enough!' [hand up, gestures for Owen to stop coming toward them].



*Figure 1*

3. Jordan looks at me hesitantly [as he if he knows that telling someone they cannot play is 'wrong' or at least controversial, according to adults at school or forest school. I do not want to interfere in what would be their natural play; but I wonder if my hesitation to say anything inadvertently gives him 'permission' to continue to exclude Owen, which is what happens next].

Owen does not stop and goes down the small slope part way.

Jordan: 'Up! Dat up!'

I say to Owen: 'Can I take your picture as well?' I say this because I want to allow permission for him to be included, if it is my photo taking that is causing the exclusion, thinking that perhaps Jordan does not want him in the picture right no

Owen smiles and poses, leaning against a branch that spans the ditch from the ground where I am standing toward the fallen log that the other boys are sitting on.



*Figure 2*

Ben and Jonathon move closer to Jordan to pose for the photograph.

Jordan is staring at Owen. He says, forcefully, 'No, Owen!'

4.	<p>Ben and Jonathon get up and prepare to leave. [They both come and go throughout this event. They come over to investigate the activity between Owen and Jordan and then leave when the conflict is evident.]</p> <p>Me: 'Why can't Owen come in?'</p> <p>Jordan: 'Too little.'</p> <p>Owen takes advantage of the communication between Jordan and me to slip into the space that Ben has just left on the log next to Jordan.</p> <p>I ask, 'Do you mean there's not enough space?'</p> <p>Jordan, 'No.'</p>
5.	<p>Jordan sees Jonathon leaving and jumps up. 'Donadon! wrong way - dat way. Wrong way.' [He points toward 'exit' doorway] 'It dat way. Donadon, it dat way.'</p> <p>I ask, 'Is that the way out? You go in this way, slide down the slope, rest a bit on the log, then go out that way?'</p> <p>Jordan [to me]: 'Mmmm hmmm...' nods affirmatively.</p> <p>[to Owen]: 'Owen, you go dat way. Meet me out dere.'</p> <p>[mumbles to himself] 'Me not go dat way.'</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>'Even your [researcher's] ideas are not good enough for him!' [laughs] (CR teacher, VS interview).</b></p> <p>Owen gets up from the log and walks toward the 'exit' that Jordan is motioning toward.</p>
6.	<p>Jordan tries to climb up the 'entrance' door slope using his stick for support, stabbing it into the ground for traction.</p> <p>Jordan: 'Uh -oh, me can't get back up!' He waits for Owen to come around the top of the ditch to the entrance, and says, 'Dis is high, high.'</p> <p>'Look how high!' Jordan uses both hands to pound stick into the ground for support for right hand, grasps a fallen branch which is perpendicular to the resting log and is at hip height.</p> <p>Owen walks around and watches Jordan, then pounds his stick into the ground with both hands.</p>
7.	<p>Jordan begins to feign slipping down slope repeatedly as if he can't get up. He does this several times, reaching the top, then jumping back down. He is smiling.</p> <p>Owen: [looks at me] 'He keeps on sliding on the stick' [giggles].</p> <p>Me: [laughs]</p>

	<p>Jordan: 'It not funny!' [Doesn't like Owen and me laughing together?] He climbs up, then jumps backwards back down, pretending the slope is very high and he can't climb it.</p>
8.	<p>Owen: [Turns away and starts to hit oak tree with his stick] 'Ah, ka-ra-té!'</p> <p>Jordan: [slips a few more times, looks at me] 'It too difficult!'</p> <p>Owen: [turns back and holds out his stick to Jordan] 'Here, hold onto my stick!'</p> <p>Jordan: 'No!'</p> <p>Owen: 'Borrow my stick!'</p> <p>Jordan: 'No!' He jumps down a few more times, then climbs up, smiles at me, as if proud of an accomplishment.</p> <p style="color: red;">'It's interesting he didn't like that challenge at first, but then he's put himself back in that position because he knows he can get out again' (CR teacher, VS interview).</p> <p>Me: 'Well done.'</p> <p>Jordan: 'Uh oh! Aaaaaaa...'. He feigns falling back down the slope, holds branch and his stick for support.</p> <p>Owen starts to walk away toward 'exit'.</p>
9.	<p>Jordan: [comes back up the slope] 'No go down there' [gesturing toward the way he has just come up]. 'I'm going to [... ]'. He puts his stick across 2 stumps at the top of the slope which he has just climbed up, blocking the 'entrance'. 'Now no one can go down dere'.</p> <p style="color: red;">Later, in VS interview, he reveals that his intention was to 'protect' the others.</p> <p>Owen turns back toward the entrance.</p> <p>Jordan says to him, 'No, on the left side.'</p> <p>Ben returns holding 'Foxy', the fox puppet.</p> <p>Owen karate chops the tree again with his stick.</p> <p>Jordan goes to the left of one of the stumps to return to the resting spot. He balances using his hands on stumps which his stick is balanced across using hands for support, smiles at me, drops down.</p> <p>Owen: 'I need to get in, I need to get in!' He runs to back door and goes in that way.</p>

	<p>Ben slips in past the stump on the left, bypassing the horizontal stick barrier.</p> <p>Jonathon approaches.</p> <p>Ben runs away – <i>out the ‘right’ door? I’ve turned and only see him running off, not why or which direction. I’ve turned because 2 girls are also playing with sticks behind me, B. taps me to tell me they are making a trap.</i></p> <p>Jordan says to Owen: ‘No! Not allowed in!’</p>
10.	<p>Owen is getting chased away by Jordan, but he keeps trying to get in one entrance then when it is blocked by Jordan, he runs to the other entrance. The carries on for a few seconds, with Jordan getting increasingly annoyed, as he tries to get Jonathon to come in and Owen to stay out. Owen remains smiling.</p> <p>Jordan says to Jonathon, ‘Come in, Donadon. Only Donadon.’</p> <p>Jonathon runs away across the clearing. <i>Both Ben and Jonathon seem to go in and out of the action freely, without engaging in any of the conflict or posing any challenge to Jordan (field notes).</i> Jordan goes after him; Owen says, ‘Bye bye!’ and seizes his chance to get in to the special space.</p> <p>Owen attempts to lay his stick across the two stumps, but it is too short. Finally he gets it to stay but as he tries to put up his second stick, the first falls. He is mimicking Jordan’s play with the stick and trying to also create a barrier with his stick in the same way that Jordan had.</p>
11.	<p>Jordan reappears and Owen jumps back quickly, as Jordan is higher up than he and appears, holding (meanacingly?) his stick.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>[gasps!]Did you see his [Owen’s] face?!’ (CR teacher, VS interview). ]</b></p> <p>Jordan says, ‘No! Not allowed stick in there!’ Owen backs down and sits on the fallen log, digging his sticks into the ground.</p> <p>Jordan turns to me and says, ‘Miss, he not allowed in there. Only Ben, Donadon come in and when dey come in, he be sittin by dere.’</p> <p>There is a pause while the boys wait for me to do or say something, so I pretend to be busy with my camera.</p> <p>Owen looks up and gives me a little smile; and Jordan hits at an oak tree with his stick and looks around, perhaps looking for Jonathon. They then have a quiet chat which I can’t hear.</p>
12.	<p>Owen gets up and starts walking toward the exit, marching with his 2 sticks, ‘Walk, walk, walk’ smiling. Simultaneously, as he leaves the space, Jordan slides down the slope and heads for the fallen log, and Ben approaches the entrance.</p> <p>Ben goes straight into the resting place, sits for a moment.</p>

	<p>Owen crouches down with his stick resting on a log and Jordan uses his stick to hit Owen's stick. 'Come on!' he says to Owen. [He means 'come on' as in 'get out'.]</p> <p>Ben notices one of the girls playing with sticks nearby and leaves the den.</p> <p><i>[In the background, girls can be seen making their bonfire/trap for Father Christmas, B. being the leader of the two girls, giving orders to L. <span style="color: red;">[CRT, VS interview: laughs] little dominant role here as well, haven't we?</span>]</i></p> <p>Jordan says, 'Go! Go!' He begins to push Owen out, explaining to him that he can't be in there, as only Jonathon is allowed.</p> <p>Jordan turns to me, 'Miss! Owen not goin!'</p>
13.	<p>Owen uses the break in attention to begin running from the entrance to the exit, still with his 2 sticks in hand, making a game of Jordan trying to get him out. He is laughing.</p> <p>Jordan keeps putting his stick across the entrance, repeatedly saying, 'No! you can't come in! no allowed to come in!'</p> <p>Owen is now teasing Jordan, getting him to leave his post and chase him and then running back to the entrance when Jordan's guard is down.</p> <p>Jordan says, 'No Owen - [s]top winding me up!' He drops his stick and jumps down into the den. Uses both hands to push Owen and says, 'Go! Go! Donadon and Ben, not you. [...] you go under there, around there and up there [points to an alternative route for Owen to take which doesn't involve either entrance or exit]...Ahhh... [pained moan]'</p> <p>Owen says, 'No-o' and starts to head to exit.</p> <p>Jordan says, 'Now you, get out' His stick is lying at his feet. He is grasping a rhododendron branch and shaking it. 'If you get out you not coming back in. Get out now.'</p>
14.	<p>Ben returns, running, still holding fox, 'Whoooooaaaa...'</p> <p>Jordan says to Ben, 'Come in.' He gestures Ben can come in and walks toward him to help him down the slope. 'Now Ben can come in.'</p> <p>Ben enters and sits on log.</p> <p>Jordan to Owen: 'I'm not goin tell you again.' He climbs back up the slope to the top of the entrance and picks up the stick he had dropped earlier. 'Me lose my temper.'</p> <p>Ben leaves through entrance, passing Jordan.</p> <p>Owen stays in den, hits at rhododendron leaves and branches with one of his sticks. 'Please', he says.</p>

	<p>Jordan: 'Get out now. I'm not goin play with you ever again'. He walks toward Owen in the den, who doesn't move but puts his head down.</p> <p>Jordan picks a leaf from the rhododendron bush and throws it at Owen.</p>
15.	<p>'Let's have a leaf fight!' Jordan says, with a new, happier tone in his voice.</p> <p>Owen smiles, backs away from Jordan.</p> <p>Jordan turns and runs out of front entrance. 'Uh-oh! Aaaaaa....' And runs away as if Owen is chasing him and he is afraid.</p> <p>Owen goes out the exit – still holding 2 sticks. He pulls both sticks up to his waist as if drawing duelling pistols. He looks toward Jordan, who is now behind me, drops one stick, and pauses. Owen charges, 'Raaarrrrr....'</p> <p>Presumably, Jordan put up his stick too, imitating Owen, for now he is charging and doing a battle cry too, as I turn around. Both boys meet. Owen gently taps Jordan's outstretched stick with his, turns away and says, 'get back in!' and runs for the safety of the den. A short sword fight ensues.</p>
16.	<p>Owen, says, 'I'm i-in' in a sing-song voice and walks through the den toward the forbidden entrance.</p> <p>But, Jordan walks away from exit toward clearing where the girls are building their trap; he hits a small hazel tree stump with his stick, gives Tarzan-type yodel.</p> <p>Owen comes out of entrance.</p> <p>Jordan says, 'You can't get me.'</p> <p>Owen says, 'Get the tree!' and starts to hit the hazel stump/tree with his stick.</p> <p>Jordan wiggles his bottom and says, 'Can't get me!' and runs away through the clearing. Owen chases after him.</p>
17.	<p>The boys end up on 'Mud Mountain'. When I approach, I find Jordan playing 'falling from the mountain', lying on the ground, and wanting to be rescued by the air ambulance, flown by Owen. Their play has transformed into imaginative play in which they were both in helicopters, landing on the top of mud mountain, and Jordan pretended to fall backwards off the mountain. In a similar activity to his pretend sliding down the slope, he seems to only want to make Owen laugh, and be in control of the action: when Owen laughs and tries to grab him to pull him back up, saying, 'No, Jordan!', Jordan says, 'Get off of him. [Slides down the hill] Him dying.'</p> <p>Owen is unsure how to participate and watches Jordan carefully, holding on to branches nearby and shouting, 'Oh no, Jordan, get in the helicopter!' as Jordan continues to pretend to fall from the helicopter into the tree branches.</p> <p>[During this play, Ben approaches the mud mountain with his fox toy, climbs up to see what is happening on the other side; turns and runs back down and away.]</p>

18.	Their play concludes with the shout from the teacher that it is closing circle time. Jordan gets off the woodland floor and runs toward the fire circle; Owen follows.
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**VSI interview with Jordan about 'stick fight' conflict filmed 15 March 2017**

Interview on 23 March 2017

Speaker	b) Verbal and non-verbal communication (gaze, gesture, sounds)	c) Adult's perspective	d) Interpretation of child's perspective	e) Interpretation of child's motive orientation
Jordan	Me keep falling  That's so funny.  [tries to close it down when the camera drifts to girls nearby]		Enjoys seeing himself playing his 'joke'	Wants to be seen as funny and playful.
Researcher	Before you close it, I'll fast forward to you again. [fast forwards to scene in which J. won't let O. go past his stick at the entrance.] I want to ask you about this bit, because I can't hear very well what's happening. I see that Owen is putting a stick up across the entrance. That's what you did before. Do you do that to make a door or just to balance the stick?	I'm checking to make sure my transcription of this event is correct.		
Jordan	No, I just did. Too tiny go down and could hurt themselves. I did when I go 'waaaa...' [referring to his joking that he was falling].		To be seen as caring for others and playful, rather than as not letting others play?	Sees himself as bigger, protective



Researcher	What are you saying there? Only you and Ben are allowed in?			
Jordan	No, only Ben, Thomas and me. Not Owen Williams. Only better people like Ben and Thomas. Owen Williams no better. Him not got 5. We got 5. Him not better.		He has an idea that being 5 years old is better. Perhaps related to birthday display in classroom?	Does not see how this is exclusive, motive to be included in a chosen group.
Researcher	Oh, you have to be 5 to go in?			
Jordan	No, we only need 5 people. Ben five and Thomas five			
Researcher	What about Owen? What is he?			
Jordan	4.			
Researcher	Is it because he isn't big enough?			
Jordan	No only 1 and 2.		Now it seems he is saying that only 1 or 2 other people are allowed in, not age related?	
Researcher	Can he go in the back door?			
Jordan	Yesh, but if go out not come back in.			
Researcher	Is that the rule for everybody?			
Jordan	Anybody			
Rsearcher	Because you're friends with Owen, aren't you?			
Jordan	Yeah, but i' him be naughty l'm not his friend. But if him be good then he my friend.		Not wanting to play with those who are naughty. Control over others. Owen said that J. is always mean to him.	Wants to be in control of who he plays with and when

Researcher	Are you ever naughty?	Wish I had asked what naughty means		
Jordan	[Rolls eyes]. No! [smiles]		Understands irony?	
Jordan	Watches sword fight Laughs. We fightin!			
Researcher	Are you play fighting or real fighting?	Was he really wanting to fight Owen or have a pretend sword fight?		
Jordan	Real. We doing 'rak! Rak! Rak! [imitates sword fight]		Real as in imitating real play. From child's perspective, play fighting is not really fighting.	
Researcher	Those sticks seem handy – you use them for walking sticks and swords			
Jordan	Gun sticks			
Researcher	Tree whackers			
Jordan	[laughs] [video ends] I wan watch more videos.			


## Lee: episode of conflict at FS

Date: 3 May 2017

Timing/Line	Activity description	Interpretation of perspectives (FS, boys', mine)
00:01-	<p>Lee and Jakub are splashing in a muddy puddle. They both have on full waterproofs and wellies. There is a rope across the puddle indicating 'out of bounds', because the puddle is considered too deep for most of the children's wellies (although on drier days, it is one of the favoured muddy puddle play zones and usually filled with enough water that the children use to fill buckets). Lee and Jacob are on the 'out-of-bounds' side of the rope, splashing in the mud.</p> <p>Ben is also on the 'out-of-bounds' side of the rope, leaning back on to it, sliding back and forth and watching the other boys. He too is in full waterproofs and wellies.</p>	<p>The rope is used as a physical boundary by the FSLs. But because the rope goes right through the puddle, it appears to seem ambiguous to the boys.</p> <p>The rope affords leaning on and going under, which the boys actualise. Its affordance as a barrier is not actualised by Lee and Jakub.</p> <p>Ben is using the rope as a prop to lean against, to keep himself feeling safe as he ventures toward the puddle down the small bank and back up again. Later he seems to use it as a physical, as well as psychological, boundary between</p>

		him and the boisterous play.
00:04-  Section 2	<p>Me, approaching: What are you boys doing?</p> <p>Lee: I like my socks getting wet!</p> <p>Me: You do?</p> <p>Lee: Yeah. My new socks. (jumps up and down)</p> <p>Me: won't you have squishy socks the rest of the day?</p> <p>Lee: yeah (sings to himself: 'squishy socks, squishy socks' as he jumps around.</p> <p>Jakub is splashing and kicking the water up.</p>	<p>The boys have discovered the qualities of the puddle as inviting. It is deep and muddy – the mud sticks to their clothes, skin and hair, as does the water, thus inviting a certain kind of physically consequential play in which the activity is displayed upon their persons. The more boisterous their play, the more material displays of their play are marked upon them.</p> <p>There is also a preemptive 'I like my socks getting wet' by Lee as if indicating he's heard the phrase, 'You'll get your socks wet!' before – indeed, that the puddle is too deep and over their wellies is why the rope is up in the first place. This could indicate that</p>


		<p>he knows why the rope is in place.</p> <p><i>'I know, but I like it': rules are good for other people, perhaps, but I'm ok.</i></p> <p><i>FS ethos regarding rules: 'How can we keep ourselves and others safe?'</i></p>
00:13	<p>Jakub: (holds muddy hands up in the air, looks at me) I am swimmin'!! (turns toward Lee, smiling).</p> <p>Me: laughs. 'You are?!'</p> <p>Lee turns to Jakub and starts to kick water on him; Jakub kicks water back on him. Jakub says, 'Muddle puddle, muddle puddle'. Both boys are smiling.</p> <p>Lee turns away and kicks water backward. Jakub does the same: turns his back to lee and kicks backward</p>	<p>Jakub expresses genuine joy also at being wet and liking the water. The water affords swimming and diving for him.</p> <p><i>Did my attention on Jakub make Lee turn his attention on him?</i></p> <p>Jakub (EAL) plays with language.</p> <p>Self-protection strategy without having to leave activity. Jakub <b>imitates</b>/learns from this technique.</p>

<p>00:24</p>	<p>Ben retreats behind the rope. He swings on it leaning in toward the puddle then back.</p>  <p><i>Figure 6x: playing in the muddy puddle, Ben in the foreground, Jakub in the back, and Lee in green on the right</i></p>	<p>Ben uses the rope as a tool – he holds on to it to separate himself from the more boisterous play, and to wipe his hands on.</p> <p>Both metaphorically and physically separating him and keeping him safe, while still being a part of the activity.</p>
<p>00:24</p>	<p>Lee and Jakub continue to kick muddy water at each other, getting increasingly bolder so that water is being kicked up into each other’s faces. They are smiling, but it also feels slightly threatening on Lee’s part.</p> <p>Me: ‘Careful. You don’t want muddy water in your eyes’.</p> <p>Jakub retreats from the puddle on the far side with Lee continuing to kick water at him, chanting ‘muddle puddle, muddle puddle’.</p>	<p>The repetition of it, while at the same time retreating and charging forward, begins to make it feel like a battle.</p>
<p>00:45</p>	<p>Ben sees his chance to get in the water and he drops a spade into the water.</p> <p>The boys start to come back – Jakub walks past Lee who is still kicking water at him saying ‘muddle puddle’.</p>	<p>Ben needs the physical space in between the boys and himself in order to venture in. He may have been enjoying the puddle with the boys before the intense splashing started.</p>

00:55	Ben walks back under the rope. Jakub goes to the spade and picks it up out of the water, sets it upright on the bank, he says, 'no' and looks at Ben.	Jakub's perspective seems to be that you can't have tools lying down in the mud puddle. Rule of the game or as in responsibility: 'that's not how to treat tools'?
00:58	Jakub then turns back to Lee who has been kicking water on him repeatedly and saying 'muddle puddle'. He joins in the kicking water and starts splashing Lee back. The kick-splashing between them becomes quite vigorous. They are laughing.	Jakub chooses to return to the splash fight.
01:06	<p>Ben turns to me and raises his muddy hands (his face is also covered in splashed mud). He makes a plaintive sound.</p> <p>Me: do you want to go wash your hands?</p> <p>Ben: nods affirmatively.</p> <p>Me: go over by the fire circle and Cerys will help you.</p> <p>Ben walks away.</p>	Ben getting splashed and too muddy is troublesome for him; also, his attempt to join in (in a less boisterous puddle activity) was unsuccessful, both because the boys returned to the puddle and because Jakub said 'no' to the spade in the puddle.
1:11	Lee and Jakub continue splashing. Lee is laughing and turns his back to do the backward splashing, then yells 'raaarr' and wipes his eyes – mud has gotten into them. He stomps his boots in the water in frustration as he wipes his eyes, but Jakub carries on splashing.	The boys continue with their play. From my (adult?) perspective, it seems like someone is already or will be hurt, which I vocalise; but, in fact, Lee appears to

01:15	Me: oh, stop stop! Too muddy.	only wants a break, which he is able to initiate for himself by turning away, roaring and stomping. Physically, he could leave the puddle if he wanted to.
01:25	<p>Jakub stops briefly, Lee turns back toward him, smiling and they resume their splashing/kicking mud at each other.</p> <p>Lee giggles and squeals and jumps up and down, splashing. He turns away from Jakub and ‘back kicks’ into the water.</p> <p>Jakub starts to come around to Lee’s front.</p> <p>Lee grabs at Jakub with both arms and they go toward each other as if it could become a mud wrestle, but Jakub says ‘ah!’ and walks past and goes out the far side again with Lee following him.</p>	It feels possible that one or both of them could walk away at any time. They continue to play with or explore their capabilities to attack each other – play fighting. It verges on the serious and not-serious.
01:42	<p>A new boy arrives, Tom. He has an open waterproof coat on and wellies but no waterproof trousers.</p> <p>‘What are you doin’ he calls.</p> <p>Lee turns to him, ‘Playing muddle puddle.... You can’t come in [...]’</p> <p>Tom: ‘why?’ goes under the rope into the puddle.</p> <p>Lee: ‘cause [...] boots’.</p>	<p>Lee refers to ‘muddle puddle’ as play (a game with rules).</p> <p>Both Jakub and Lee are very conscious of the ‘rules’ of personal protective equipment. They</p>



	<p>Jakub reenters the puddle saying 'muddle puddle' and kicks water on Lee from behind. Tom goes under the rope. Jakub looks at Tom's trousers and stops.</p> <p>'you no go in cause this is muddle puddle'. Points to Tom's trousers.</p>	<p>say a new entrant cannot play because he is not dressed appropriately. Although Lee expressed that he does not mind getting his own socks wet, he is conscious of others'.</p>
01:56	<p>Me: 'Tom, maybe you shouldn't go in there since you don't have waterproof trousers on'</p>	<p><i>I feel negligent letting this all go on – researcher or not – and wonder if by filming it, it seems that I am condoning all this activity, for which the boys may get into trouble or someone may get hurt.</i></p>
02:04	<p>Jakub is looking at Tom and as he does so, Lee picks up mud and throws it on Jakub's chest. I gasp. Lee looks at me, semi-smile on his face.</p> <p>Jakub gives a big kick of water toward Lee and says 'Muddle puddle'. Tom looks at me and back to the action. He is still standing partially in the puddle.</p> 	<p>Boys, except for Jakub, seem to hear my gasp and there is a slight pause as there is a space for me to react/say more. Jakub does not pause, however, and because he kicks the water back, the moment passes. By saying 'muddle puddle', it is as if he is colluding on the rule of this game that 'anything goes'.</p>



		<p>'play' rather than 'real' fighting.</p> <p><i>From VS interview: Jakub says at this point, when I ask: 'Is he hurting you or were you play fighting?'</i></p> <p><i>Jakub: 'I think...'</i> <i>[continues to watch]</i></p> <p><i>Me: 'Was it okay or not okay?'</i></p> <p><i>Jakub: 'No, because he punch and he punched me there and [unclear 00:04:49]' Does this support my perception that it was verging on being aggressive or getting 'out of control'?</i></p>
03:01	<p>Tom kicks water on Lee, so Lee turns his attention to him and starts to splash him.</p> <p>As Tom gets mud in the face and starts to get wet, he laughs and starts to move away.</p>	<p>The onlooker, Tom, appears to consider it play fighting by trying to join in with the splashing.</p> <p>Jakub returns indicating that he</p>

	Jakub returns under the rope to the splashing.	may be enjoying the play, or is at least engaged with it.
03:16	<p>A teaching assistant calls from a distance: 'Boys, we're going in 5 minutes – try not to get too muddy now.' [She appears to notice then that her warning is too late] 'Oh! Out you come!' she says. They all turn to look toward the teaching assistant, but turn back to their game. The TA walks over, 'Right, stop now.'</p> <p>Lee quickly climbs over the rope and says to her, 'And Jakub was doing it.' Jakub follows him out of the puddle.</p> <p>Tom says to the TA: 'I got muddy.' He follows the others out of the mud puddle.</p> <p>TA: 'Oh, Tom. And I don't think you've brought a spare change of trousers... my gosh!'</p> <p>They all troop over the closing circle.</p>	<p>The play finishes because it is time to go indicated by a teaching assistant physically approaching and telling the boys to stop.</p> <p>Lee's first response is quick to get 'on the good side' of the teacher. He can follow directions. However, he is quick to assume that he/they will be in trouble and ensures that the teaching assistant knows that it was not just him.</p> <p>Tom also pre-empts chastisement by acknowledging his muddiness.</p> <p>Teaching assistant (with gentle voice) alludes to the problem of mud/the consequence: the lack of being able to get clean and dry back at school.</p>

## Appendix 3: Interviews with adult participants

### Interview CRT 4 July 2017

*In school nurture room, audio-recorded*

Researcher (R): [...*Unintelligible on the recording*].

CRT: the needs in that class are so vast, ranging from additional language needs of EAL, speech and language communication needs, lower ability needs that are quite extreme, just extreme communication needs. Behaviour needs, it's tricky. There is a small majority who are meeting expected levels in reception year. And not all of them are ready to go up to year one. I'm trying to split the class up.

I'm going to put all the polish speakers with [polish speaking TA]. Because I can see they've progressed so much since she's been with them. Keep them together in the middle class.

The straight year one class will have 3 tiers of abilities. I don't know - you just never know whatever you do if it's going to be the right thinking. If they'll progress over the summer or get worse...

R: Do you think about which teacher might be best working with a particular group?

CRT: yes, and definitely the TAs in the class. The teacher also makes a difference – [...] isn't most tolerant with behaviour needs and not particularly tolerant with language needs either. But definitely not behaviour needs, she doesn't want to invest the time that is needed with particular behaviour interventions that the children respond to.

R: do you spend quite a lot of time in reception year figuring out what those intervention models are or what might work most effectively?

CRT: yeah, if the child has been in Flying Start then they have already identified early particular needs – and they will have implemented effective behaviour interventions. That isn't always carried through though then once they get to school, but it should be. The teacher should just be able to carry that on, but it isn't always the case.

R: are Flying Start practitioners trained in particular models of behaviour and language interventions?

CRT: yes, Flying start practitioners are really highly trained in child development, so they know what is 'normal' child development on a spectrum of development, they know that even if children have some low abilities, they understand that some children may progress not necessarily in a linear way, but in an expected way. So, behaviours can be quite low level and not alert any learning needs – they understand the difference between significant needs and what is maybe just a case of understanding how children bring some things from home and just need extra support. They also work alongside

health visitors, so it's a very holistic approach to the whole child, including the home, health, everything that contributes to the child's development.

R: Do most of your students come through Flying start?

CRT: I would say, 80 – 90 %. We have a lot of people moving in and out of the community later on – getting rehoused and that kind of thing, so by year 6 only about 40-50% would have been here throughout their school career, but in the early years, they are usually 'home grown' and known by health visitors and flying start and then us.

CRT: I think the new FP profile where it is more developmentally focused and goes right back to bronze, silver, gold statements where you're looking at developmental baby skills right back to 6 months or a year old, helps to give the teachers focus on what is normal progression, even if they have to go right back to a starting point. Even if they enter school with very low profile scores, the teacher can see what progression is expected, even if it's slow steps to next milestones. I suppose it's the children who don't get to those milestones or make that progress that you get alerted to.

R: What kind of recognition is already in place for students who might be behind expected levels, in speech and language, for instance?

CRT: Are you thinking of Sylwia?

R: Yes, and Jordan, who just has some speech differences.

CRT: Well, we can refer them into the speech and language service. I've referred in a few of my children: Jordan and x; Sylwia was already in the system. The speech and language therapist came in and gave us a programme, so, the welcome programme lady then does that work with them from flying start to year one. So, Jordan has learnt words wrong and has bad speech habits, or they might have their tongue in the wrong position, so she helps to reteach them. It will be ongoing –

I've told you about the Welcome Screening before, have I? Basically they get screened when they come in in nursery and get an age bracket. Then they get a programme, which is chunked in 6 month – age blocks. Then they keep getting screened, and tracked and have intervention until they reach their age appropriate level really. You can see that the children really benefit from the one on one intervention and interaction. It does make a difference for individual children.

But, also we need it as a school for our data really, because it gives us other starting points for progress...With all our data, our numeracy skills have always been higher than literacy skills – and the majority of that is speech and language skills. Since we introduced WellCome, - cause they are classed as school action in additional learning needs steps - our special needs percentage rose to about 60% because all those kids needed that extra intervention. It's pretty poor. Quite often it comes from parents not talking or singing to their children, or keeping them in a pushchair all day with a phone to keep them quiet, or

with a dummy or bottle in their mouth at all times... that 's why their speech and language skills are so poor. It's always been bad, but I've seen it get worse as well with parents on phones all the time, so they give their child a tablet or phone to keep them quiet and there's no interaction at all.

R: I suppose in the past, parents might have had tv on thought to entertain children when we had other things to do... but maybe at least it was CBeebies which is sort of interactive.

CRT: yes, and watching telly most people do with their child and there's a bit of interaction. Poor language affects everything:

If you look at science and even maths, everything has such a language rich basis - in order to learn concepts and express your ideas and understanding. Even in simple terms, then the gap widens. And it is hard for us as a school, which is why we got something in which we could really use to see their baseline scores and their progression. You can see and show progress even if it's slow. Even if they still aren't at age appropriate levels, you can see why they aren't and also that they are making progress.

It's really hard – it's soul destroying really – at the end of the year, the local authority sends you a spreadsheet with all the schools' end of Foundation phase outcomes and if they've hit their CSI or not. And you know, other schools are getting 60% which is considered quite poor, and other schools are at 95% of pupils reaching outcome 5 or above in literacy, numeracy *and* PSD. And, we are on there this year at 17%. It's heartbreaking as a school and as a teacher. When you see it in black and white compared with every other school in this area, it's heart breaking. However, when we look at our children, we know why. If even one of our struggling pupils was in another school, they wouldn't be there! They would have been seen by ed psych and would be considered special needs and have been referred to a special unit. But, here, we don't get any more ed psych time just because we have more pupils who need it, so we literally house children and those children just plod on, just coping, and by the time they go to comp, they are really, really behind.

R: So you don't get any extra support? And consider it an inclusive school?

CRT: No, not even any more ed psych time... and the quiet ones are really left behind because so much attention gets given to the behaviour management of the ones who need that as well, that those quiet ones who are seemingly coping just get... I don't know... not enough.

**Part 2, second recording:**

CRT: If even at home they had more input, it would make a difference. They often just sit on devices – no games or reading or anything.

R: so, presumably flying start is really essential to identifying those children who show that they need some extra attention... are they in for a whole day?

CRT: no, they only come for half a day. They would be better off though coming for a whole day... just having those things in place, not even the interventions necessarily, but just being in an environment with singing and books and support and nurturing really early on and in those key years.

We are trying to do early years experiences the way the research tells us it's best to do it, with the free play and the experiences, but with the demands on us 'oh, they have to be at this stage by this age' and then we have to stop all the time to 'do literacy' and 'do numeracy' or stop that to go out and play... and there's no flow and it's contradictory. You never feel like you're doing it properly.

R: you know the points about experiential learning and the outdoor play within the FP documents, is that why you have accessed Forest School? Does it help you deliver aspects of the FP? Or does it feel like an extra thing you have to do?

CRT: FS fits in because it gives you the true freedom for children to lead their own learning, really. They are... it's sort of FP in its truest sense. Open ended resources, they aren't prescribed how to use it. No set tasks – you might do a little focus activity for a very short time, which is what the FP says to do, but then the rest of the time, the children are open to explore. Their communication is better, their ideas and imagination is better, you know Bence with his building and the girls with their pirate ships.

R: Do you think it's different to the classroom then, or do you just not have time to notice because you are so busy doing literacy and numeracy work with small groups while the others play? I know that's a tricky question...

CRT: [laughs]. No... it's not sustained enough – it's all stop and start. They don't get long enough to do things and be engaged. They can't build on things. It's fascinating how in the forest they go back week after week and build on what they did the previous week – they retain it and build on it. They just don't do that in the classroom... they don't have long enough to establish it strongly, they are more flitting. In the forest, they go back week after week and build on what they did the week before. It's amazing really. I see a huge difference for that reason. And the adults are more relaxed. We can step back and watch what's going on, what they're doing, without thinking about what the end goal is – in the classroom, you're always doing something and everything has an end purpose in order to tick some box on their developmental progress! It's terrible. When you can see it happening at Forest School – I do take it on board, and I notice their language and imagination there, which feeds into my evaluations that I do back here. but, here, in the school, they can see that there is a big divide between work and play which isn't ideal. Because that's not supposed to happen – they shouldn't always think of sitting at a table as work, and being on the floor is play. And it's segregated. And, they see me and my table as work! [laughs].



R: I got asked to play cards today with [group of children] which was really interesting – it covered language, numeracy and PSD – and there was so much difference in how each child played... too bad you can't do that for your assessments [laughs].

CRT: [laughs]. I know.

R: Do you feel that you get enough time to speak with each child since you have such a big class [36]?

CRT: No, and there are some kids who demand a lot of time, behaviour wise... I think because I am working to a tick list of getting kids through a focused task I engage with them then, but I don't have time to engage when they are playing or watch each child in a playful situation. I did last year, I think. Last year with only 24 pupils, I had some pockets of time where I'd finished our focus tasks, and I could play with them or observe them playing. But not with this many. I haven't done any of that this year. In order to get all 36 through their focused tasks, hasn't left me with any time to observe them *not* at my table, doing specific skills for numeracy or mental recall or whatever.

R: I noticed some differences between last year and this year. I think they went outside a lot more and also I haven't been able to record you doing small group work because it's so noisy – whereas last year, I got some great small group episodes with good sound quality.

CRT: I think that is true – with so many, we don't have the ratios to be able to take them outside.

Our polish speaking TA has a lot of extra responsibility – like translating and meeting with parents and doing one on one language work – but she still counts as one of the classroom staff, so we have the same number of teaching staff in the classroom with 36 as we did with 24.

And, I have teach skills in order to ensure their progress... hopefully next year I'll have a smaller class next year and I have split up the reception and year one so that there are 3 classes with mixed ability. A full year one class, a mixed reception and year one, and then a reception year class. I have been considering leaving some children in reception to have an extra year of phonics and stuff, but then I was speaking with the SENCO and we thought it would be better for them to be in a more differentiated class with more able children for better models... the Polish speakers will be in that middle class to give them more time to learn English and to be with their TA...

*Part 3:*

CRT: staffing is so important. We had a teacher last year that really didn't respect the pupils or their families, and she didn't really respect us teachers who had been here working with this community for years. She had been a TA in a perfect village school,

where kids were happy to learn and had had lovely upbringings, and so she expected her class here to be like that – and when it wasn't she was angry with them.

In a school like ours you've got to make the children feel they are amazing, regardless of where they are on that developmental continuum, it's your job as a teacher to make those children feel skilled in what they're doing and then say, 'now you've got those skills, here's what we can do next!' And make them feel like they can achieve it! You've got to be highly skilled to teach in a school like this – because you have to forget outside expectations and judgements and get to know each child and what they need to accomplish and follow what children need. Luckily most of our staff see that and try to get the most out of our children.

And, people don't realise how important that is in the early years – getting kids on board and engaged and feeling good about school and themselves... If you don't get it right now, it will impact them for life. If they think, 'I'm no good at anything' or 'I can't learn anything' or that kind of self-identity, then they do act out and push people's boundaries... it can be self-perpetuating.

R: And, the new curriculum wants to extend a kind of Foundation Phase ethos throughout secondary so it needs to be understood well by everyone.

CRT: yeah, and I don't think it is even by people within the Foundation Phase! (laughs).

R: Can I ask you about peer learning? What kind of learning happens between the children within their own interactions?

CRT: Sharing experiences through their imaginative play. They bring their own experiences from outside of school into their play, and they like hearing from each other about their lives. I also see children helping each other out – they quite like to show each other what they know. It's not showing off, it's helping; but, of course they do like that sense of praise and achievement that comes from helping others. They love to be Helper of the Day. Like R., yesterday he was biting people and so on, but today he was helper of the day and his behaviour was perfect! He needs more days like that, but so many kids in class means he can't be helper of the day as often as he would like.

CRT: But he also needs to realise that he can do that, even without having that badge on, but it takes time.

R: So, if you could change anything about your 'every day doing' of the FP, what would it be?

CRT: I think it needs to be separate from 'school' and not considered school. Then you could be free from certain assembly times and scheduled play times and so on. You could be autonomous and create a space in which children and teachers could all work together being creative and imaginative and learning without pressure to be a certain way, and meet a certain criteria. Early years provision wouldn't need a 20 minute 'break' outside,

because you wouldn't need a 'break'. Why do you feel you have to do literacy all in one go... why couldn't there just be stations with literacy materials and children move through the classroom and in and out of the classroom... like we have a creative area and a maths area now, but when the teacher is so busy we aren't able to model what could be done in those areas. What we have isn't really working for the children now, is it?

Obviously these children have a low, low, low starting point and a level 6 outcome is really unrealistic. Our outcomes could be at level 4 and everyone could feel like they've achieved as much as they really have. It's just all contradictory messages really.

R: Do you know how the children feel about the indoor and outdoor spaces? Do any children really dislike either space?

CRT: well, A. doesn't always like being outside, but then he's kind of dissatisfied inside as well much of the time. Most of them feel like being outside is a reward, because we don't use our outdoor space that much – there isn't any visibility there so our ratios need to be higher for health and safety reason. So this class really see it as a reward, which is bad – it shouldn't be seen that way. They feel such a sense of freedom there.

R: Do you know if they have opportunities for outdoor play outside of school? Can and do they access parks and the woods around here?

CRT: yeah, because of forest school that's increased the amount of people that go there outside of school. The kids want to show their parents the forest school in the woods. Tyler had a paddy the other weekend because he took his mum down there but they went to the wrong part of the woods: 'This isn't MY forest school! Where's my forest school!'

R: Did she take him to the right place?

CRT: No, she didn't – she took him to the woods, but she didn't know exactly where it was. He was mad, it wasn't *his* forest school! She was like, "I don't know where the forest school is!"

R: I thought maybe he just didn't recognise it without the leaders and the props being there.

CRT: oh, no. He'd recognise his place, his forest school. Yeah, a few kids go down there and around here there are parks and back gardens. I mean there are a lot who go out around here alone, even at 5, they are allowed out and around... I don't know how used or misused it is. It can be a hazardous space – there are lots of horses and motorbikes around. But it can be a nice space.

R: And some kids aren't always allowed to go to forest school, you've said.

CRT: yeah, some kids aren't allowed to go if it is a bit rainy or wet. I can't pander to all of their worries, but if they say their child can't go, I have to leave them behind [here at

school instead of forest school]. Like, [one girl]'s mum is a bit of a hypochondriac and thinks that [...] is having a bad time, but she isn't. And, I want to show [...] that there is a different way to be, you don't have to be scared of everything.

R: Yes, she once said to me that she cries at school and when I asked her if she cries at forest school, she said, 'nope, never!'

CRT: she actually never cries at school either, but her mum makes a big scene every day, saying, 'don't miss me. I'll miss you!' and all this, which makes [...] feel a bit of responsibility toward her mum. It's quite controlling. Not that the transition from nursery to reception isn't hard, and she did cry a little when she first came in, but then she settled fine. [...] has done amazingly well, and it is almost like her mum can't or won't believe it because she is needy, not [...]. She has several other kids and she is pregnant again...

*[discussion continues regarding [C.] and her transition and her parents and episode from school in which she stood up for herself].*

R: How do you feel about having enough time with the EAL children?

CRT: I don't have enough interaction with them. If I do an activity with them, they don't understand what I'm explaining, so [the Polish speaking TA] usually explains it and sometimes even does it with them and she assesses them then. They then get a better service.

R: do you think she has the same approach that you do toward teaching?

CRT: no, I mean she doesn't have all of the skills, like emergent writing for instance. I don't think she would recognise that. Knowing when to make children feel like they're writers even if what they've written isn't 'right' – lots of TAs will just write it and have the children copy, then correct what they've done.

R: How do you know that? From teacher training?

CRT: yes, training. And reading. You know, I'm always reading and my old days in Flying Start helped me see how children progress from mark making to writing. Seeing a scribble to a shape as progress.

R: Do you get training in school?

CRT: yeah, literacy training and that in school. But, TAs don't always get the same training. Although I try to train my TAs as we go along. But then it's dependent on the teacher, isn't it? For me, a task is pointless if the TA has done it for the child – I'm not seeing the child's development.

## Interview CRT 24 May 2017

Setting: classroom after school, audio-recorded

Time frame	Speaker	Conversation
00:01	TEACHER	<p>We've just had a team meeting. Things have been pretty stressful around here recently with some of the families.</p> <p>An example the head gave to the education minister is that in the 9 years she's been here, she's seen about 50 children go into care. And that's huge when you think a teacher in the other parts of the country might have 1 or 2 in their whole career.</p> <p>It's emotionally draining.</p> <p>I don't know why it's so intensified here. I don't know whether it's just families that stay in this area, so all they know is the same chaotic lifestyle that they grew up with and then that's what they provide for their children... and if they split up with their partner, they just go on to the next relationship with that partner's friend or someone their mother knows who's from the same area so have the same patterns.</p>
01:26	RESEARCHER	<p>What about the families who move here from other countries? You seem to have a high proportion of children from non-English speaking backgrounds [6 out of 36 in this class].</p>
01:30	TEACHER	<p>They get placed here just because this is where the housing is. They have a hell of a life here. There isn't much tolerance for multiculturalism here and they are made to feel like second-class citizens.</p> <p>One family has moved out because they were bullied and the father said, 'all I've been through in Syria and I came here thinking it might be a safe haven and I feel worse than I ever have.'</p> <p>They'd be spat at in the street, called names, they had people knocking at their door and running away, they had people trying to get in the house to con them out of money... just made to feel very uncomfortable just being here.</p>
02:54	RESEARCHER	<p>I suppose traditionally it would have been an estate that housed workers in the nearby factories? [now closed]</p>
03:02	TEACHER	<p>Definitely, and what we've been saying is the best thing that could happen is to put that factory up and running. There is a need to create jobs cause there is</p>

		<p>nothing. And, you do get parents who work hard and who have jobs and try to give their children some sort of stability – they have more sense when it comes to parenting, then too. But, I would definitely say they are in the minority in this school.</p> <p>And, even families that are doing ok in school, the parents will come and tell me what the child is like at home – I think parenting skills are really lacking. They use a lot of technology at home to interact with the child.</p> <p>I think the parents that I have to work with on behaviour, they don't want to challenge their children because they can't handle the emotional outburst; they will pander to their children and pussy foot around, so their child has all the power and calls the shots at home. The parents would rather give in than have the challenges of telling their child no.</p>
05:06	RESEARCHER	So, then does that affect how they behave or respond to you?
05:09	TEACHER	<p>It does. I mean because we are consistent from day one: the rules are the rules, this is how we are going to have a happy classroom, we have a class charter in the beginning, and we go through what's going to make us happy with our friends, and that never changes.</p> <p>So, they've got the boundaries and they know. They are consistent enough in school. But, you do get the odd children who will kick back and say 'no, I'm not listening to you, why should I listen to you, you can't tell me what to do.'</p> <p>It's really conflicting for me, because I don't want to be all authoritarian and be like 'you're the child, you have to listen to me because I'm a grown up.'</p> <p>But, equally, if they keep breaking the classroom rules, that everyone else can follow to make a happy classroom society, then they have to face the consequences of that. But, they don't... they don't learn it and they keep retaliating back.</p> <p>You know, like Leon - he will argue back all the time, and I have to stop and say, 'why am I arguing with a 4 year old?', so I stop. I just give him choices. And, then if he doesn't make the right choice, then he has to face the consequences. So, this is an example.</p> <p>Yesterday, he had already punched someone in the face at breakfast club.... An older child, so I'd been told this. At play time, I was out on duty. And because he wasn't happy with how a little girl was playing a game, he went within centimetres of her face and started screaming at her.</p> <p>So I had to go over and explain that he could not behave like that. And, he wouldn't say sorry, so I said,</p>

		<p>you have 2 choices, 'you can go inside or you can hold my hand and stay with me.' And he said, no. and was slapping my hand away. This went on a bit, and he wouldn't make a choice, so in the end, I literally ended up carrying him in. And, I don't know if that's right or not. I mean, is that just a battle of wills?</p> <p>But, he needed to know that if he has done something wrong, there would be consequences. I gave him plenty of time to make a choice, but in the end it became a battle. And, I don't want to be battling with 4 year olds!</p>
08:48	RESEARCHER	It seems like you're not battling with Tyler so much anymore.
08:52	TEACHER	Yeah, he's mellowed! He does still try it on, but he's more willing to listen.
09:01	RESEARCHER	Has he grown to respect you? Has something changed.
09:06	TEACHER	<p>Well, I think he's matured a little.</p> <p>So, he has understood that he needs to play this game so he can get what he wants ultimately. You know if he just chills out and doesn't do the wrong thing - follows the rules, he can carry on playing with what he wants to play with.</p> <p>He's much better at playing with other children. He still has the control element of his play where he doesn't like it if someone offers other ideas or does other things.</p> <p>Like, this morning someone wanted to do something with this model that they were playing with, he didn't like it, so he told this child that he [Tyler] was going to stab him and his mother.</p>
09:44	RESEARCHER	[gasps]
09:46	TEACHER	<p>I know, so pretty extreme response. So, I pulled him out of the classroom to sit and talk to him, to ask what was that all about, why would you say all those things. And he said this child wanted to do something that he didn't like. And I told him that that's how we play with others, other people can have their ideas and we have ours and none are right, they're just all different.</p> <p>And, he said, 'yeah, but he did this ...' I said, 'It doesn't matter. It's not right to say those things.'</p> <p>And, he said, 'But, it's just a joke.'</p> <p>And, I said, 'It's not ok to say those things when you're in school with me. It doesn't feel like joking ever, but I certainly don't like that in our classroom. It doesn't make me happy or anyone happy. It's threatening.'</p> <p>'But it's just a joke!'</p> <p>And, I said, 'Well, you have two choices: you can go in and say sorry or sit with me.'</p> <p>So, he had a little flop on the floor, then decided to say sorry and went in and carried on playing.</p>

		He's more willing to listen to that dialogue now and also to make that choice now.
11:07	RESEARCHER	He seems quite bright and quite sharp.
11:10	TEACHER	<p>Oh yes, he's so bright. I do worry about him moving up though. Part of me wants to keep him with me in the mixed class, but that won't do him any favours, because he should be moving up because he's bright, capable and able.</p> <p>I do think he has that interest in stuff and learning, and if you get the right spark with him, he really flies with it. He really wants to be involved. So, I don't know.</p> <p>We're going to split this class into 2 or 3 next year, so some will go up to year one, some will go into a mixed class in between reception and year one.</p>
12:04	RES	That sounds good.
12:06	CRT	Yeah, some just need more self-regulation skills and learning how to be in the classroom before they are ready to go up to year one. Reading context and knowing you know, like this is home time, this is when we get ready and get our stuff together.
12:35	RES	'Learn the ropes'.
12:38	CRT	[laughs] yeah, you'd be amazed how much of reception year is just 'learning the ropes.'
12:45	RES	[Laughs]. Thank you. [turns off recorder].



### Interview FSLs 14 June 2017

**Interview with Forest School staff:** 1 Level 3 Forest School Practitioner (FSL), 1 Forest School Assistant (FSA) with Agored Cymru Level 2 qualification, 1 Forest School Volunteer with Level 1 qual.

Lunch time at Forest School site in between sessions, audio-recorded

<i>Interview Protocol</i>	<i>Interpretation notes</i>
<p>RESEARCHER: my research is looking at interactions between people as well as the space. What do you think characterises interactions when children come to FS?</p> <p>FSL: Well, there are the interactions that children have with the environment when they come here which is really important. And that might be very specific, like L. always has this area up here and you know he's used it for so many things: it started off as a construction site and then a fast food restaurant ... around this area also is where they did all their painting and decorating. You know some children use certain areas very specifically.</p> <p>RESEARCHER: and do you think they find it on their own?</p> <p>FSL: yeah, or maybe with one friend or a couple of friends and then it builds doesn't it, so I've noticed that, and then you get the ones who go down and play down there and put the mud on the trees and where they're doing their fantasy or TV series games or whatever [laughs].</p> <p>RESEARCHER: So, do you set up or would you say that you see where they play and then set up, like</p>	<p>Immediately discusses environment and the space</p> <p>Doesn't initially interpret that adults might 'make the space': her experience is that children create and find their special places</p>

<p>you know, where that rope ladder is in the trees, did you put that there first, or were they playing there first?</p> <p>FSL: A bit of both. That evolved – we used to use that area down there for climbing [points to a different part of the rhododendron copse], then for some reason, I can't remember</p> <p>FSA [interrupts] and we can see them better here</p> <p>FSL: yeah, for some reason – there might have been a bit of mess [when we risk assessed before the session], so we decided to keep them up this end, then we realised - it was a default thing, I think, by using it we realised that it worked. There's an edge there [a natural boundary], where they do their wild play and climbing, and then where that mud play is is another edge, say beyond the beech trees and the love trees [an intertwined beech and birch trees at centre of site] and this open area, - and we can see [nods to FSA] - we just realised that it brought all those things together. I think you just use the site and between you all [children and adults] discover how you can use the site. I think we'd used this site in a particular way for a couple of years before we began to use that space in a different way.</p> <p>It's partly dictated by the children, and the size of group, and partly dictated by what's happening to the environment: so it could be that you have to change because of vandalism or weather or dangerous trees, or something like that.</p> <p>FSA: there was mud play here, but that's changed, hasn't it?</p> <p>FSL: We had to stop that happening here because it became very smelly – basically it had loads of anaerobic bacteria in it – luckily they've finally lost interest in it now and found another place for their mud play down there. So, everything over time evolves and shifts.</p>	<p>Safety – practical reasons</p> <p>Safety – impact by public (community aspect to ecology of site)</p> <p>Areas are defined by natural features and children's use of them</p> <p>Children's participation acknowledged – not as <i>Participation</i> but as natural and obvious – taken for granted.</p> <p>Children's ownership of the site</p> <p>Loose parts</p>
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<p>RESEARCHER: so do you provide stuff, like the ropes, and they put them up where they want to?</p> <p>FSL: a bit of both really. We have lots of loose parts – spades, buckets, ropes, tarps, puppets, which they use wherever they want to really. But, we put up, say the swing, where we feel a branch is safe. They might try to then put up another swing on their own somewhere else, which is fine, and we'd just make sure it's in a safe place. Like there was a bit of jostling for turns on the swing over there, so we put another one up next to it – then they can run back and forth if they can't be bothered to wait [laughs].</p> <p>We put the rope on the tree on the mud mountain which they found and turned into 'Mud Mountain', but we noticed they were using the trees to climb up, but some needed some help – or wanted us to help them – they're so little! – so one boy was trying to put a rope around that tree to use as a pulley system. So many of them used it then to get up – they don't even need it anymore! [6 months later], so we put it up at the start of each session each week so it was already there. So some things are already here when they come, like the swings are up and the rope ladder, and the puppets we put around the fire circle or hide in the trees; the other stuff, the buckets and paintbrushes are just here for them to get if they want them.</p> <p>So they kind of create the space or it's created by the environment itself really and we all work with that. It changes throughout the year as well, like them noticing things, like it feels more enclosed now and in winter it feels more open...</p> <p>RESEARCHER: Did I tell you how one little girl said to me after the Easter holidays, 'Is this the same forest?' because all of a sudden it had gone really green, with all the leaves from the rain or something.</p>	<p>Non-human nature influence on human activity.</p> <p>Also noticed a change in FSL (ref. to interview – you're a girl!)</p>
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FSA: one of them over there today was talking about all the leaves over there, saying, 'wow! look at all these leaves'.

FSL: yeah, that's all come down now - the branches of all kind of come down over where the mud play is and the beech branch is so covered with leaves ...

FSA: It's totally changed the feel of that mud play area, the leaves have created a little cavern, because of the branches coming down to the ground by it.

FSL: it's interesting how – like with the stream play, it's kind of dried up with the weather – well some days, the other day it was really hot and I'd driven off [from home] leaving the water containers by the gate. So, I got here and was like –oh! – and had to send [volunteer] over to Tesco for big 5 litre bottles of water [rolls eyes] - the water is really just for drinking because it was so hot, but when they got here, they were like, where's the water, where's the water?! So, after explaining how things dry up or the water fills up because of rainfall – and giving a big environmental spiel, we end up filling up their water hole with bottled water from Tesco! We had to send a volunteer to go get some water! That was a bit bonkers! [shakes head].

FSA: They are so used to there being mud after the winter! [laughs]

RESEARCHER: Do you feel like you have to provide certain activities?

FSL: I don't feel I have to, necessarily, it's a bit of a double edged sword. I think you can have too much kit – it stops kids from... well, it feels like I have a lot of kit here today [laughs]... it's interesting, because over a certain number of weeks, kids expect you to bring things back and you have to remember that some kids get attached to stuff you bring, they make very strong attachments, especially to the animals, so if you bring 16 puppets, but forget the one they're attached to, the number is neither here

Compromising on environmental ethos to meet the needs/desires of children's play.

<p>nor there, if you forget that one they're attached to, it can be devastating for them. So, I think you have to tune into your group and be aware that if there is a child who needs something, then you need to bring it. And that continuity is important, although that doesn't mean that over time you might not try to work with that child to wean them away from that one object, maybe not take it away, but as part of what you're doing with them...</p> <p>And it's the same with the swings and what not, we used to always put the rope bridge up for a few weeks and it was interesting that –</p> <p>FSA: Alex, he loved it today! He was good at it, and so confident and engaged with it.</p> <p>FSL: oh yeah, he really got into it today and it opened up all kinds of interaction with other kids for him. It's one of those things where you think, oh what a shame we didn't bring that a few weeks ago, but a few weeks ago he might not have been ready to do that, so... We'll bring it now and put it up for awhile and see if it continues to trigger his interactive play with others.</p>	
<p>RESEARCHER: Do you feel like you're working toward Foundation Phase targets or outcomes – do you think about key skills and those kinds of things? Or, do you have your own Forest School outcomes or something?</p> <p>FSL: A bit of both. I wouldn't say that I'm completely savvy with everything 'cause I don't work in the classroom environment, but I have read all those documents at various points and talk with the teachers. And, sometimes teachers will ask us to do particular things – to go with particular themes or criteria that they have to meet. Like Mrs. X with her cylinders and spheres [laughs]</p> <p>On the whole, the way I've gone with it, this is the 4<sup>th</sup> year of this reception class project, is to go by</p>	<p>Key skills and outcomes: a blend</p>

<p>feel with where the kids are at – and the way the kids are going -- and incorporate certain things that they might be doing in class – like this year, they were really into writing with your being here with your notebooks [laughs] so we got chalkboards and chalk and followed their interest in writing and drawing, so they could be developing their work with fine motor skills as well as their gross motor skills, but really it comes from them. And we just focus on <i>them</i>.</p> <p>This class particularly I felt, when they first came – they were quite diverse in their abilities, they were quite diverse in every way...It's almost impossible to <i>plan</i> for meeting everyone's needs, so it's been a case of just letting them go – whoosh [gestures throwing arms out into space] – into the woods and then see who is doing what, who needs what, who is struggling, who is achieving, who is in their comfort zone and who is not. And, kind of helping them to get to the next rung up the ladder from where they're at.</p> <p>I think you can probably do that better in the woods than maybe in the classroom, there's more scope for doing that and it's less formal and less outcomes based, well, the outcomes are happening anyway, but you don't have to do ... that formal ... you know... <i>assessing</i>.</p> <p>RESEARCHER: So, how do you know about developmental aims, like you used the phrase 'next rung up the ladder'?</p> <p>FSL: Well, I guess I am just aware about it from reading – and over the years you just pick up on it even though I'm not a teacher, I spend a lot of time talking to teachers and reading on my own... I don't know, osmosis! [laughs].</p> <p>And helping on the Level 3 [FS leader] training...you pick things up over the years. And, I did read a lot on the Foundation Phase particularly when it first came in. It had a massive impact on Forest School - it enabled us [the charity] -- that's why for the first</p>	<p>Diversity and differentiation</p> <p>Following children and meeting their needs</p> <p>Forest school and foundation phase</p>
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<p>sphere! Or, 'You've done your sphere, now go play!' [laughs].</p>	
<p>RESEARCHER: Do you think the kids learn a lot from each other?</p> <p>FSL: it was interesting this year in particular because there was such a large number of EAL speakers. And the Polish kids in particular, because they had their own TA and everything, they tended to band together. But you could see that over time, as they got more comfortable and learned more English, maybe, they began playing more with others based on personality. And then they really started learning from each other much more equally...</p> <p>FSA: And there were interesting dynamics even within that small group of Polish children, for instance, A. and D. had a lot of conflict. A. was kind of bullying to D. so when he got more confident, he could go off and play with others! And she played more with others and left him alone! And, Sylwia can't speak well but she is totally engrossed in trying to communicate.</p> <p>FSL: yeah, it's like she had echolalia and just repeating sounds. She's really watching you now and trying to make those same sounds.</p> <p>FSA: For awhile she was just making noises to express herself – and quite loudly – lots of screams, but now all of sudden she is really doing things and calm and grounded. She has matured quite a lot.</p> <p>FSL: when she first started to climb she would let go and expect you to be there like she had no concept of danger, or she'd go high and then scream to get down. To get your attention. And, now she's more sure of what she's doing. And probably, the others are like that too – it's a natural progression maybe,</p>	<p>EAL, ALN</p> <p>Sylwia communication</p>



<p>but she didn't have the words to ask you to get down, so she'd scream out.</p> <p>The brain develops in such an interesting way... there are a lot of kids this year who struggle with language and being able to communicate. And some of those things might be to do with what's going on at home... they may not be getting enough stimulation or direct conversation at home. So, it takes a bit longer out here to find out what's going on for them – or how we can help. You know, we only see them once a week. So like, we only just found out Sylwia was getting some sessions to help with both languages.</p>	
<p>[FS leader begins to set up for next session, by placing puppets on the seating logs around the fire circle].</p> <p>FSA: Don't get the rabbit out!</p> <p>FSL: [laughs] Oh dear. That rabbit puppet is so realistic as well...</p> <p>RESEARCHER: I've got some video of him playing with that puppet.</p> <p>FSL: Well, you never know if he did it because out here they're used to throwing the puppets around and nothing bad happens; you know, it's making that link between this is a pretend animal and this is a real animal... maybe the line between reality becomes blurred, especially if you watch tv where people get killed a lot or whatever. And, if you're impulsive, like Tyler...</p> <p>Well, it's all about learning these things, isn't it? How to be social and what things have consequences.</p>	<p>Reference to Tyler's incident at home in which he killed a pet rabbit by repeatedly throwing it at the ceiling.</p>
<p>Researcher: What role do you think the environment plays in the children's learning?</p> <p>FSL: I suppose it's obvious and there's so much really, but to have access to this and have a link with</p>	

somewhere on their doorstep is really important and they might discover that this is a place where they can come and have some breathing space. I mean literally it is a breathing space. If someone wants to go off and be alone there is space for them to do that. I'm sure Mrs G. has noticed that.

This site works particularly well because it's got open spaces but it's also enclosed - it's got a good balance of trees to openness. I read this book about the brain on nature which said there's an optimal formula for what ratio of trees to space makes people feel restored and calm... like if it's too dense or dark people can have panic attacks or feel anxious. If it's too open, it's still beneficial to be outside, but it doesn't feel safe and held.

FSA: There is lovely dappled light today coming through the beech leaves which makes you feel very good. Mrs G. noticed it too today – and said that the energy was really calm.

FSL: it works here – there is just enough space – they feel free and there's enough space, but they also feel safe as they can see the boundaries. They don't feel hemmed in, but they also don't feel like they've been dropped into a vast forest.

RESEARCHER: And, it's close to where the bus can drop them off so that must make them feel safe too – yet, you can't hear the motorway, so it's quiet. It's a lovely spot, this sheltered site located within a bigger woods, like real wilderness.

FSL: yeah, you have to remember that a lot of kids arrive here, having never been in the woods before, so the energy of a place and having trees that aren't foreboding. But, there's still some wildlife.

We were up there playing 1, 2, 3 Where are you [hide and seek game], and instead of counting we were just listening to the birds, and imagining what they might be saying, and someone said, 'I want to play with you'. So they are aware of what's here.

Thoughts on the reciprocity between the participants and the outdoor space. Impact of nature on the brain and well-being.

FSA: that's funny, cause when we were hiding [her team], someone found a little spider in the bark of a tree and we were talking about why it might live there and why different species choose certain habitats.

FSL: there are chances for incidental encounters – just as well, you know if you tried to set up bug hunting, it would be too dry or you couldn't find any [laughs]. But, if you stumble across something, everyone is like, wow, look at this! That's really nice, because it's that sense of wonder - it's the wow factor and the sense of discovery and finding something unexpectedly that they really engage with. Not that bug hunts can't be like that... but you can then introduce something else they have to deal with, like not finding anything and being discouraged. They are really into the robins who have been here all year. And, last week, the squirrels got into the raisins but only at lunchtime when the kids weren't here – because of course that's what happens – the animals come out when everyone goes away.

We do make bird feeders out of lard and pinecones and bird seed, and then you can see from week to week that something's been eating it, even if they don't see it happening.

They certainly interact directly with leaves and trees all the time though. Although last week, they wanted to go look for frogs... we had been watching the frog spawn and the tadpoles all spring but hadn't been back to the pond for a few weeks. We didn't see any though.

There's always a heron up by the lake. And there are kingfishers on the stream or river over there.

Lenz Taguchi (2010: 60) '...an intra-active pedagogy can never be about planning exactly what kinds of learning processes will take place, or what kinds of learning will be achieved. There is no way to predict exact learning outcomes if you have an onto-epistemological understanding of learning and knowing... you can... make new decisions on what intra-actions to make possible in the planning and organisation of the pedagogical environment...'

<p>RESEARCHER: All I can hear are children [laughs].</p> <p><i>[A group of years 1 and 2 children are playing in the clearing next to the FS site. They are from the same school and have attended year-long Forest School previously here during their own reception year. They are having a day out from school with their classroom teachers. ]</i></p> <p>FSL: They've all walked down from school for the day and have brought their lunch. It's great, cause it's really forging a direct connection between their school and these woods. To this place, to have to walk it and understand where it is.</p> <p>RESEARCHER: Did Mrs. G tell you that Tyler and his mother tried to find it [the FS site] the other day? He was really upset that they couldn't find the site – she brought him to the woods, but now here exactly, and he was like, 'This isn't <i>my</i> forest!!'</p> <p>FSL and FSA: Awww...</p> <p>FSL: It's do-able, isn't it, from their community down to here?</p>	<p>Connection with larger community: housing estate adjacent to woodland. Impact of FS upon life outside of school.</p>
<p>RESEARCHER: How do you plan for the sessions then?</p> <p>FSL: Well, we make a plan, then we do whatever comes up [laughs]. No, I mean, we have a rough idea, you know, I've been doing this for 18 years, so I don't really write it all out or anything anymore, but I have a bit of a plan in the red file. I know what kind of opening activity I might use, mainly so I can think about what bit of kit I might need to bring to get it started, like if I need a particular tool, or treasure trail things, like for an Easter egg hunt or something. But, really, I mainly bring everything! [laughs]. Then the children can choose what they want to do – you know each week they build on what they've done the week before. But, I do make a little plan to have some new ideas and activities to</p>	

<p>throw out there. Then they either carry it on or leave it and go on to their own activities.</p> <p>RESEARCHER: So, how do you prepare if they can do anything?</p> <p>FSL: We do a risk assessment for all of the site and all of the potential activities – the tree climbing and so on. Then we have to do dynamic risk assessments as we go, you know, like if they start to do backstroke in the puddles instead of just wading through it [laughs] – we’d have to decide on the spot whether to stop it, make it safer, or let it happen as it is.</p> <p>FSA: Everything is dynamic: the planning, the risk assessment, the activities. You have to have a lot of tricks up your sleeve and adapt to whatever the kids are doing.</p> <p>FSL: I think it comes with experience too. We have done a lot of sessions and a lot of playschemes, so we have a range of ideas and can switch from one thing to another really quickly.</p> <p>Especially if something is dangerous or gets a bit dodgy, we can distract and guide onto something else rather than have to say ‘no!’</p>	
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**Interview FSL2 (VSI) 28 June 2017**

*At FS office, audio-recorded*

Videos shown: Bunny bike (Tyler) and Muddle Puddle (Lee)

Time on VSI recording	Speaker	Conversation	Interpretation Notes
	RES	So, my research is about children’s interactions and participation in the classroom and at Forest School. Does	

		that seem abstract, I mean, what does the word participation mean to you?	
00:12	FSL	Yeah, involvement – in any way that you can engage.	Participation seen as being involved, engaged – any way possible – multi-modal as well as those things seen as negative, i.e., arguing?
00:14	RES	Is FS a good space for that?	
00:16	FSL	<p>Absolutely. Because for instance in a classroom there is one level of teaching for everyone, but at forest school we almost have individual learning plans according to each child, in that we spend time observing each child and considering how we can best support that child – I mean they might do that at school too, but they have all these assessment targets and things they have to get done, they might not have the opportunities to consider what the child is actually doing – outside that box they have to tick.</p> <p>And, FS differs from other outdoor learning or informal learning provision too, because it's ongoing. I mean ideally it's ongoing throughout the year. So, we can build upon our observations and the child's learning and development.</p> <p>We recognise that everyone learns differently, in their own ways and their own time. And, we can apply that. I can't think of one single child – and I've worked with hundreds if not</p>	<p>Unaware of differentiation used in teaching?</p> <p>IEPs</p> <p>Now, shows awareness of teacher's role, but acknowledges the difficulties they may face in achieving differentiated aims.</p> <p>Diff b/t FS and OL/IL</p> <p>Building upon observations during long-term provision</p>

	<p>thousands of children and young people in the past ten years, I can't think of one single fail. And by fail, I mean that we haven't been able to engage or who hasn't actively participated and come away saying, 'that was great!' Even kids – especially young people – who might come to the woods, going, 'aaa, I'm not really into this', leave at the end of the day happy and excited. You know, we've had young people rock up and they pretty much tell you they don't want to be there, and by the time they leave, they're like, 'See ya next week!' [laughs].</p> <p>We spend quite a lot of time talking after each session – about an hour, talking and writing up about each child and what they were doing and what we think is going on for them. Other informal provision doesn't really have that.</p> <p>Like, look at Tyler, we knew Tyler didn't have a filter, didn't have limits or boundaries, so we were quite straight, quite fair and firm with him. We'd say, 'you know, Tyler, you shouldn't hit so and so', he would straight away deny it or burst into tears, so we worked to help him to regulate his emotions and his outbursts, so he could socialise with other kids. He found it very hard, I think. He was used to being the leader, I think – at home – and he found the lack of power at school quite hard; in someone so young that can be quite worrying, as well.</p>	<p>Attitude toward conceptualisation of failure</p> <p>Children's engagement as participation, well-being used as indicator of failure</p> <p>Clear boundaries, objectives for social skill development and self-regulation</p>
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		Working on his social skills seemed to be the most important thing.	Lack of power in school – didn't mention at FS, not seen as being a place of power hierarchies even though clear boundaries?
03:40	RES	Aw, I did see him try to engage with others almost unsuccessfully, but it seemed he was really trying. He once smacked Lee on the bum and laughed – like sharing a joke, laughed with him, but Lee put his hand up to tell the teacher. It was kind of like he was trying to create some camaraderie.	
03:50	FSL	I think with Tyler, the other kids didn't really see him as playing, they saw Tyler behaving as Tyler, or they were kind of wary of his playing because they knew it could turn at any moment. It's all about reputation, even at that young age already. So, if someone is constantly hurting you or confusing you, you can't help but be a bit wary of any <i>playful</i> advances. Lee probably knew that it might escalate, or that he would get into trouble, and he cared about that, whereas for Tyler, getting in trouble is the usual.	Echoes pellegrini's study on rough play seen as aggression in unpopular children  Children's expectations of each other. Demands created both ways (Hedegaard)
4:10	RES	He did seem to play with others at Forest School, like here on what he called 'the bunny bike', [shows some photos] but the other kids didn't seem to be able to keep up with his play or help to further it.	
6:01	FSL	I mean, it's interesting, you know, maybe his imagination is well-	Imagination potential outcome of lone play?



		<p>developed because he ends up playing on his own a lot.</p> <p>Seeing this makes me wonder if the killing the rabbit thing had to do with him playing with this toy bunny? You know, the kids are always throwing them up in the air, even putting them on the ends of strings and hoisting them up into the trees.</p> <p>He does <i>like</i> playing... maybe since he's an only child, his imagination is quite well-developed... you know, when I was a kid, you had to have an imagination because your parents didn't play with you, your imagination saves and entertains you.</p>	<p>Recognising that behaviour might be indicative of crossing institutions – what is possible in one may not be possible in another?</p> <p>Theorising from own childhood (echoes a play study – whose was it?)</p>
08:25	RES	Speaking of adults and interacting, what do you feel is the role of the forest school leader?	
08:35	FSL	to facilitate play – in that age group [reception] anyway.	Facilitating play seen as key input by leader
08:46	RES	What do you mean by facilitate play?	
08:56	FSL	Well, my idea of play comes from play background, I suppose, all that intrinsically led and personally motivated ... I don't always agree with personally directed, in some ways, for instance, in that video we watched of Sylwia playing tag – she had absolutely no idea what was going on, she needed some guidance because she was getting distressed because she didn't understand, so it was	Understanding of play comes from play pedagogy, but recognises from experience that it is socioculturally mediated.

		necessary to help her understand the rules of the game, or the idea of the game. We bring a lot of props and we also utilise the woodland landscape for imaginative and other kinds of play. And we do actively encourage it, probably more than adults in that kind of learning arena.	she could make a choice to play or not, based on understanding that it was a game and the nature of the game.  Loose parts and features of environment for play
11:08	RES	How do you structure the sessions? It seems that you always started with a game or some activity?	
11:11	FSL	Yeah, like British Bambi instead of bulldogs [laughs]. That's a great one.	Risky play also negotiation, challenge and appropriation of 'banned' games
11:20	RES	I saw you do a treasure hunt once too. Would those activities always relate to the session or is there a theme to start the session or [trails off]?	
11:38	FSL	We start with the idea of something physical to start, to awaken enthusiasm, you know, Joseph Cornell, and we are aware that they are coming straight from school, sat on a bus, and they've managed to sit still in the opening circle to actually listen the opening chat...	Considers play as a way to engage children, for physical and well being purposes
12:15	RES	Oh, yeah, you do an opening circle to start	
12:18	FSL	Yeah, always start with a circle to bring the group together – we do try to do it as quickly as possible, I get as bored as the kids if some adult is rabbiting on at the start, Pam [other forest school leader] always says, 'oh, Cath is getting bored!', but, you know	Empathy with children  Emotional literacy

		<p>I think it's ok to tell kids it's ok to be bored, it's ok to say 'I'm bored', just like it's ok to say, 'I'm happy, I'm sad, this is fun, this is boring.' It's ok to say how you're feeling, if it's in an appropriate way. And, there's nothing bad about being bored, of course, as well. As long as you can pick up a stick and poke it into the mud while you are bored [laughs] Then it can lead to your own thing, which doesn't seem boring! [laughs]</p> <p>Their lives can be so sedentary, I think, I mean because Pam and I were born in the 70s where we were running around all the time. Maybe another leader, who was in her twenties, might not think anything of sitting around, but we are all just culturally conditioned, so for Pam and me, it's important to get children running around, we love to see them with red cheeks and out of breath, laughing, having fun, playing a game. We think that's great! Even if they fall over, get covered in mud – even if they have a bit of a cry.</p> <p>You know my approach is like, 'Are you hurt? Are you bleeding? No blood, do we need to amputate anything?' Any distraction to get them back playing. Cause you know, kids are going to fall over. I think as a mum, that was how I was with my own daughter – I wanted her healthy and fit and engaged and learning and being outdoors and socialising and having fun – and you know, that's forest school in a nutshell.</p>	<p>Play approach from 1970s childhood – reflects new nature / play pedagogy movement? Recognition again of sociocultural shaping. Historically situated as well.</p> <p>Nurturing</p>
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		<p>I remember saying to the director of FS something I picked up from my youth work training – something from student management or business psychology or something – the idea of a psychological contract, where as a worker you have the same values, principles, and goals as the organisation where you work. Forest School is the only place where I’ve ever felt that.</p>	<p>Shares values with charity/work</p>
15:36	RES	<p>That sounds really positive – like you’re in alignment ...</p>	
15:40	FSL	<p>Exactly.</p> <p>Yeah, I think that Forest School leaders are really passionate – especially Forest School leaders who aren’t teachers. I mean teachers who’ve trained as Forest School leaders – in my experience, they just can’t let go, they’re always teachers first. They can’t help but dilute Forest School a bit...</p>	<p>Leather 2018; Waite</p> <p>McCree 2014 – developing ecoidentities</p> <p>Teachers unable to shift perspectives as easily?</p>
16:08	RES	<p>I think it’s probably hard for them to let go of the stuff they feel they have to tick off... I recently read on Facebook of a Forest School leader working with a preschool that wanted her to tick off skills such as hammering a nail and climbing a tree... so even the bushcraft stuff was</p>	

		being assessed – at that age! It’s like a BTEC for preschoolers.	
16:30	FSL	<p>I don’t know how you’d do that – you’d have to wander around with a clipboard and be like an evaluator. And, maybe you could do that with 4 people, but not with a big group of children. I think a lot of them have to take out [outside] too many kids. You couldn’t do it with a whole class. We are already pushing the boat with 18 [children] some sessions – I think there’s 36 in that class. It’s crazy – you can’t consider each child’s needs with that many children in a class. I think we did really well with that amount, but really it was 6 too many probably, even with 4 or 5 adults there!</p> <p>There are so many kids in this class with different needs and different abilities. I mean it’s already a shame that our educational system puts kids in just one year group – some kids are going to be 5 in September and others not until August. How can you expect those groups to have similar skills? I think Forest School is a good leveller, being outside allows them to find their own thing and work together with a range of skills.</p>	<p>Ratios seen as important for meeting children’s needs and assessing abilities.</p> <p>Says that in that age group there are bound to be huge differences across the board. FS is a leveller, building a Community of learners (see Rogoff)</p>
17:30	RES	<p>Yes, I found that the number of children in that class influenced my research in some ways, simply because I couldn’t hear what anyone was saying in the classroom setting – there were too many children and it was too noisy to record conversations well, which is what I had thought I would do.</p>	

18:10	FSL	<p>That's another point as well – if any conflict arises in the classroom, what are the chances that you're going to be able to, one, observe it, because not being able to see something, then follow up to an event or situation? You've missed the background, don't know the context, as an adult, you'd be making assumptions, that's a tough call. How do you protect the child's self-esteem or confidence, if you don't know what all is going on?</p> <p>I mean for instance, in that video [Tyler and Shannon conflict], Mrs. Gordan didn't know what was going on, but I had been in the woods, so we could confer. And, if she'd only taken Tyler's word for it...</p>	Seeing conflict in a contextual bigger picture, shaping multiple children's and adult's experiences.
18:56	RES	That Shannon had 'whacked' him...	
19:00		Yeah, Shannon could have gotten in trouble, and Mrs. Gordan could have done something detrimental to Shannon. Instead, she was able to turn the situation around to help Tyler with what he needed to learn and not punish Shannon for something she didn't do. So I don't know how you manage conflict or how you protect those who need it when there are so many kids in one class.	Comparing managing conflict indoors / outdoors – ratios as a factor in handling conflict for <i>all</i> participants'/children's benefit
	RES	Luckily you have a lot of staff – more than they have in a classroom.	
	FSL	Yeah, that's true.	
21:00	RES	I'm glad you mentioned conflict... is there like a forest school policy or practice around conflict?	

21:05	FSL	<p>Well, it would come under challenging behaviour, I suppose.</p> <p>We try to diffuse, distract, it's not always easy. We try to use the right words and emotional literacy.</p> <p>I can't think of a good example from this group, but one incident which stands out for me, is a play scheme I did at [nearby community]. A lovely day, fabulous session, everyone was happy, and I'm packing up and I look up and I see two boys punching each other in the face! I was so shocked! Where did that come from? First thing, I was like, 'nooooo!' it was the most violent thing I'd seen! Then I walked over and I separated them, talked to them individually and I was then able to say, 'ok, now I see why this happened, I can see why you felt so bad you had to hit someone, why you may have felt so angry, but physical violence is not acceptable.' So they had time-outs. I did also say, since it was the end of the session, 'if it was the beginning of the session, I may have had to call your parents to come get you because we can't have people here who lose control. We have a lot of dangerous activities: fires, knives, and we have to be calm and responsible for ourselves and take care of each other too.'</p> <p>And, they took it on board, and I said maybe they should shake hands and sort it out like men. And they loved the idea. They felt like they had some respect from me, and they then showed it to each other. With teenagers, I make them arm-wrestle... 'don't use your words, don't use your</p>	<p>Conflict seen through lens of managing challenging behaviour, which is implemented through emotional literacy strategies for acknowledging, awareness, self-regulation and empathy</p> <p>Recongises adult's perspective – first reaction, then thinking/problem solving action</p> <p>Boundaries</p> <p>Reasons and consequences for actions</p> <p>Respect</p> <p>Strategies for conflict management from childhood as well as EI training</p>
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		fists, get down on the ground and let's have a good old fashioned arm wrestle.' Different strategies – I mean again, these are all from my childhood! We lived in a small community – you had to learn to get along together!	Understanding that individual activity is part of community activity.
	RES	I suppose that's how the school yard, the classroom, the forest school setting are: micro-communities.	
	FSL	Yeah [laughs]	
	RES	Can I ask you to watch this video {shows 'Muddy/muddle Puddle'}	
	FSL	<p>Look how he turns his face! He's learning what he can do to keep himself safe!</p> <p>And, he's kicking backwards! That's brilliant!</p> <p><i>Lee throws big lump of mud on Jakub</i> Gasp! [bursts out laughing]</p> <p>Look he's still turning his face. He's learned from that, that's really interesting.</p> <p><i>Me, saying, 'do you think muddle puddle is getting a bit dangerous? Do you think someone might get hurt soon?'</i></p>	<p>Sees risky play as learning to manage risk</p> <p>Laughs at my worried reaction</p>



		[laughs], Your voice! 'soon?' [mimics my high pitched voice]	
	RES	I was feeling worried and guilty, like maybe I shouldn't be letting this happen or it was getting out of control.	
	FSL	Really?! I wouldn't have, I would have just been like, 'get on with it.' That's how they learn, isn't it? I mean rather than falling over and cracking their heads on that [points to a big stone in the middle of the puddle]; now that would worry me, I'd be watching to prevent that.  <i>[in video, third boy arrives and kicks a bit of mud, and Lee kicks a huge splash of mud on him. He is covered in mud now with a huge grin on his face]</i> [laughs out loud again] he's just remembered he doesn't have waterproofs – another lesson learned!  Oh, this is great. That is brilliant!	Sees the real risk as the rock in the puddle that could have resulted in unintended injury. Adult's role in risk assessment – recognise benefits as well as managing socio-material hazards?
	RES	Does it seem like they aren't respecting the rope that is there for out of bounds?	
	FSL	What? Oh, well, they are though, aren't they? They aren't going beyond it, I mean far, are they? And, they know they are only allowed in there if they have on the waterproofs and wellies. I don't see any problem with that. Looks like great fun!	Perspective that children ARE respecting the boundaries and the rules.  Sees the Fun
	RES	What do you do if there is a conflict between the child and you, as a forest	

		school leader – or what kinds of conflicts might there be?	
	FSL	<p>Well, conflicts are more often in the groups with young people if the young person has a problem with one of the rules, not usually an adult. We put a lot of effort into creating good relationships with the kids and young people first before we do anything else. Everything follows from there really cause then you can actually talk to the kids if they have an issue with something. We also do something called, 'making it work', which is where we agree with the children and young people what the boundaries and rules are going to be. They contribute to that and participate in what the sanctions might be if anyone doesn't get along or go along with it. We don't often have problems, but sometimes, some young people just don't want to go along with it – usually a boundary thing for young people, they want to see how much they can push you. Usually all we have to say is, if you don't like it, you don't have to come – and they'd rather be with us in the woods than in school, so that stops that problem [laughs].</p> <p>We use that emotional intelligence stuff that we picked up on the level 3 training really – if you can get a person to consider where they are coming from and tell you about it, you can usually come to some kind of</p>	<p>Aware of life trajectory possibly from working with range of learners from EY to YP.</p> <p>Boundary pushing as a developmental step?</p> <p>What if they had to come? How would leaders deal with it then? To ask in further interviews.</p> <p>Emotional intelligence approach answer to my question?</p>

	FSL	solution together that makes everyone happy.	
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### **Informal interview with FS staff about kids as participants on 26 April 2017.**

Me: 'They all seem to be doing their own thing, but it also seems quite peaceful and they come together and move apart and come together again quite smoothly... without any shouting [laughs]'

FSL1: 'Well, they are just shorter than the rest of us, but that means they see some things differently, more closely. And they take the time to see things in more detail, quite often. You know the expression "herding cats"? [laughs]. They are all independent, looking out for little things, bumping into each other, going at their own pace, but they are still all cats who want to play – just in their own way. [laughs]

I don't know why I'm comparing kids to cats – I'm more of a dog person! But, it's the same with dogs, they're all different and while some might fit in with the pack better than others, they all have their own history and things going on. I know a lot of rescue dogs who have all had their own trauma in the past and you just go with where they are at, get to know them and do the best you can to make them feel safe with you, safe with others, so that they have the best life possible.

I mean I'm not saying children are second class citizens the way animals are treated in our culture! That's how animals become traumatised, isn't it? Because adults treat them badly and don't treat them the way they would want to be treated, or worse, treat them the way they were or are treated! You know, you get that story – he was hit by his father, so now he hits his dog or saw the dog being beaten, so thinks that is how you treat animals. Even in good homes, people might get a puppy for Christmas, the same as having a baby, then decide they don't have time for it so either neglect it or try to train it within an inch of its life so that it fits in with family life, rather than considering what the dog or child might want and need. I'm getting my metaphors in a twist, aren't I? [laughs and shakes her head]. But you know what I mean'.

FSA: I know what you mean. It can be frustrating sometimes – and you can see why teachers maybe give up and just shout, 'Do this now!' – I do it myself as a parent. But we all mess up as parents – and get stressed and shout, then wish we hadn't. But then we have time to apologise and most of the time, hopefully, we aren't shouting, so it's a one-off kids can recover from and you have time to make sure it's not a pattern or whatever. Whereas, the way that I see it at work, whether you're a teacher or forest school leader, you don't get repeated second chances – you've got to treat children with respect *all the time*! If you're stressed, you need to sort it out. It's our job to be calm, to be patient, to see children as individuals with individual needs, to care about whether they had breakfast or not, or whether they are feeling sad'.

FSL2: Like [A----] today – he finally did not look so sad when he came out. And last week, he said he wanted to be called [T----]. I asked him why and he said that was his brother's name and his brother is better than he is. [collective group 'awwww...']. So I called him that and then this week, I asked if he still wanted to be called that and he said, "not today. I'm ok". It's nice for them to get some space to be able to say how they feel, do what they want about it and be respected for those choices. That's what we all want, isn't it? [laughs].

FSA: yeah, if only...

R: What about if doing what they want doesn't fit in, I mean, in a negative way or challenging behaviour way?

FSL1: Well, it depends what it is. I mean, we try to use some emotional intelligence about it – like, get them to try to say what's wrong, I think sometimes that helps – and especially if you have

impulse control issues or can't speak up very well, you can lash out instead of really thinking about how you feel. You know what I mean? So, we try to help them figure out what's really going on.

FSA: that's what I like about forest school... there is space for the children – and adults [laughs] – to try to figure out what's wrong, but also not to feel bad if something is wrong. That being angry isn't wrong, but hitting someone is...

FSL2: no bad feelings only harmful actions. It is part of the emotional literacy side of the training that you begin to think about how some emotions just happen in the brain – really quickly. I think it's the cognitive part of the brain that becomes engaged when you start to speak? [looks at others].

FSL1: yeah, the emotions are in the primitive part of the brain and things like flight, fight and freeze are basic instincts. There's some room out here to get to the bottom of what's going on for children who maybe lash out or freak out... I mean, of course, they aren't allowed to really freak out and hit people or break things, but if that is how they are feeling, we can find a safe way for them to vent those emotions, maybe go for a run or throw sticks at a target – a spear! [laughs].

R: I think I saw that with Owen and Jordan – they kind of transformed their fighting by actually play fighting a sword fight. It made them laugh and then they ran off and did something else together.

FSA: sometimes we have to get involved though, remember Coral with the stick? She hit someone over the head with it. It wasn't in anger though, it was like she just didn't know how to get someone's attention properly. I had to step in and explain to her how to get what she wanted without hurting other people. It was really good – she walked over to you then and said, see my stick? And, you responded with praise about the stick so she got good feedback right away.

R: oh yeah, the one she had whittled?

FSA: yeah. She was really proud of it – but then she hit someone over the head with it! It's like she just didn't know how to communicate.

R: So, even though it looks like you all are just standing around, you're actually paying pretty close attention {laughs}.

FSA, FSL1, FSL2 all laugh.

FSL1: well, most of the time [laughs]. We don't see it all, I'm sure.

FSL2: Well, when we were kids, no one saw all stuff we did either, so it's good for kids to also have some room to figure it out without adults seeing it all or interfering.

FSL1: oh my g\*& - we just ran wild, no one cared what we were up to unless we did something wrong, then any adult on the street could give you a smack or call up your mum. You learned pretty quickly to shape up or be sneaky, I'm not sure which.

FSA: Probably just stay out of sight!

R: yes, I don't remember any adults around when we were playing outside, but then maybe that is just my perception? Maybe the adults weren't important to us? But, I remember climbing trees and walking along the stream at the back of our house in the woods. But, maybe adults were watching out the windows or something and I just *think* we were unsupervised.

FSA: Well, now all the adults are on their phones, not looking out for kids in streams behind the house!

R: [laughs] Kids aren't allowed in the stream behind my house now. They have big signs up around the pond and there is one neighbour lady who shouts at any children who go anywhere near it. And we get letters from the neighbourhood association warning everyone about pond safety the minute any kid tries to look at it. I feel sorry for them – most of them just want to look for frog spawn or something – I mean they are 7 or 8, then can probably get out of a 2 foot pond if they fall in. Is that terrible?

*Everyone laughs.*

FSL1: Well, I think kids are a bit mollycoddled these days or stay inside – they probably couldn't even get out of a pond! [laughs]. The kids we have here do come not very surefooted on uneven ground, let alone tree climbing. Although last year, we had that boy from Romania, remember? He was just up the trees like a monkey! He was so confident – really different from the local kids. You always get a few that are really ahead in their physical development, but then the rest you can see just getting better and better as the year goes on – they grow a lot in this year and get more confident too about what they can do. Like Mud Mountain – some kids just razz up it and others need the rope... then you see them each week get better and better at doing it themselves and they are so pleased with themselves.

That reminds me – I can't find the rope ladder – I looked everywhere in the store cupboard at the centre.

[interview ends].

## Interview with Tyler's mum 15 June 2017

### Interview transcript

Setting: School. Unused Staffroom. Audio-recorded.

Time	Speaker	Conversation	Interpretation
00:00	Researcher	I just thought you'd like to see some videos and photos I've been taking and we could have a chat about what I've been doing while researching the kids in the classroom and at forest school.	
00:06	Mother	Yeah, it must be great to watch all the kids, I did some psychology and I really liked thinking about why people do what they do. You know?	Interest in psychology
00:15	Researcher	Yeah, it is interesting.	
00:17	Mother	<p>I wonder about Tyler all the time! It seems to be that no matter what goes wrong, it's always Tyler what does it! I'm always like, 'Of all the kids...'; it's always Tyler who's doing something wrong.</p> <p>Like my mother she had one of those big bubble [unintelligible] you know those big tall ones, well you know there were about 7 or 8 kids in the house, but who broke the big bubble thing?</p> <p>You know, and you find that he's also an outspoken child, so he's classed as a naughty child. He is 'bunctious. He is naughty sometime, but people look at him in a wrong perspective and they don't see the problems.</p> <p>I can shout and scream all I want, but ... [shrugs].</p>	<p>Tyler considered to be always 'doing something wrong'</p> <p>Because he's outspoken, considered naughty by others. Mother sees underlying problems / has been wanting him to be diagnosed with autism, according to CR teacher</p>
02:40	Researcher	Yeah... that's hard.	
02:46	Mother	I have done all those help manual books. On a good day, I	Echoes teacher's comments about



		<p>stick to my threats and I'm in a strong mode, and I am getting stronger in me, but other times I am just tired and then he knows he can walk all over me.</p> <p>He senses it! He just does silly things... he can push me. I know he's pushing me. This is how I'm struggling at the moment, cause I'm getting stronger but he seems to be getting worse. But, when I spoke to the social worker, she said, he's just seeing how far he can go. But...</p> <p>Like yesterday, we are cwtched up watching television – he loves cwtches' – and he's leaning back, you know he can't sit still, and all of a sudden he starts picking at the, well, I've got sticky flowers on the wall all over my house, and he starts picking at them. And, I'm like, 'Why?! Why? Why you doin' that?'</p> <p>And he's laughing, and I'm like 'get off there!' And I ripped it out of his hand and I said 'get out of here!' and he cried. I said, 'you didn't like that [the shouting?], did you? Right, I'm going to do that more often!' and, he knows. He knows he can't – if you say to Tyler, 'where do the pens go?' He'll say, but, and, if you say 'where do the pens not go?', he knows that you can't just write on Mammy's walls and Mammy's furniture. But he has a stamp with his name on it, so he said 'Mammy, come and see this.' And he had stamped all over the walls. And, I just looked at him and said, 'Are you for real?' and he was laughing.</p> <p>So I stamped on his stamp and said, 'now you try stamping on my walls!'</p>	<p>setting clear boundaries with him as intervention.</p> <p>Battle of wills with mother?</p> <p>Finds his behaviour challenging, as in incomprehensible /questions why he does the things he does.</p> <p>Punishments vary</p>
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		He's just uses everything to his advantage and he's clever.	
04:05	Mother	Maybe it's genetic. His dad is bit psychotic or deranged, whatever. All the boys in my family have got some sort of ADHD or ADD...	Links behaviour with family behaviour / genetics
04:16	Researcher	Is that how or why you got into studying psychology?	
04:25	Mother	No, I fell into it. I trained to be a dancer. But, I was getting too old. And, I thought well I need a job cause the job centre was gonna put me on one of those courses where they help you get a job, and I thought what am I gonna do – I didn't want to work in a shop I don't like that kind of work. Retail is just not me, so I applied at a care home, but it was really a psychiatric home and I said to my dad and he said 'you're not workin in no nut house' [laughs]. I did see some stuff that was really off-putting. I mean we were working nights and stuff was going on, but after about a year one of the nurses said 'we want you to go further' cause I just had a knack with 'em. They knew I loved 'em. You know, I just fell in love with the naughty ones, the buggers. And all of a sudden I was doin my NVQs and goin managerial but I done it all whiles I was workin and they funded it all and it was all goin good, but then I fell pregnant.	
05:40	Researcher	Ahhh...	
05:48	Mother	But I done it for 5 years and I loved it. It reminded me of one of those old mental hospitals. But, I love it cause it fascinates me.	
05:58	Mother	This is what I get confused with children. A lot of adults say problems are triggered by life events, religion, abuse and stuff that happens as children. So what triggers children?	Does not consider 5 years old old enough to have had 'life experiences' which may trigger behaviour

06:10	Researcher	Hmmmm.... That's an interesting question.	
06:15	Mother	Like I was interested in Tyler when he was little, I don't know what Tyler's trigger was. I mean maybe it's genetically linked. My sister has Down's Syndrome. My nephew has ADHD. Like the other day he comes home and he's like zoom, zoom, zoom, he's all over and I guess he [nephew] can take medication. But Tyler can't have medication, cause his problem is that he's too smart.  I mean I've had him pinned down before saying, you're not moving until you say sorry. Or he throws a tantrum and I step over him and people look at him, but I say don't mind him, he just needs to get over it.	
10:57	Researcher	I suppose children can be like that.	
11:01	Mother	No, it's worse than regular children. And it's getting worse, you know, he's getting stronger. And one day he'll be bigger than me. So that's why I gotta do something about all this now.	Has been asking for help from ed psych and school.
11:22	Researcher	Yes [pause]. Why don't I go get him so he can show you these videos from school and forest school?	
11:29	Mother	How long will it be, cause I have to Hoover up before he comes home from school.	
11:35	Researcher	Oh sorry. Do you want to just see some photos and videos without him quickly before you go?	
11:42	Mother	Yeah. That'd be good. Otherwise, he'll just kick off when I go if I go before him. He goes nuts if I leave.	
11:50	Researcher	Oh sure. I understand. I thought it would be nice for you to see some of these forest school	

		ones, since you've never been to forest school.	
12:02	Mother	Oh he went nuts... I took him to the woods the other day and Tyler went ballistic – saying 'this isn't forest school!' when we couldn't find the right place.	FS important to Tyler – he wanted to show the site to his mother. She took him to find it. He was frustrated when he couldn't remember where it was or they went to the wrong entrance.
12:10	Researcher	[shows Bunny Bike episode] they are riding what they call 'Bunny Bike'.	
12:45	Mother	See that controlling-ness? [when Bence gets off the bike]	The play involves Tyler undoing his passenger's seatbelt; Bence gets off bike, but turns to tell Tyler that he knows how to do his own seatbelt now.
12:47	Researcher	Well, this other boy [Bence] is annoyed because he wants to be in control of the play too. I mean he likes to do what he wants to do too.	Both boys are still playing happily.
12:49	Mother	Oh! They clash!	But, mother sees this as an altercation.
12:51	Researcher	Well, I wonder if they are really clashing...	
13:03	Mother	Oh, you know what though, I know it sounds stupid, but if you have a naughty child and you see another naughty child, you kind of expect it, it's weird. Just because he knows if he can win, he'll try it on.	Her interpretation of the video is that there is a conflict between 'naughty boys'. Also, perhaps used to explaining her son's behaviour, as she mentioned earlier.
13:36	Researcher	I don't know if he's being naughty...	
13:39	Mother	Oh, you mean that other boy is just strong? As long as they don't let Tyler have his own way, they get along lovely.	
13:45	Researcher	Mmmmm...	
13:46	Mother	That was me in school. I was exactly like Tyler. When I was in school they wanted me to go and give a big presentation but I couldn't put pen to paper. I didn't even know that Tyler couldn't put pen to paper. He	Defensive about son's behaviour and academic achievement / expectations.

		can read and he can spell but he just can't get put pen to paper and I was exactly the same, it's mad. This is why he is so much like me, he is like me, I was the class clown to cover up my fears and he does the exact same thing, he makes a big act.	
15:25	Researcher	Ah, he was making some lists the other day with me. It was finding it hard, but he was really interested in doing it. I'm sure it will come – he's only 5.	
15:30	Mother	I don't know. I mean that's just what I was like. It was all a big cover up – being the class clown and everything. I still struggle with writing now and there I was going to give that speech in front of the university and everything and my front was my boldness – I made a joke out of it – 'oh I can't read out loud' that's how I dealt with it – being the centre of attention and the class clown and everything. And, he's exactly the same, it's mad.	Perhaps this is in part something to do with me, as a university student researcher? Is she defending herself? Is that what the psychology chat at the beginning was about? Establishing 'common ground' ?
15: 50	Researcher	[Looks at the time.] I'm aware that it's nearly time to go, sorry.  Is it ok with you if I use Tyler as one of the case study children in my research? I won't be using real names or their photos that show faces -	
15:55	Mother	Sure, that's ok.	
15:58	Researcher	I've got a variety of kids, so boys, girls, and so on.	
16:01	Mother	Yeah, that's fine.	
16:03	Researcher	Thank you. I'll let you get off to do the hoovering now [laughs]	
16:06	Mother	Yeah, I've got to do the hoovering cause I can't do anything after Tyler gets home except make the tea. He comes home and it's all go [laughs]. He's just such a case. You know, my friends can't believe what I'm saying, but I say, 'this is what's happening!' I think he's autistic and the	Perception of Tyler is that he's very active and playful.  However, there is this side where it seems to go 'wrong' at particular moments.

		<p>sooner we get that all formal the better.</p> <p>Like, you know he might be aspergers which is all linked. He saw an educational psychologist and they said that he has the intelligence of a 9 year old but the behaviour of a 2 year old. So put them together and that's expulsion! That's expulsion for me!</p>	
17:02	Researcher	<p>What do they say that about his social skills? Because he's really chatty with adults and funny with me. Last week he was making To Do lists for all of us on these To Do pads and he gave me one too.</p>	
17:15	Mother	<p>Yes, everything has to be his idea; he has to be in control of everything. I knew Monday morning was going to be a bad morning, cause I had to go away and da-da-da and Mrs. J. called me in and said it was the worst day since last September and he was physically violent and she had to restrain him twice and he had a girl pinned to the floor because he wanted to be leader of the queue to the canteen. And when you ask him why, he says, 'because I wanted to.' And when I say, 'did you ask the child to move?' and he says, 'no, I just hit her.'</p>	<p>Perception of Tyler as controlling. Sees list of things to do as controlling.</p> <p>Physically violent episodes (cross ref with CRT's interview – same episode?)</p>
17:30	Researcher	<p>Do you think he doesn't understand or care? Like, if he's spoken to about caring...</p>	
17:35	Mother	<p>He killed my rabbit two weeks ago. He threw it up to the ceiling then threw it back in the cage dead.</p>	<p>Referred to twice before in FS interviews and CRT informal interview.</p> <p>Tyler and another boy in the class threw a rabbit up in the air several times until it died.</p>

17:38	Researcher	Oh, do you think he didn't know that it was dead?	
17:41	Mother	<p>He called me over to the cage and said, 'Mam, your rabbit's dead.' And it was laying there on its side with its legs out. I said, 'what?' He said, 'yeah I killed it.' He acted like I was just shouting at him for drawing on the wall. I looked at him and I thought, 'wow, you really haven't got a clue.' It's dangerous. I feel like he could be a dangerous person.</p> <p>He hit my friend's 2 year old across the back of the mouth. My friend is used to him now, but she was upset. I told him there's no excuse, I don't care what happened, I just wouldn't let him speak. He had to go up to his room and stay there. He just does something and I don't know what to do, do I hit him? Do I cry? I can't do normal things like normal mothers do. I can't go to the park, what if he's in a bad mood?</p> <p>Our normal day-to-day life is exhausting. I think Monday was a trigger because his auntie told him she was having another baby and I think he doesn't like babies, you know he says, 'they stink', and when my auntie showed him the scan he went, 'oh heck.' [laughs]. He didn't want my mum to have another grandchild, I think!</p>	
17:58	Researcher	Laughs	
18:00	Mother	The things he comes out with, I say what are you talking about, child?' He says he thinks animatronics are controlling his brain, he says robots are controlling his brain sometimes, something about cameras are everywhere and robots are beaming all this stuff to him. I don't know where he gets it from, he says all these things.	
18:13	Researcher	Maybe TV?	

18:15	Mother	<p>I say, what are you talking about?</p> <p>I don't know, he just knows all this information. He asks me all these questions, I say 'I don't know!' He says, 'Mami, you're growing a cavity.' I say, 'what?!'</p> <p>He says he's going to be a gangster when he's 6, and a dangerous acrobat, then a traffic warden and then he wants to be a policeman. [we laugh]</p>	
18:27	Mother	This is where the social skills come in, he knows all the information and these kids don't – he likes the older children.	
18:36	Researcher	He seems to like adults too. He can ask them questions.	
18:40	Mother	[nods] He is really 'Mammy, mammy, mammy...'. After school it becomes <i>Tyler's World</i> , I go out the window. I am batman, I am superwoman, I have to be a superman, a race driver, whatever he wants me to be - a power ranger.	
18:49	Researcher	Sounds exhausting.	
18:51	Mother	It is. At least he sleeps now. He was going to sleep at 4 o'clock in the morning. There's one time my alarm was going off and he was still awake. He says my eyes won't shut. He was just singing to himself. He came in yesterday singing, 'I came in like a wrecking ball!' [laughs]. He says, 'my mam died when she had me, but she came back to life' and I say 'why are you saying that?' I don't know how he knows that or why he says it.	
19:01	Researcher	I guess because it's just you two, it can be quite intense, I suppose.	
19:04	Mother	Yes, he says things like, 'it's our house!' and I say, 'no, it's mammy's house! And you live with me!'	



		<p>I got back together with his dad a couple of months ago and it was better – he just had to go to his own bed. His dad just said, leave it, let him scream. Or I'd take him up some water and he'd say, 'he's got legs' [laughs].</p> <p>Now Tyler is in my king size bed with my big screen TV and I'm sleeping in his little bed in his room!</p>	
		[Bell goes for end of school day; interview terminated]	

## **Interview with Bence's mum**

**VS interview with Bence and his mum 7 June 2017**

**In disused school staff room, audio-recorded**

**Videos chosen: watching 'making cement' then others of Bence's choice**

Bence (B): Do you know you get rocks in shoes?

Researcher (R): Do you?

B: You have to pick them out.

Watching video... about making cement

R: What are you doing here/

B: We are making cement

That's me and Lee and Joseph. And that's Cleo.

R: You seem to know what you're doing.

B: Yes I do.

R: How do you know how to make cement?

B: [shrugs] I just know.

R: It sounds like you don't want the girls to join in?

B: No, it was only boys. But Cleo is helping too.

R: You didn't want Shannon to join in?

R: No. That was too many girls. Not enough place to make cement.

B: What? In your circle?

R: No. I mean yes.

B: Can girls be builders too though?

R: Laughs. No girls aren't builders.

B: They aren't?

B: No. shakes head.

R: Well, I think some girls build houses.

Pat is building a house, remember? [refers to conversation with FSL in the woods].

B: I didn't know that girls could build houses.

R: Yes. Maybe when you grow up you'll meet more women builders.

B: Maybe. Yes.

R: You seem to be a very hard worker.

B: Um-hmmm. [nods]

R: Do you work very hard at home too. Do you help your mum? Does he help you?

Mother: Yes, too much. [possibly means 'a lot?']

R: too much!? Is that possible? [laughs]

Mother: Yes, he is cooking everytime.

R: really? You are cooking a lot?

Bence: yeah.

Mother: yes, yes.

R: what do you like to cook?

Bence: all things.

Mother: cake, cake, yes, everything, yes.

R: wow, that's really good, isn't it?

Bence: yeah, and sometimes I make some minion cakes too.

R: yum, like fairy cakes? Or a big one?

Bence: yes, small ones.

R: was it for a birthday?

Bence: no, just for me to eat. I eat it.

R: Mmmm...

R: here is a video of you eating Oreos around the circle

[sounds of children laughing]

R: They were talking about funny kinds of Oreos.

Bence: but, I didn't know what was funny

R: Do you understand now? That they were making up funny flavours, like bacon-flavour?

Bence: [nods]

R: What would be a funny flavour? Like sausage Oreos?

Bence: maybe that!

R: Did you just want to get back to work?

Bence: mmm-hummm. [affirmative]. No time for jokes.

R: What do you like to do after school – do you just get to work or do you take some time to relax?

Bence: Yes, I just relax first, then go to work.

R: what do you do to relax?

Bence: In the bed.

R: you just lie down and chill out?

Mother: he go on his...taa...

R: Tablet?

Mother: yes. [laughs].

Bence: sometimes I laying down on the carpet.

R: to play on the tablet, or do you just look around?

Bence: I just look around.

R: do you look at books?

[Mother says something in Hungarian to him].

Bence: no, well sometimes.

R: I wonder if there are some building books at school you could look at. I'll have to find you some, because it seems you really like building.

Bence: I am good at building.

R: Here is a video of you playing on the bunny bike with Tyler.

[We watch]

Mother: he boss.

R: [to Bence] are you a little boss?

[Mother laughs].

Bence: mmm-hmmm [nods].

R: You have lots of good ideas, I think. And you listen to others' ideas. I think you are a good leader: You like to be the boss but you are very encouraging to others who are working with you.

Bence: I wanted to tell you something then [pointing to the video].

R: yes, you wanted me to film you then.

Bence: I was running so the burgers wouldn't get burned. [video of running].

R: Oh, I'm sorry, I don't have the rest of the running race on here. I'm sorry. That's what you wanted to show your mum, wasn't it?

Bence: that's alright.

[showing Mother the video of all the children arriving at Forest School site]

R: Here is you arriving with your friends? Who are your best friends to play with?

Bence: Molly.

R: she is nice.

Bence: yesterday she is letting me play.

R: at school or after school?

Bence: at school.

R: That's nice.

R: oh, there you are! [pointing at video]

Mother laughs.

R: Maybe I can bring the other pictures of your race in next week and your mum might like to come in again to see them?

[Mother speaking in Hungarian to him].

Bence: yes, or maybe you can .... [mother speaks in Hungarian to him].

Bence: maybe you can come to our house?

R: oh, yes, I can show you more videos?

Bence: yes.

R: would you make me some minion cakes?

Bence: yes! And I could make some burgers?

R: yes, like in the woods [referring to imaginative play burger delivery]. What else do you cook?

Bence: some sausages, some pancakes, and some fries with fish.

R: oh, fish and chips! Do you say fries? That is what we say too, in America.

Mother: Hungarian goulash!

R [to mother]: Oh, yum! Nice. How long have you been here?

Mother: just 2 years.

R: where were you before? In Hungary?

Mother: no, no Cornwall. 7 years.

Now, my daughter is here and me grandmother, grandson.

And my boyfriend, my ex-boyfriend, father [points to Bence]: 'You no speak English, you no speak English, you no speak English.' I'm shy and no [shakes head from side to side]. We finish and now I speak English [laughs].

R: Good for you. [laughs].

*End of interview.*

