

What is child well-being and how can it be supported by parents and early years educators in low-income areas in England?

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51,115 words

Declaration of original contribution

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

CA	The Capability Approach
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DfE	Department for Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education & Care
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
EYE	Early Years Educator
FSM	Free School Meals
GP	General Practitioner
GLD	Good Level of Development
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PGT	Primary Goods Theory
PND	Post Natal Depression
RWB	Relational Well-Being
SEND	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SWB	Subjective Well-Being
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Abstract

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What is child well-being and how can it be supported by parents and early years educators in low-income areas in England?

The term 'well-being' is increasingly used in Early Childhood Education & Care (hereafter ECEC) policy contexts as a desirable outcome for children. In large part, this outcome appears to be predicated on children achieving stage specific educational goals and being 'ready for school'. However, in spite of its ubiquitous use, child well-being remains under-theorised, thereby contributing to implicit understandings within policy arenas. Such understandings may not be reflected by the recipients of, or those charged with implementing this policy. This study therefore set out to explore: first, how ECEC policy currently theorises child well-being; second, how parents, early years educators and young children themselves conceptualise child (their) well-being; and third, the implications of these understandings for the policies and practices of working optimally together in the interests of children in low-income areas. To do so, a theoretical framework of child well-being was developed as the study's framing and analytical tool. This framework was developed by exploring current well-being theories and considering how they are influenced by and contribute to prevailing social constructions of young children. The concepts privileged by each of the theories were used to critique ECEC policy and its implications for young children's well-being. These concepts were, in turn, applied to perspectives of the three under-represented groups in ECEC policy formation. These views were generated in a small-scale qualitative study (conducted between July 2016 – June 2017) which involved 18 children aged two - four years and seven each of parents and early years educators in a low-income area in England. Semi-structured interviews and the Mosaic Approach were used to generate data with adults and children respectively.

The findings suggest that ECEC policy is narrowly conceived. Its measurement practices and curriculum goals, in particular, may undermine, while at the same time characterising itself as espousing, practice supportive of young children's well-being. The three respondent groups had broader conceptualisations of child well-being. They understood well-being to be inter-dependent with that of others. In this sense well-being was seen to be not only under-theorised, but under-socialised and de-historicised. Consequently, an integrative approach to well-being is proposed which neither privileges nor abstracts children from their social and material contexts. A reconceptualisation of childhood away from prevailing deficit social constructions, a recalibration of ECEC policy and practice to be more responsive to children's wider contexts, and recognition of the broader social and material factors influencing m/others and their shared environments would support all their well-beings. The thesis contributes to knowledge by developing a theoretical framework, which provides a more holistic conceptualisation of young children's well-being in ECEC generally and for those in low-income areas in particular. It is also the first study, to my knowledge, to report the subjective well-being of children under the age of five years.

Key words: child well-being; Early Childhood Education & Care; low-income areas

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Dedication

To my mother, Helena Kiernan, intelligent, articulate and witty, who had to leave school at the age of 15 to help support her family, and who from the beginning of her adult life was engaged in the unpaid reproductive labour of raising her children, followed by poorly-paid work as a cleaner,

To my father, Keith Street, a school refuser whose 'entrepreneurial skills' landed him in a residential 'approved school' and detention centre but who settled down to a life-time of alternating weeks of daily/nightly 12 hour shifts in a paper mill to provide for his wife and children,

To my friend, Win Greenhalgh, brought up on the council estate in Wythenshawe, an 11+ failure who achieved a PhD at the age of 47 but was unable to find a postdoc position so went on instead to do equally, if not more, important work on a zero hours contract and minimum wage as a carer of old people,

To my little brother, John Street, who was bullied at school for being gay (including by one of his teachers) and left school nine years ago with no qualifications and who now works as a part-time warehouse assistant in a Krispy Kreme doughnut factory, in spite of being one of the most creative and critical thinkers I know,

To the mothers who responded to this study, including Michelle who told me that no matter how hard she tried she could not "better" herself,

And to the unique and differently brilliant children who also responded to this study, and have all this still to come,

This thesis is dedicated to you.

Hope is a gift you don't have to surrender, a power you don't have to throw away... the world often seems divided between false hope and gratuitous despair. Despair demands less of us, it's more predictable, and in a sad way safer. Authentic hope requires clarity - seeing the troubles in this world - and imagination, seeing what might lie beyond these situations that are perhaps not inevitable and immutable.

Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark*, 2015, pp. 14 & 40

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

In England, as in many other parts of the world, most children living in poverty¹, and particularly those in low-income areas, do not achieve the same educational outcomes or have the same life chances as their more advantaged peers (Bradshaw & Main, 2016: 32; Simpson et al, 2017:177). Consequently, significant expenditure on and effort within schools are directed toward the ostensibly equitable objective of narrowing these ‘attainment gaps’ on the understanding that this will potentiate children’s social and economic mobility (Social Mobility Commission, 2017:20; Government Equalities Office, The Equality Strategy, 2012:5; Department for Work & Pensions & Department for Education, 2011:42) and thence, their well-being. Yet in spite of these endeavours, the ‘attainment gap’ between children on free school meals (hereafter FSM) and non-FSM, for those leaving school at 16 years, remains stubbornly persistent in most UK regions, the exception being London (Macdougall & Lupton, 2018).

One of the principal responses in the past few decades has been to increase investment in Early Childhood Education & Care (hereafter ECEC) (Belfield et al, 2018). This is predicated on an increasingly robust evidence base (Feinstein, 2003; Mathers et al, 2014; Skinner, 2016:288) suggesting children’s life chances and educational outcomes (as they are currently conceived) are positively influenced, particularly for economically disadvantaged children, before they start statutory education which, in England, is at five years old. This understanding has supported an explosion in growth in the ECEC sector. In 2017 there was nearly universal take-up of the 15 hours per week early education offer to families with three-and-four-year olds and nearly three-quarters of two-year olds living in poverty (DfE, 2017). The same year marked the

¹ Poverty is a complex multi-dimensional concept but for the purpose of this study, its definition is based on Households Below Average Income (HBAI) data, which is used to assess children’s eligibility for the two-year childcare offer and Free School Meals.

introduction of the 30-hours early education offer for three-and-four year old children of parents working at least 16 hours per week. The implementation of this offer is still on-going and has been generally popular (Coram Family & Childcare, 2019:24).

For the past couple of decades, I have had a professional duty to support young children's "best possible outcomes" (DfE, 2017a: 10). From 2000-2006 I was the manager of an independent local charity and voluntary sector representative on the board of a Sure Start Local Programme, and up until 2018, a Locality Manager for Early Years services employed by a Local Authority in a north English city. During this time, I also supported the local implementation of other social policies, including health and social care initiatives, also crucial to young children's well-being. However, in this study, I focus on ECEC policy and practice. The sector's rapid and continued growth in contrast to budget cuts in other policy areas affecting economically disadvantaged families with young children the most (Bradshaw, 2016:2) necessitates closer scrutiny. I have witnessed first-hand the effects of this shift in policy focus on young children and their families in low-income areas. Young children under the age of five years are spending increasing amounts of time within formal ECEC settings.

1.2 Focus

Given what appears to be a strong link between ECEC and future well-being, in terms of social and economic mobility, ECEC policy has focussed on 'outcomes' in an attempt to set up continuing educational achievement and attainment and thus apparently, future social inclusion and prosperity. Such outcomes relate to notions of ensuring children's "school readiness" (DfE, 2017a:5; Webster-Stratton, 2005: 35) i.e. that young children have a particular skillset to assist their smooth transition into school. In this evolving early years policy context there is also a sense in which such outcomes are now becoming conflated with other more general notions of well-being so that to thrive and experience well-being is predicated on achieving stage specific educational outcomes in early years contexts and beyond. Children's "best possible outcomes"

(DfE, 2017a: 10) is a term often conflated with “well-being” (ibid.) but also “flourish” (Standards & Testing Agency, 2018:11) and “thrive” (DfE, 2017a: 7) The elision of terms such as ‘learning outcomes’, ‘life chances’ and ‘well-being’ are also apparent in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s recent International Early Learning and Child Well-Being Study initiative in which England is one of three early adopters (OECD, n.d.). Indeed, I began this study by conducting literature searches on these and other of well-being’s proxies (‘reaching full potential’ for example). In an early pilot for the study I asked a parents’ focus group for their views on what supports their children’s ‘better outcomes’. So too, I conducted the fieldwork for this study privileging the term ‘thrive’, although I was not particularly attached to this phrase and asked adult respondents about their preferred words and phrases. I settled on ‘well-being’ after the fieldwork had been completed not only because it was less jargonistic than ‘better outcomes’ for example, but also because of its ubiquitous use in academic and grey literatures.

The fusion of thriving/well-being with stage specific learning outcomes has been contested in academic literatures and by those who advocate a more holistic play focussed notion of development and achievement. However, in spite of policy thrusts in ECEC and its conflation with well-being there has been very little research as to how and whether such notions are shared by the recipients of, and those tasked to implement, such policy. In addition there would appear to be little in the literatures that more fully explores notions of well-being relating specifically to early childhood. In essence this means there is an implicit understanding of well-being in education policy. Without appreciating the nature of similarities and possible differences in perspectives there is perhaps less chance of educational policy leveraging its desired outcomes, if in fact these outcomes should be privileged. This study is designed to focus on such issues and questions. It explores ideas of well-being that relate to early childhood and how these are perceived and enacted in the development of ECEC policy in England. These ideas are then

considered against the perspectives of children, parents and early years educators.

1.3 Research Questions

The study therefore attempts to address three questions:

1. How is child well-being conceptualised in ECEC policy in England and what are the consequent implications for young children?
2. How do parents/carers, early years educators and young children conceptualise child (their) well-being?
3. What are the implications of these conceptualisations of child well-being for policy and practice?

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter 2 I present a literature review of prominent theories of 'well-being' and consider how they influence and are influenced by current and prevailing social constructions of young children. By so doing a theoretical framework of child well-being is developed, which informs the study's design and analysis. Following this, I use the theoretical framework against a review of ECEC policy and the academic literatures that critique it, thereby addressing RQ 1. I conclude by arguing the paucity of views of children, parents and early years educators in the formation of ECEC policy constitutes a current gap, which may undermine efforts to work together to support young children's well-being. This gap provides the impetus for the study.

Chapter 3 describes how the study was designed to address RQs 2 & 3. I explain the rationales informing the design decisions, the resulting issues and how these were handled to support a robust, ethical and trustworthy investigation.

Chapters 4 to 6 form the main body of the thesis in which the study's findings are presented. These are categorised into each of the respondent groups: children, early years educators and parents.

In Chapter 7 the findings are discussed against the theoretical framework described in Chapter 2, thereby addressing RQs 2 & 3.

I end this thesis in Chapter 8 by summarising the findings and outlining my contributions to knowledge. I also describe the study's limitations and suggest further research, which might support young children's well-being in low-income areas. Finally, I consider my professional learning as a result of conducting this study.

Chapter 2: Literature review - Theories of well-being: how they relate to young children and are mobilised in ECEC policy in England

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is presented in three parts. In the first, a theoretical framework of child well-being is developed to be used as the study's framing and analytical tool. This framework is developed in stages. First, the challenges of locating young children in general literatures about well-being are considered. These challenges are explored against current social constructions of young children. Second, a summary introduction to several theoretical approaches to well-being are presented. The concepts privileged by these theories are then considered in relation to social constructions of young children, previously outlined. I end this part of the chapter by drawing these different strands together into a theoretical framework of child well-being.

In the second part of this chapter, I begin to make use of this framework to provide a response to RQ1: How is child well-being conceptualised in Early Childhood Education & Care policy in England and what are the consequent implications for young children? To do so, I review the ways in which the concepts privileged by the theories are mobilised within the Early Years Foundations Stage (curriculum and assessment arrangements). The academic literatures focusing on the Early Years Foundation Stage (hereafter EYFS) are then reviewed against this theoretical framework to extrapolate from them current views about the implications for young children's well-being.

The third and final part of this chapter considers some of the gaps in the understanding of young children's well-being. I signal the lack of opportunities for young children, parents and early years educators to participate in discussions about child (their) well-being, both within ECEC policy formation in England and academic literatures generally. This gap provides the impetus for this study.

Part One: Well-being theories and how they relate to young children

2.2 Challenges of locating young children in well-being literatures

The concept of 'well-being', let alone that of child well-being, is notoriously complex. Camfield et al (2009:67) argue that the term is an "empty notion", taking on meaning only when understood against the discourses emanating from its implicit theoretical interpretations, thereby,

...allowing specific agendas to be promoted under an apparently benign umbrella (ibid.).

Some commentators have suggested that the term has been appropriated to promote the 'happiness industry' (Cigman, 2012) while "conceal[ing] inequality" (Betz, 2011:24). The term's use is sometimes held to be "politically naïve or disingenuous" because it de-politicises adversity and individuates human responses to it (Camfield et al, 2009:97). Conversely, it has also been argued that 'well-being' can be used to support different people's well-being aspirations thereby enabling analyses of power and political relationships (Nussbaum, 2011:33). Similarly, others have argued, the term can be used to counter approaches to children's welfare that violate children's rights under the ruse of their 'best interests'; for example, defences of corporal punishment which perceptibly reduce children's current well-being (Camfield et al, 2009).

Some authors of conceptual reviews of 'child well-being' within both academic and grey literatures focus on identifying the term's possible dimensions but without underpinning them theoretically (See for example, Amerijckx & Humblet, 2014; Gutman et al, 2010; Pollard & Lee, 2003; Statham & Chase, 2010). Statham & Chase (2010) in their article "Childhood Well-being: a brief overview" present a review of the term's dimensions and suggest possible lines of direction for future work. They include, for example, what they view to be the necessity to regard the

well-being of children in the here-and-now, to focus on attributes and strengths as well as difficulties and deficiencies and to take account of children's contexts as well as their cultures, genders, age and other characteristics. Yet, it could be argued, these recommendations are relevant to adult or human well-being too. These commentators (and the others cited above) omit what may be specific about *child* well-being. Instead, they define *human* well-being. Working out the differences between the two, if there are any, is one of the conundrums arising from an evaluation of these conceptual reviews. That said, some commentators (Camfield et al, 2009; Macleod, 2015) argue that child well-being is often wrongly conflated with that of adults. Camfield et al (2009:79), referring to a study involving children, explain

Many of the measures [of well-being] were designed for adults and later adapted for use with children, often by modifying the mode of administration rather than the content, which suggests an understanding of children as incompetent adults.

It is well established in the literatures that human well-being is multi-dimensional (Amerijckx and Humblet, 2014; Feeney & Collins, 2015; Huppert & So, 2013; McMahon & Estes, 2011; Rogers et al, 2012). But, in much the same way as Dr. Johnson's English dictionary (1755), some authors of conceptual literature reviews have attempted to explicate child well-being seemingly motivated, as Johnson was, to find "a consistent unified definition" (Pollard & Lee, 2003:64). Like the English language, however, 'well-being', although perhaps comprising some core characteristics, is often described as fluid and relative rather than fixed and normative (Crivello et al, 2009:53) or as "socially and culturally constructed, rooted in a particular time and place" (White, 2015:5).

Thus, in the literature review that follows, I attempt to explore the ways in which the "empty notion" of well-being is conceptualised with particular regard to young children. I suggest that to understand what is distinctive about current conceptualisations of child well-being, one needs to understand how, in what ways and for what purposes children

themselves are conceptualised. In other words, that child well-being cannot be understood without first exploring how childhood(s) is/are understood and interpreted. I suggest this is necessary because childhood is socially constructed (Betz, 2011:13; Camfield et al, 2009:76; Cook et al, 2018:1) and is also a structural concept (Archard, 2014:13; Betzler, 2015:67; Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2015:27; Burman, 2019:6; Cannella & Viruru, 2004:87). Burman (2013:230) points out that 'child' acts as a "signifier of subjectivity" which can therefore be seen as distinct from that of adults'. As such, I respond to claims that the field of child well-being, in spite of its over-saturation, is under-theorised (Amerijckx & Humblet, 2014; Dominguez-Serrano et al, 2019:22; Graham et al, 2017; Statham & Chase, 2010:3).

I turn now to a consideration of some of the current and prevailing social constructions of young children which, I suggest, influence perceptions of their well-being. It is self-evident that young children (especially babies and toddlers) are vulnerable and their well-being, contingent on good care (Macleod, 2015:53). However, it is argued, this provides a rationale for their conceptualisation as vulnerable only and with "intrinsically inferior" agency² in comparison to that of adults (Macleod, 2015:59; see also Caputo, 2018:205). Consequently, it may be argued that young children are socially constructed as "deficient" and "diminished" (Waite & Rees, 2014:1; see also Crivello & Espinoza-Revello, 2018:140; Mayall & Oakley, 2018:xi) and their childhood(s) conceptualised largely as preparation for adulthood (Archard, 2014:13; Binder 2014:1201). In other words, young children are conceived of as predominantly 'becomings'.

There are a number of implications for young children when they are viewed mainly as future adults. First, their well-being is principally located in the future, hence, 'well-becoming' (Andresen & Albus, 2011:54;

² For the purposes of this thesis the definition of 'agency' is taken from Sen (1999:19) who describes it "as someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well".

Thomson & Baraitser, 2018:68). As such, young children could be said to occupy a

...temporality of anticipation, rather than temporalities that may be specific to childhood, such as those of immediacy or the situated present. (Thomson & Baraitser, 2018: 68)

Second, other needs, principally the skills and competences considered to be required in adulthood may be privileged above children's current affective states and their own knowledge about their needs (Andresen & Albus, 2011:54). Consequently, conceptualising childhood as a preparation for adulthood may then be said to necessitate control of children and justifies their surveillance, often through the institutions of family and school (Burman, 2008:184). These institutions are then held responsible for enabling children to learn the skills considered necessary for them to become responsible citizens.

Another consequence of this social construction of young children is that their views about their own well-being are very rarely, if ever, sought. The Good Childhood Reports (The Children's Society, 2017), for example, outlining children's subjective well-being are conducted with children aged eight - seventeen years only, even though there may be good reason to think some of the issues leading to some children's self-reported unhappiness may start at younger ages. So too, the work undertaken for the Equality & Human Rights Commission (Burchardt et al, 2009) on a "list of central and valuable capabilities for children" included the views of children under the age of eight years but mediated by their parents. The majority of studies involving children about their subjective well-being include children from the age of eight years (see also Fattore et al, 2007 & 2012; Sixsmith et al, 2007; Boushel, 2012:161; Cigman, 2012:458).

2.3 Well-being theories

In this section I provide a summary introduction to different theoretical approaches to (human) well-being. These are 'distributive approaches' i.e. primary goods theory and the capability approach and 'relational approaches'. Following this, I consider how these theories are influenced by and contribute to the social constructions of young children, outlined in the previous section.

2.3.1 'Distributive approaches': primary goods theory and the capability approach

Primary Goods Theory

Put simply, primary goods theory (hereafter PGT), as presented in 'A Theory of Justice' (Rawls, 1971), holds that the provision and equal distribution of primary goods is the means to a good life and forms the basis and first principle of justice. These primary goods are subdivided into two categories: natural primary goods including intelligence, imagination and health; and social primary goods including rights, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect. Rawls developed this theory following the prevailing philosophy at the time of utilitarianism, which promoted 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people' thereby excluding some people in this "sum-total maximizing approach" (Sen, 1995:13). PGT therefore could be said to invite comparison of individuals' holdings of resources as a measure of their well-being. In addition, and crucially, Rawls' second principle of justice - 'the difference principle' - mandates for the arrangement and distribution of public goods (such as education and health provision, for example) as means to the end of supporting individuals to acquire the primary goods outlined in his first principle. The difference principle holds that any inequalities in the distribution of primary goods are permissible only if they benefit the least well off in society (Rawls, 1971:75). I suggest therefore that the concepts foregrounded by this theory are that '**havings**' (goods or resources,

broadly defined) need to be focussed on the distributive **means** by which **individuals** can attain well-being and becoming.

The Capability Approach

Proponents of the Capability Approach (hereafter CA) argue that it addresses a central concern about viewing well-being as solely about the provision of resources. They point out that an equal distribution of primary goods, even if possible to achieve, cannot account for different people's opportunities to convert these into valued 'functionings'. Sen describes the CA as,

... the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve. Capability is, thus, a set of vectors of functionings, reflecting the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another. Just as the so-called 'budget-set' in the commodity space represents a person's freedom to buy commodity bundles, the 'capability set' in the functioning space reflects the person's freedom to choose from possible livings. (Sen, 1995:40)

By way of an example, Sen has cited the capabilities of disabled people as often being doubly compromised: first, because their disabilities may make it harder for them to earn a living (or those looking after them to earn a living owing to their caring responsibilities); and second, due to the additional costs disabled people often incur to attain similar levels of functioning as their more able-bodied peers (Sen & Robeyns, 2010: 7.45-9.30 mins). Sen thereby highlights the shortcomings of approaches that try to achieve more equality in distribution of resources on the grounds that he feels it demonstrates,

No attempt to come to terms with the ubiquitous variations in conversion opportunities between any two different persons. (Sen, 2010:248)

The CA focuses on the "extent to which people have the opportunity to achieve outcomes that they value and have reason to value" (Sen, 1999: 291) and has thus been described by some as a more nuanced approach to human well-being (Macleod, 2010:183; Pogge 2010:17). Its proponents, particularly those inspired by Sen, claim it is better suited

to supporting people to self-define their well-being (Clark, 2014:839; Unterhalter, 2017). Further, that the act of participation in itself is also a means of achieving well-being (Clark, 2014:839; Sen, 2010:250). Sen strongly advocates for the process of deliberative democratic practice as a means to ensure that people are not “the passive recipients of cunning development programmes” (Sen, 1999:11). That said, it is often argued that the process of participation is challenging enough for adults, let alone young children. First, people’s aspirations are said to be “culturally and socially influenced” (Andresen & Fegter, 2010:9), and that “their fulfilment may not indicate equality” (Gale & Molla, 2015:815). In other words, that personal goals and aspirations may be affected by ‘adaptive preferences’ whereby,

Through making allies out of the deprived and the exploited the underdog learns to bear the burden so well that he or she learns to overlook the burden itself. Discontent is replaced by acceptance, hopeless rebellion by conformist quiet, and...suffering and anger by cheerful endurance. (Sen, 1984:309)

Others, however, advise caution against over-simplifying interpretations of adaptive preferences (Biggeri & Libanora, 2011:83; Robeyns, 2017:140). Robeyns (2017) questions the assumption of an idealised state against which preferences are considered to become ‘adapted’ and who determines these.

Second, critics of the CA state that it shows “considerable faith in the capacity of processes of argumentation to deliver rational and beneficial outcomes” (White, 2015:5) partly because of the realities of what Brighouse & Unterhalter (2010:203) describe as “prejudice against minorities”, “existing imbalances of power can be replicated through deliberation”; and “[c]harisma often trumps reason”. In other words, deliberative democratic practice is conceived as relying upon ‘reasoning’ to arrive at self-definitions of well-being.

Martha Nussbaum, another key contributor to the development of the CA, in an attempt to deal with some of the tensions inherent in deliberating about what adults and young children might have reason to value, has suggested a list of ten central human capabilities which any “decent political order must secure” to enable “all citizens...to pursue a dignified and minimally flourishing life” (Nussbaum, 2011:33). These include being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length, to have good bodily health and integrity, to be able to use our senses and emotions, to engage in critical reflection and to be able to affiliate with other people and species. The final central capabilities include being able to laugh, play and enjoy recreational activities and to have control over one’s environment (Nussbaum, 2011:33 & 34).

Advocates of the CA generally contend that if provided with opportunities to participate in discussions about their well-being, people usually cite valued ‘ends’ rather than just the ‘means’ by which to achieve them. In this way it may be said that this approach privileges the distribution of differential amounts of ‘havings’ so that individuals may attain the same ‘functionings’ as others, if indeed these ‘functionings’ are valued. I suggest therefore that the concepts foregrounded by the CA are that **‘havings’** (goods or resources, broadly defined) need to be focussed on **unique individuals’ ends** (or self-defined well-being goals) and that the distribution of resources needs to be organised accordingly.

2.3.2 Relational approaches to well-being

Unlike distributive approaches’ focus on ‘havings’, proponents of relational approaches to well-being (hereafter RWB) view ‘havings’ as being only instrumental to what is intrinsically important to people i.e. relationships. Proponents of this theory argue well-being is not the property or ‘havings’ of individuals but instead, is something that belongs to and emerges through relationships with others: that it is “emergent through the interplay of personal, societal, and environmental processes”

(White, 2015:5); that it is a 'happening', that it "inheres in the dance, it is not the property of individual dancers." (White, 2015:11).

It is a concern about the potentially damaging impact on well-being of individualising people that has prompted some commentators to promote, what they consider to be, the primacy of relationships to well-being (Henderson & Denny, 2015:352; White, 2015). White, for example, proposes that relational well-being is "substantive rather than evaluative" (White, 2015:5), "grounded within the interpretivist tradition" (White, 2015:2) and is "interested in the experience of wellbeing, in *how* people are doing when they say they are doing well" (White, 2015:4) rather than *what* it is (White, 2015:1). Crucially, she contends that RWB is "social or collective, going beyond the individual" (2015:2) and that well-being comes from "between" (Ibid). I propose this theory could be said therefore to speak to a conceptualisation of people as a "mutuality of being" (Sahlins, 2013:19).

White further contends that place and context are crucial to understandings of well-being. In other words, that RWB in the way White defines it, necessarily involves institutional and societal influences on well-beings and their intersection with temporal influences. In sum, RWB might allow a window into understanding the longstanding and embedded socially unjust treatment of people, including young children, living in low-income areas. I suggest therefore that the concepts foregrounded by RWB are that people are **social and collective**, a '**mutuality of being**' whose well-being is derived from '**belonging**'. This approach can be distinguished from PGT and the CA as these are predominantly based on individualised perspectives of the human condition.

2.4 Well-being theories and how they relate to young children

In this section I consider some issues relating to children's well-being viewed through the lenses of 'distributive' and 'relational' approaches, and how they intersect with current and prevailing social constructions of young children. The issue upon which I initially focus is children's rights,

which have been much promoted and critiqued in the past couple of decades. In particular I focus on: the provision of rights and protection of young children; and their participation in discussions about their own well-being. I have chosen these foci as illustrations of how different theoretical perspectives of well-being influence and are influenced by social constructions of young children. Emanating from these issues, I outline the theories' approaches to how young children's well-being is and might be assessed or measured.

The provision of rights, and protection of young children

It might be reasonable to suppose, at least provisionally, that most children across the world now have access to a universal set of rights - one of the key social primary goods requisite within Rawls' theory of justice. In fact, children's rights have gained supranational attention in the past few decades largely as a result of the introduction in 1989 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This convention comprises a list of 54 'articles' setting out what governments must do to safeguard children's provision, protection and participation (UNICEF, 1989).

However, in spite of its almost pan-governmental ratification, many commentators have highlighted some shortcomings and contradictions within this Rights Charter, which, I suggest, speak to the outlined well-being theories. Some commentators, speaking from the perspective of the CA, draw attention to the irony that children did not have the opportunity to participate in the formation of these rights (Ballet et al, 2011:39) and that they were developed in a top-down fashion (Biggeri & Mehrotra, 2011:59). It could be argued, perhaps, that had children been involved in the formation of 'their' Rights Charter, 'play' and 'learning' might not have been disaggregated into two separate 'articles' (28 and 29 respectively): separating them suggests the two concepts are different - which is hugely contested, as I will explain in Part Two of this chapter.

Still other commentators, speaking from a relational perspective, signal the unhelpfulness of establishing rights hierarchies, which they argue can lead to relegating others' rights, and particularly those of women. These commentators argue that rights hierarchies contradict general human rights ideals and, ironically, also adversely affect children because women are often their primary carers and their interests said to be interdependent (Borda-Carulla, 2018:50; Burman, 2008; Lister, 2006). So, for example, 'evidence' is presented that 'breast is best' for both mothers and child(ren), and this may well be so from a biological perspective, but the practical difficulties and potential psychological impacts of 'failure' to breastfeed, may militate against mothers' sense of well-being and hence, potentially that of her children (Símonardóttir & Gislason 2018; Street, 2012).

These concerns highlight the tensions, and perhaps the contradictions, inherent in the Charter between the provision of universal rights for children and the responsibility to act in children's "best interests" (Article 3), or to protect them. It would appear from this 'convention' that adults always interpret the meaning of 'best interests' on behalf of young children. It might also appear that some adults have a greater say in what children's "best interests" might be. For example, governments are portrayed in the Rights Charter as beneficent, protecting children "from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment *by their parents or anyone else who looks after them* [Emphasis added]" (Article 19) thereby obfuscating any possible implication of corporate or governmentally perpetrated neglect. In combination, these issues provide good grounds for arguing that the provision of children's rights, in the name of social justice, obscures the control of children by adults and their institutions. Commentators suggest that this control represents a colonisation of children either in the service of economic growth (Alderson, 2008:135; Borda-Carulla, 2018:50; Burman, 2013:236; Mayall & Oakley, 2018:xi) or to meet their parents' hopes and expectations (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2015; Palaiologou, 2014).

Children's participation

In spite of the almost universal ratification and provision of children's rights (which I have suggested is in keeping with primary goods theory), children's participation in decisions that affect them (a key tenet of the CA) is said to be the "most limited and least developed in practice" (Munoz, 2010:43). It is proposed here that the paucity of opportunities for young children to participate in decisions that affect them, is influenced by (and in turn, contributes to) deficit social constructions of them. 'Their' Rights Charter, for example, only gives "due weight" to the views of children "in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (Article 12). This statement is commonly interpreted as precluding young children from participating in decisions affecting them as they are generally considered incapable of expressing (i.e. verbalising) reasoned (i.e. cognitive) views. It might be supposed, at least again provisionally, that the CA might speak to the participation of young children in discussions about their own well-being. However, and crucially, it is generally held, not least by Sen himself, that young children are incapable of participating in such discussions because they cannot reason (Sen, 1999a: 4). In this sense too, I propose that the CA also draws from and influences deficit social constructions of young children.

Other commentators too conceptualise young children as not being able to reason or undertake means-end reasoning (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2015:27; Brighthouse & Unterhalter, 2010:195) because this implies fairly well-developed cognitive skills and capacities. However, while it may be reasonable to suggest that young children cannot take responsibility for their 'ends' – or at least those 'ends' conceived by adults - this does not mean to say that they might not have their own, albeit tacit, conceptualisations of 'ends' that they deem essential to their well-being. More, that the 'ends' they often cite or demonstrate in other ways (especially, to play) might also be 'means' as well as valued 'ends'. What seems to be at issue here is how some adults dominate the conceptualisation of "reason" as necessitating cognition, and which is

imposed, some argue unjustifiably, on young children (Archard, 2014: 13). What this may indicate, as critics have highlighted (Burman, 2019; Gheaus, 2015:42) is a passion/reason binary which is “part of the master’s tools” (Burman, 2019:13). And ‘reason’ (or perhaps a narrow conceptualisation of the term) is always privileged above ‘passion’ or affect (again similarly narrowly-conceived) and represents an “enrolment into adults’ version of the world” (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2015:16) – and potentially undermining of children’s well-beings. The irony that children are understood to lack vision, or cannot plan ahead or postpone pleasure when these same impulses dominate public policy, often against well-established evidence bases, has also been highlighted (Alderson, 2016:43).

I propose therefore that the CA’s application to children generally, and young children in particular, is still at best, under-explored or at worst, confined by deficit views. Biggeri, Ballet & Comim, for example, in their book, *Children and the Capability Approach* (2011) do not include any empirical studies with children under the age of five. So, it might appear that in their view, childhood only begins at five years old! And, while they claim that participation is one of the “pillars of the approach” (Biggeri, Ballet & Comim, 2011:7) this again appears to be predicated upon children’s ability to be verbal and cognate (Ballet et al, 2011:22). They elaborate that the provision of schooling is important for children as it means “they will be freer agents tomorrow” (Ballet et al, 2011:36). And, while the intrinsic value of education as a public and personal good in itself is not in question here, whether children will become “freer agents” (or indeed what this term even means) as a result of being educated is highly contested (Katz, 2018; Meiners, 2016; Reay, 2017). An assumption that this might be the case seems to naively discount the effect that structural constraints and/or adaptive preferences for example, can have on children’s capabilities to lead, or even imagine, a life they might have reason to value, and the role that schools might play in counter-acting and/or reproducing these.

Young children's individuality and/or mutuality

It has been argued that 'distributive approaches' and 'relational approaches to well-being' differ most fundamentally in their view of the human subject (White, 2015:5). The CA, for example, is generally understood as being primarily focussed on individuals (Gale & Molla, 2015; Underwood et al, 2012:296; White, 2015:5) while RWB focuses principally on the social and collective - the mutuality of being (White, 2015; Sahlins, 2013). This difference is also discernible in Children and the Capability Approach (Biggeri, Ballet & Comim, 2011) not least because its contributors promote children's education as being important for their "self-realisation", "self-expression" and "self-determinations" (Comim et al, 2011:10 & 11). Proponents of RWB argue that the promotion of individualism is problematic. They maintain that insisting on people's multiple diversities (i.e. their unique beings and doings) obfuscates the commonalities and shared values that might otherwise connect them, thereby at least in part, achieving well-being through a sense of belonging (White, 2015:6). In other words, proponents of RWB propose that the CA, in focusing on individual beings and doings, under-socialises and de-historicises well-being and injustice. As such, White contends that well-being, as she conceives it, is fundamentally a political project rather than one of individual narratives [which] "may be co-opted for very personal and invasive disciplining of the self" (White, 2015:15).

Some of these criticisms have been contested by proponents of the CA. Robeyns, for example, has insisted that the CA only focuses on individuals as a "**unit of moral concern**" (Robeyns, 2003:44). Others have argued there is not a simple dichotomy between individualised and group conceptualisations of well-being (Clark, 2014:839; Robeyns, 2017:187; Sen, 1995:57). Sen distinguishes between what he describes as "agency freedom and well-being", the former concerning the freedom to, for example, support the well-being of others, and the latter being defined by him as one's own well-being and that the two are "thoroughly

interdependent” (1995:57). Similarly, Pogge holds that it is an oversimplification to view the CA as individuating, stating that,

Capability theory is more sensitive to the needs of historically disadvantaged groups, for example, disabled people or lactating women. (Pogge, 2010:26)

However, the groups mentioned here comprise people who do not necessarily live or conduct their everyday lives together and so, as Henderson & Denny (2015:373) convincingly argue, do not share fates.

That well-being may be principally about ‘belonging’ and what happens “in between” as White contends, might be said to provide the conceptual space to consider children as social actors, contributing to and gaining from or losing out on social interaction. I propose that RWB thus intersects with proponents of the ‘new sociology of childhood’, which promotes a re-conceptualisation of young children as **capable social actors** (see for example, Bath, 2013:365 & Palaiologou, 2014:690) and away from the deficit social constructions that currently inform and are informed by ‘distributive approaches’.

In addition, given the focus on ‘belonging’, RWB surfaces questions about the potential for people to attain well-being unless everyone else does so too: and this in a world of limited resources. Some proponents of RWB are therefore critical of ‘distributive approaches’ as they consider these to be predicated on economic growth models, and potentially unsustainable (White, 2015:14). Furthermore, viewing well-being as principally about ‘belonging’ raises an important question about what children may belong to. Young children may well be “social actors” but, as has been previously suggested, are still not provided with sufficient opportunities to act socially given prevailing deficit discourses, nor to do so equally. For example, children are disproportionately affected by poverty (Biggeri & Mehrotra 2011:46) and are constrained as a result of this (Bradshaw & Main, 2016:53; Brown, 2015). Some commentators also convincingly argue that ECEC settings reproduce every day practices where children

learn, for example, "...what it means to live as male and female within patriarchy" (MacNaughton, 1997:63). However, it might equally be argued that young children imbibe these and other stratifying practices wherever they are: home, educational settings and beyond.

Measuring young children's well-being

Reflecting across the different theories as they are understood and applied to young children highlights the conceptual and epistemological differences between them. As described in Part One (2.3) of this chapter, proponents of PGT foreground the equal provision of primary goods as its metric of social justice. I propose therefore that by so doing, it focuses on a conceptualisation of children as '**every child**' requiring as near an equal provision of primary goods as possible.

In contrast, proponents of the CA have convincingly argued that, "equality in one space tends to go, in fact, with inequality in another" (Sen, 1995:20) and that,

[D]emanding equality in one space – no matter how hallowed by tradition – can lead one to be anti-egalitarian in some other space, the comparative importance of which in the overall assessment has to be critically assessed (Sen, 1995:16).

As mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, Sen has often exemplified this concern by reference to the circumstances of disabled people who may have reduced capabilities to achieve the same well-being goals as an able-bodied person with an equal amount of resources. The central issue then becomes "the choice of the evaluative space" (Sen, 1995:20): in other words the selection of the most relevant and appropriate "focal variables" (Sen, 1995:16) upon which to assess, for the purposes of this study, young children's well-being and life chances. Sen has elaborated on the shortcomings of adopting normative standards by which everyone is to be judged in the name of equality.

If human diversity is so powerful that it makes it impossible to equalise what is *potentially* achievable, then there is a basic

ambiguity in assessing achievement, and in judging equality of achievement or of the freedom to achieve. If the maximal achievement that person 1 can have – under the most favourable circumstances - is, say, x , while person 2 can maximally manage $2x$, then equality of *attainment* would leave person 2 invariably below his or her potential achievement. (Sen, 1995:91)

Equally it could be argued that Person One, under this metric, might be considered to have failed to achieve. In this passage therefore, Sen invites us to acknowledge the impossibility for **unique** children to achieve the same educational ‘goods’ (in the form of tests or profile results and educational credentials) and an expectation that they should is limited and limiting. By so doing, he provides a rationale for focusing on ‘functionings’ (i.e. what an individual person may be and do) and the ‘capabilities’ (or freedoms a person may have to attain these) as more appropriate metrics by which to assess equity. However, as I now proceed to explain, deciding what the more appropriate measures might be to assess ‘functionings’ and ‘capabilities’, and particularly for young children, is hugely complex.

Of principal concern, perhaps, is what “focal variables” could provide some evidence that all unique, multiply diverse children were achieving their valued ‘functionings’ that might also prepare them for their futures. In other words, one of the challenges for advocates of the CA is to capture the “complexity and ambiguity of human well-being” (Clark, 2014:847) and to measure what Unterhalter (2017) has described as the “unmeasurable” while avoiding the potential of imposing huge information burdens on educators. Sen has dismissed this concern by arguing that more resources could easily be navigated to address ‘measurement’, if it were considered to be important (Sen & Robeyns, 2010: 21.29 - 22.27 mins). That said, proponents of RWB have questioned what they consider to be a predilection for vast amounts of quantitative indicators. These indicators are said to be often assigned to “an elephants’ graveyard...[and] are never used or referred to.” (White, 2015:15) and their generation, often motivated by a quick fix mentality (Underwood et al, 2012:296).

While proponents of RWB may be said to have very cogent criticisms of 'distributive approaches' to the measurement of (child) well-being, their own approach is no less complex and problematic. As previously mentioned, RWB focuses on the processes of well-being i.e. *how* well-being is experienced rather than *what* it is. Their view, that well-being is social, comes from "in between" may be seen to render well-being less tangible. In addition, and in spite of her criticism of the CA in particular as individuating, White states that RWB seeks to understand someone on their own terms rather than rank them against others (White, 2015:5). This, in spite of her protestations against the CA, is I suggest, congruent with the CA's focus on viewing people as unique. However, viewing children on their own terms may obscure the injustices that may be meted upon them. Indices that allow for comparison between children (and are therefore more akin with PGT), may at least allow such injustices to be surfaced.

2.5 Theoretical framework of child well-being

Key concepts from theories of well-being in relation to children

In sum, in this section I have argued that prevailing deficit social constructions of young children as vulnerable only, tabula rasa, adults-in-formation inform and perpetuate attitudes to their provision, protection and participation. The central concerns of 'distributive approaches' (i.e. PGT and the CA) to child well-being focus on their differential propositions regarding the role and distribution of resources ('havings') to support individual young children's beings, doings and becomings. I used the key concepts emanating from these theories to shape the questions I asked of my research respondents (and which I outline in Chapter 3), i.e. individual young children's 'beings', 'doings' and 'havings'. In contrast, RWB focuses on well-being as an embedded process between people and privileges the concept of 'belonging'. It differs from distributive approaches in two main ways. First it supports a re-conceptualisation of young children as potentially capable social actors and therefore away

from deficit discourses. Second, it promotes 'mutuality of being' rather than individual being.

The table overleaf outlines the concepts privileged by each of the theoretical approaches and which form the basis of a theoretical framework. Such a device inevitably obscures nuance as it records the differences between the theories as binaries rather than highlighting areas of overlap. So for example, RWB also accommodates "personal" experiences of well-being (White, 2015:12), and includes the importance of "materiality" (White, 2015:2) to well-being thereby implicitly shadowing distributive approaches' much stronger focus on individuals and resources. Similarly, proponents of CA emphasise that well-being is "interdependent" (Sen, 1995:57) or requires "affiliation" (Nussbaum, 2011:33) suggesting some sense of relatedness between people. That said, the concepts listed in the table are those that are privileged by each of the theories and provide a convenient tool to capture some of their distinctions.

Theoretical orientation	Focus on...	Conceptualisation of children as...	Social constructions of children mainly as...	Key concepts privileged	Concept dimension emphasised	Principal approach to measurement
Primary Goods Theory (Rawls)	Means	Every child	Vulnerable only Tabula rasa Future adults	Becomings	Individual/Self defining	Quantitative Comparative
				Haveings	Distribution of resources to provide equal means to become	
Capability Approach (Sen, Nussbaum, Robeyns)	Ends	Unique	Vulnerable only Tabula rasa Future adults	Beings & Doings (Functionings)	Individual unit of moral concern	Quantitative Evaluative
				Becomings (Capabilities)	Self-defining	
				Haveings	Distribution of resources according to self-defined goals that people value and have reason to value	
Relational well-being (White)	Ends	Social and collective	Capable social actors	Belonging	Mutuality of beings and doings	Qualitative Interpretivist
					Interdependent with others and temporal & spatial context	

Table 1: Theoretical framework of child well-being

Part Two: How well-being theories are reflected in ECEC policy in England

RQ1 How is child well-being conceptualised in ECEC policy in England and what are the consequent implications for young children?

In this part of the chapter, I provide a response to RQ1: How is child well-being conceptualised in ECEC policy in England and what are the consequent implications for young children? To do so I focus on the Early Years Foundation Stage (hereafter EYFS - as outlined in DfE, 2017a & 2018; Tickell, 2011). The EYFS is the current curriculum and assessment framework in England and operationalises understandings of child well-being. It is not the whole of ECEC policy, of course. Issues of spending, access, work force development for example, are also ECEC policies but it is the most important aspect of policy for the purpose of this study. I consider the EYFS statutory documentation and the academic literatures that review it, against the theoretical framework of child well-being extrapolating from them the impact this policy is said to have on young children's well-being.

2.6 The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum and assessment arrangements

The EYFS was introduced in 2008. Comprising a set of welfare, learning and development requirements, it combined three previous sets of guidance and regulation thereby standardising ECEC provision. The EYFS curriculum currently comprises seven areas of development and learning: three 'prime' areas ('communication and language'; 'physical development'; 'personal social and emotional development') and four 'specific areas' ('literacy', 'mathematics', 'understanding the world' and 'expressive arts and design'). Each of these 'areas of learning' is, in turn, subdivided into 'early learning goals' (hereafter ELGs – DfE, 2017a: 10). For example, the ELGs within the 'communication and language' prime area comprise 'listening and attention', 'understanding' and 'speaking'. It

is emphasised in the statutory framework that “every child is a **unique child**, who is constantly learning and can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured” (DfE, 2017a: 6) and that, “**children develop and learn in different ways and at different rates**” (ibid.) (original emphases).

I propose therefore that the EYFS is congruent with the CA in its emphasis on each individual child being unique and acknowledging that they develop at different rates. In addition, it might also be argued that the EYFS incorporates elements of RWB. It draws on a conceptualisation of children as being “capable” and includes a focus on ‘personal, social and emotional development’. However, Henderson and Denny (2015) convincingly argue that this approach privileges relationships in the service of individual efficacy.

The developmental self of resilience may be relational, embedded in affective and effective relationships, but this self is not for that matter a social being. Relationships are meaningful within resilience science to the extent that they are capable of reducing later vulnerability in the individual. They are investments in agency in the context of a life course, agency that is manifested in an individual’s healthy choices and, when his or her life enters into relationship ‘ecologies’ with others, in affective interactions that promote individual competencies (Henderson & Denny, 2015:360).

In this sense, it could be argued that the EYFS foregrounds ‘personal, social and emotional development’ as an individual skill. In other words, the development of relational skills are set within the context of other skills which are to be acquired for the advancement of individuals i.e. as emotional intelligence or capital and the property of an individual (and therefore more congruent with ‘distributive approaches’).

There are two summative assessments of children’s progress against the EYFS’ ELGs. The first is of children aged two years and the second, when they are four or five years old, towards the end of their ‘reception’ year. The latter assessment forms part of a child’s EYFS Profile (hereafter EYFSP) and is published nationally at school level. Children who have reached “expected levels of development” (DfE, 2017a: 14) in

the three prime and two specific areas of 'literacy' and 'mathematics' at the end of their reception year are considered to have reached a "good level of development" (Standards & Testing Agency, 2018:59). The ELGs within each of the seven areas of learning are supported by early years educators' promotion of three "characteristics of effective learning": 'playing and exploring', 'active learning' and 'creating and thinking critically' (DfE, 2017a: 10). The characteristics may thus be said to describe *how* rather than *what* young children learn, and I propose, speak more to RWB. These 'characteristics' are 'measured' by a short commentary prepared by each child's 'key person' and passed onto their Year One teacher: again, suggestive of RWB's preference for interpretive assessment. This commentary does not form part of a child's EYFSP and, in my experience, often gets overlooked as the nature of current assessment practices (that privilege *what* children learn rather than *how* they learn) as numerical data is more easily replicable in national statistics tables.

However, the expectation for children to attain a 'good level of development' (hereafter GLD) at the end of their reception year, speaks to PGT as it supports notions of equivalency in the procedural distribution of educational 'goods'. These 'goods' are demonstrated by the EYFSPs, which are said to potentiate for young children a collection of qualifications and credentials, which eventually have (in theory, equivalent) use and exchange value. In other words, it may be said that one of the purposes of education is to provide children with the means by which to acquire what is considered to be, the necessary human, social and cultural capitals with which they may then acquire financial capital and ultimately, well-being (Kelly, 2012). Similarly, ECEC enjoins early years educators to ensure children are 'ready for school' (DfE, 2017a: 7) and have received a specific skill-set (i.e. their 'goods') deemed necessary for them to begin their schooling from the same starting point. According to policy narratives, the EYFS seeks to provide "**equality of opportunity** and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported" (original emphasis) (DfE, 2017a: 5). This

narrative is mobilised to suggest that children are enabled to be equally equipped to take up the opportunities their statutory education provides, thereby supplying them with an individual passport to future well-being. Education settings are meant to demonstrate their capacity to be able to fulfil these goals through outcome measures and league tables. The most successful educational settings are then considered to be those in which most of the children achieve above average profile (and later, exam) results and the 'attainment gap' between children is narrow. I propose the credo informing this approach is a particular notion of fairness represented by PGT.

In sum, the expectation for all young children to attain a 'GLD' at the end of their reception year, suggests that assessment procedures treat them as 'every child'. This is in contrast to the 'unique child' privileged by the EYFS curriculum. I propose therefore, in the light of the theoretical framework of child well-being, that the EYFS undermines itself in expecting young children to be concurrently 'unique' and 'every child'.

2.7 Implications for child well-being

In this section, having established that each of the well-being theories, outlined in Part One of this chapter, is visible within the EYFS, albeit differentially so (with the CA and especially RWB being backgrounded), I review the academic literatures about its implications for young children's well-being.

In spite of support for investment in ECEC, and claims that the EYFS is doing "a good job" (Mathers et al, 2014:38), it has nonetheless, excited considerable and increasing amounts of criticism. Most of the criticism is targeted at the EYFS' assessment arrangements. First, it is argued that the EYFS bases its understanding and consequent measures of children's educational outcomes on classical developmental psychology (Gesell & Piaget, for example) which posits children as passing naturally

and inevitably through specific phases of development. This view, however, is contested by more critical scholars (Burman, 2017; Fleer 2015; Palaiologou, 2014; Wood & Hedges, 2016). They argue that linear ‘ages and stages’ models, currently used to measure children’s learning (DfE, 2012), are predicated on narrow conceptualisations of children’s development.

Second, it is argued that the EYFS’ measurement requirements in the form of profile results, which depend on this linear development model, become constitutive of well-being or other of its proxies, rather than merely descriptive (Gorur, 2014; White, 2015). EYFS assessments have been described as “fictive” (Bradbury, 2014: 335) not least because they are said to reduce children to “data doppelgangers”, rendering them “machine readable” in an attempt to anticipate children’s likely future actions and progress (Williamson, 2014:12). Similarly, Rosen & Newberry (2018:118) also describe the pre-occupation with child development as “well-intentioned” but,

...underpinned by all sorts of ideas about controlling the future: the idea that teaching children to verbally express emotions or sit in a circle will have predictable results such as self-regulation, ‘school ready’ bodies, and improved school achievement – as though these were unproblematic measures of well-being and social justice. And, this is all potentially very different than the interests of children themselves. (ibid.)

A further criticism is that narrowly-conceived curriculum goals (Ang, 2010) and definitive standards (or ‘outcomes measures’) against which all children are judged, begin to shape children’s perceptions of themselves and others in ways that can create failure by damaging self/other perceptions (Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016). Some commentators argue that curriculum goals, albeit for older children, are anyway subjectively determined to privilege certain socio-economic groups (Reay, 2017; Thomson, 2002). Similarly, it is further argued that even if it were possible to furnish all children with equal educational credentials this would still not potentiate the same life chances because people have

different values and “conversion opportunities” (Sen, 2010:248). Thus, it is convincingly argued that education becomes a competition with winners and losers (at ever younger ages) and that rather than supporting equality of opportunity, ECEC actually reinforces inequality (Kay, 2019). Taken together these arguments suggest that the EYFS may undermine, while at the same time characterising itself as espousing, practice supportive of young children’s well-being.

Writing about education more widely, some authors have echoed these concerns about the nature, and potential over-measurement and testing, of children’s learning and ‘outcomes’. They too convincingly argue, for example, that,

Even if we were confident that a rigorous testing regime was crucial for the best strategy for improving children’s performance, we might feel justified in sacrificing that achievement for the sake of not making their school days miserable (Brighouse & Unterhalter, 2010:205).

It is suggested that the EYFS’ assessment arrangements and accompanying inspection frameworks impact on the curriculum and pedagogies in ways that may serve to potentially undermine young children’s well-being. First, some commentators argue that play has become appropriated in the service of policy narratives that privilege the measurement of children’s learning, cognitive learning especially (Larsen & Stanek, 2015; Mathers et al, 2014:39; Roberts-Holmes, 2012; Wood, 2014). So, while play that is freely chosen by children is considered to be essential to children’s well-being (Wood & Hedges, 2016), it has been highlighted that the EYFS promotes play so long as it aligns with curriculum goals and demands for outcomes-led policy drivers (Kane, 2016; Roberts-Holmes, 2012; Wood, 2014). Wood (2014) for example, draws attention to the contradiction whereby “child-centred theories that value free play and free choice are at odds with policy frameworks that

maintain a discourse of universalism” (Wood, 2014:5) which, she claims, “privilege adults rather than children” (ibid.) as

Even in relatively democratic pedagogical repertoires, adults usually define what choices are available; what degrees of freedom are allowed; and what institutional rules and boundaries need to be placed on play, free choice and behaviour. (Wood, 2014:15)

Therefore, according to these commentators, play becomes harnessed for teaching and learning a prescribed curriculum; in other words, “eduplay” (Pramling-Samuelsson & Fler, 2009:186). As a consequence, it is argued that free play is not valued and that learning and play are seen as two distinct activities (Kane, 2016). Indeed, the EYFS makes many references to “planned, purposeful play” (DfE, 2017a: 9; Tickell, 2011:28) but this raises questions about whose purposes these are.

Following this, it is often argued that young children themselves are conceptualised as ‘means’ (rather than ‘ends’) and become instrumentalised in the service of national economic growth. Commentators contend that efforts to ensure children are ‘school ready’ prefigure their ‘work readiness’. They argue that improving children’s educational outcomes is seen as providing the means to increase their labour market participation and subsequently the country’s economic competitiveness in the growing global knowledge economy (Goldstein & Moss, 2014:260; Gorur, 2014:60). Consequently, it is argued, children’s development prefigures national development and that childhood is thus colonised by adults (Burman, 2019:13). As such children not only acquire educational ‘goods’ as means to the end of their well-being, but instead become the goods that provide the means to others’ ends and upon which prosperity, for some, may depend. Many commentators describe the discourses of ‘quality’, ‘standards’ and ‘accountability’ prevalent in ECEC policy and practice documents as being similarly problematic. This is because they believe such language belies a promotion of human capital theory as the chief means of alleviating poverty. They consider this theory to be defunct in a post-industrial society (Moss, 2014; Wood &

Hedges, 2016). Further, these commentators contend that the appropriation of education for this main purpose has a diminishing effect on children's well-being as they are reduced to being consumers. In other words, that well-being is conceptualised as, and in the service of, the production of homo economicus, a self-interested consumer (Paananen et al, 2015; Moss, 2014). The elision of human development and human capital discourses appear to be ubiquitously derided among most academics of ECEC. That said, some commentators (see for example, Paananen et al 2015:703) argue that human rights and human capital theories are not necessarily mutually exclusive as everyone contributes to and benefits from (albeit differentially), the financial economy. This is particularly important for children and young people growing up in low-income areas, and especially those in poverty.

It is beyond the scope of this study to present a full analysis of different approaches to ECEC in other countries but literatures do point to Scandinavian countries, Australia and New Zealand especially as espousing pedagogies and curricula more in keeping with RWB. Such approaches are said to recognise children as social actors, for example. Indeed the Australian Early Years Learning Framework focuses on three over-arching principals of 'being', 'becoming' and 'belonging'. The approaches to ECEC policy in other countries appear to be informed principally by the work of Vygotsky. His theories of play and socio-cultural activity are also considered to be more in tune with young children's socio-economic contexts (see for example, Edwards, 2010 and Fler, 2015 for applications in Australia; and Hedges et al, 2011 for applications in New Zealand) again more congruent with RWB.

With the expansion of the ECEC sector, however, there are increasing numbers of EYEs (and teachers of EYEs) in England who are receiving training and developing their practice by learning and practising different approaches (See for example, Phillips: 2018). These practitioners, alongside those who worked in the field long before the government ever

became interested in it, are able to form strong lobby groups to “keep the early years unique” and to emphasise that children are “more than a score” and to promote, and even implement, educational practice that is more congruent with children’s beings and doings. Certainly these other approaches make visible the background practices of possibility against the currently foregrounded policy of testing and normative standards.

In sum, elements of the three well-being theories are visible within the EYFS, albeit differentially so. However, it is clear that assessment arrangements informed by PGT predominate in ways that indicate that current ECEC policy may, at best lead to confusing practice resulting from conceptual confusion and/or, at worst, serve to undermine young children’s well-being.

Part Three: Gaps in the literatures

2.8 Young children’s subjective well-being

As I outlined at the end of section 2.2, children have participated in studies concerning their own well-being, or other related issues, only in the past couple of decades and generally only if they are aged eight years or above. Findings from studies involving older children consistently suggest their participation is important to their sense of well-being (see for example Fattore et al, 2007 & 2012; Sixsmith et al, 2007). However, no studies, to my knowledge, have involved children under the age of five years in discussions about their well-being. Young children’s perspectives on any aspects of their lives are scant (Larsen and Stanek, 2015: 196). When they are invited to participate in research, studies tend to gather their views on services that already exist and how to improve them (see Joshi et al, 2015 concerning experiences of services aimed at reducing the impact of low income; Hreinsdottir & Davidsdottir, 2012 & Coleyshaw et al, 2012 - both of which are about listening to young children’s perspectives on their day-care provision). The Mosaic Approach (Clark &

Moss, 2001), which I use in this study to generate data with children, was developed with three and four year olds in a UK nursery school as a way to involve young children in reviewing their ECEC experiences. In this study, I broaden the scope of previous studies to consider young children's views about their own well-being; in particular how they conceptualise it and what helps and hinders.

2.9 The views of parents and early years educators about child well-being

The views of parents and EYEs are similarly under-represented in both academic and grey literatures. Like children, parents' views, when sought, tend to be predicated on how already-existing services could be improved (see for example, Vuorinen, 2018) or focussed on how they may be able to support their children's learning (see for instance, Niklas et al, 2016). Some of these studies are predicated on deficit views of parents (see Junttila & Vauras, 2014, for example) or focussed solely on parental influences on their children (see for example, Greenfield & Marks, 2006). EYEs too, are very seldom involved in discussions regarding their views of quality ECEC (Simpson et al, 2018:4) and when they are consulted, studies are sometimes framed around how they may compensate for perceived poor parenting (Broomhead, 2013).

This is the first study that, to my knowledge, explores the understandings of young children, parents and early years educators about (their) child well-being. That said, if, as the literatures (sometimes inadvertently) suggest, child well-being is virtually indistinguishable from that of humans' or adults', it could be argued that my over-arching research question separates and privileges children above their adults. In addition, the ontological supposition of my research question, given the social and cultural expectations around care of young children, is how women can support it. Parents (specifically mothers) and EYEs (generally women, many of whom are also mothers) are framed within this study only in so far as they are important to their role as nurturers of children. This potentially endorses another oppressive societal norm that expects

women, more than men, to undertake some form of comparatively poorly remunerated (child) care. Burman (2013) suggests that in focusing on the child we lose sight of the (differential) injustices experienced by mothers.

That said, there appears to be a consensus among commentators that the views of young children and adults need to be disaggregated (Andresen & Albus, 2011:54; Ben-Arieh, 2005:576; Burman, 2013:237; Camfield et al, 2009:74; Mayall & Oakley, 2018). Burman (2013:237) suggests disaggregation may facilitate understandings of injustices perpetrated against children. This is not least because young children are “a social minority group” (Mayall & Oakley, 2018:x) and the least visible group participating in social research (Crivello et al, 2008:52) although the most likely to be affected by poverty (Camfield et al, 2009:74). Also, parents may not know their children as well as they think they do (Ben-Arieh, 2005:577) and may have expectations of them that run counter to their own perceptions of the lives they value (Bou-Habib & Olsaretti, 2015).

2.10 Summary

In this chapter I have developed a theoretical framework of child well-being and used it to address RQ1. I have argued that ECEC policy draws principally from PGT. Other well-being theories, while visible, are backgrounded in the EYFS leading to practice which may undermine itself and consequently young children’s well-being. I have also briefly considered approaches to ECEC in other countries and argued that they privilege other theories, which appear to be based on conceptualisations of children as relational. I have concluded this chapter by outlining the dearth of research involving young children, parents and EYEs in discussions about child (their) well-being which provides the rationale for the study.

Chapter Three: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and justifies the study's research design to elicit (often tacit) conceptualisations of child well-being among the three under-represented groups. It is bookended first by explaining my positionality within the study and last, how I dealt with this to support its trustworthiness. In the main, I describe and explain the rationales for the methodology: sampling, recruitment, data elicitation, storage and analysis methods. In addition, and underpinning each of this chapter's sections, I outline the ethical issues occurring during the course of designing and conducting the study to support its trustworthiness.

3.2 Researcher position/ed

It is generally required that a doctoral candidate explain the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of her thesis and thence its methodologies, methods and ethical considerations. But to do so I first need to describe the study's socio-political contexts, as recommended by den Outer, Handley & Price (2013:1504) and Cohen et al (2011:359).

This investigation was conducted during a period of massive public spending cuts. Since 2010 and the introduction of 'austerity measures' by the Coalition government, the Local Authority that employs me has undergone significant and repeated budget retrenchment. In attempts to reconstitute and bring its services 'to scale', continual service 're-designs' have been implemented. These cuts, and the ideologies mobilised to justify them, are symptomatic of a supranational "downsizing" of the public sector in the past few decades (Simpson, 2018:5; Thomson, 2002:32) and I was harnessed to the roller-coaster of these changes well before I started this EdD. But specifically from the outset, with a re-interview for my job imminent, it was unclear what empirical study I would

be able to undertake, if any. Consequently, in my first research paper (Street, 2014) I undertook a critical review of Paulo Freire's espoused pedagogies. I was motivated to do so following my MSc study (Street 2012) during which I began to understand how my job role implicated me, albeit inadvertently, in "conscript[ing people] to a state agenda of performativity" (Ranson et al 2005:358). And so, I was interested in undertaking an investigation that may have pointed to ways in which I, and if appropriate, the colleagues and families with whom I work, could "exercise [our] agency to look for spaces in the structures [we] inhabit" (Griffiths, 1998:12).

My reappointment to the same job involved a wider remit in another differently 'disadvantaged' area of the city. Fortunately, this was just after I had completed a pilot study for my second research paper (Street, 2015a). That there was yet another 'service redesign' being planned immediately following the one just experienced was the over-riding impetus for the design of this study. And while I may have been more ontologically predisposed to undertake an action research project or ethnography, the precarity of my presence in the study area prevented me from doing so. Consequently, the research methods I describe in this chapter were adopted pragmatically because they would have allowed for me to return temporarily to the area should I have needed to do so. That I was able to conduct fieldwork at times in the EdD process that necessitated it, while riding the waves of the re-structuring of public services, was a matter of sheer luck, albeit also enervating. It is commonly acknowledged that it takes time for people in professional roles to develop trusting relationships with families with young children (let alone conduct research with them); and such families living in low-income areas were also affected more than any other demographic by the 'austerity measures' to which I refer (Stewart & Obolenskaya, 2015).

There were other factors too that served to position me in this study. Lacking the cultural capital traditionally valued by Russell Group universities (no-one else in my family has been to university and I knew

no-one at that time with a PhD) I had only a cursory knowledge of doctoral funding, an understanding that it was highly competitive and unlikely to be granted to a middle-aged woman. And so I blithely signed up to do this EdD as one might enrol on a course at a local adult education college. Consequently, this study's design was shaped by its 'curriculum', which focussed solely on qualitative methodologies.

So even though it is usual for researchers, especially those "studying down" (Shopes, 2011:457) to discuss the means by which they mitigate and/or reflect on their 'power' (which I nonetheless do at the end of this chapter) and the impacts these may have on findings, I assert that this 'power' must also be viewed within the wider socio-political and institutional contexts I have just outlined. In these circumstances, I suggest it would be fanciful for me to discuss my 'research design' as if I were a completely agential operator. ECEC is classed and gendered (Osgood, 2005), and I am a working-class woman researching this "gendered social experience" (Shopes, 2011:459) with, as I predicted, all female adult respondents. The positions that my research respondents and I occupy are similarly but differently imbricated. I suggest this begins to elucidate the embedded, inter-relational and historical injustices (being) experienced by those who live, and were brought up, in low-income areas. But history, of course, is not just of one hue. There are other historical factors that influence this research. The investment in the welfare state following the second world war, for example, and which had only just started to be dismantled when I was being educated the first time round, has also supported me to use my agency to acquire and accumulate the resources needed to conduct this study, although it has taken me over fifty years to do so.

There were yet other 'pulls' on my position(s) as a novice researcher. Guided by experienced researchers and writers, I nonetheless found their advice to be often unaligned and frequently contradictory to my own circumstances. First, the apparent assumption that researchers (especially those researching in high-poverty contexts) only "study down"

surfaces a perhaps well-founded expectation that most researchers are middle-class. My 'role power' during the conduct of the fieldwork notwithstanding, I suggest that my other identities and status meant I was more 'studying across' as well as, at times and to some extent, 'studying up' as, in my experience, there are some (especially, but not exclusively, from working-class backgrounds) who do not consider doctoral studies as worthy of much esteem, but rather, pity.

Second, I was also confused, for example, by advice "to find ways of standing outside of our histories, circumstances and fields" (Haggis, 2009:389) when my study was embroiled in them. I wish to acknowledge, not only the impossibility, but also my refusal to stand outside of my history because it is borne of my longstanding 'insider position' of belonging to and working with families with young children experiencing social and material inequalities. My research is consequently more akin to being "unashamedly with and for" (Smyth & McInerney, 2013:2) the people I research, but at the same time, and crucially, that I

...avoid the sentimental conclusion that 'the people' have all the answers as if poverty and oppression automatically conferred wisdom and foresight (Angrosino & Rosenberg, 2011:474 but see also Skeggs, 2002:356).

Thomson & Gunter (2011:28) discuss the challenges of negotiating "fluid researcher identities" but I contend that my own prevent me from sympathetically othering the social class I have (mainly) studied and from which (albeit in a different socio-economic era) I emanate.

3.3 Philosophical traditions of the study

One of the consequences of my positionality is that this study is broadly influenced by the practice of deliberative democracy, notwithstanding its associated difficulties outlined in Chapter 2. This approach necessitates involving people in the process of 'naming their world' (Freire, 1970; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011) and is important for those of us who have been described as "the passive recipients of cunning development

programmes” (Sen, 1999:11). In alignment with other researchers espousing ‘egalitarian’ principles, I argue that to ignore stakeholders’ views would be “committing a kind of epistemic violence” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011:548) as my respondents and I are equally, but differently, knowing subjects (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011:549; Smyth & McInerney, 2013:4). This includes young children. And so my study also accommodates a conceptual shift from prevailing deficit views of young children as only vulnerable tabula rasa, to being social actors with their own strategies for actively navigating their conduct of everyday life within the structures and institutions they inhabit.

This study is therefore sited at the subjective end of the epistemological continuum. I have attempted to treat all respondents as “equal players” (Cohen et al 2011:350), especially “...those groups in society whose interests, voices, and perspectives are silenced, excluded, marginalised, expunged or totally denied” (Smyth & McInerney, 2013:2). Following this, the study’s methods which, for the most part, rely on dialogue, are partly influenced by an understanding that there is no one discernible reality or truth to be mined, but a multiplicity of truths or perceptions, sometimes mutually co-constructed and to be interpreted (Cohen et al 2011: 409; Fram, 2013; Phoenix & Brannen, 2014:11). That said, and crucially, I do not subscribe to a view that “the social is nothing but a product of linguistic practices” (Angermuller, 2018:6) because my respondents’ ‘linguistic practices’ (and my own) are embedded within our material lives. I have attempted to explore this intersection and what it may reveal about my respondents’ conceptualisations of well-being.

3.4 Methodology

This study is a small-scale qualitative investigation. It involved 18 children (aged between two and four years), seven parents and seven early years educators working (and some living) in a multi-cultural and low-income area in a northern English city. The study focuses on only one low-income area. This is not in any way to suggest that all low-income areas are the same. However, given the study’s conceptual focus one area was

chosen to explore how

Many of the issues associated with poverty can become concentrated within disadvantaged neighbourhoods, so that living within an impoverished community has a multiplier effect upon the individual experience. (Brown, 2015:23)

Qualitative studies are recommended in the methodological literatures as means of helping to “bridge the gap between research and practice” (Boeije, 2010:164). Given the conceptual complexity of term ‘well-being’ and its proxies, qualitative studies can potentially

...serve a conceptual aim, which mean that the understanding and insights that they yield might lead to a different view of the social issue that was studied. And in doing so, the research might shape policy debates and inspire policy makers to come up with different solutions” (ibid.)

And so I have attempted, albeit in a partial way, to bring disparate strands of the literatures together with empirical data generated with the three under-represented groups, to explore what is essentially a subjective experience, albeit socially, culturally and politically influenced.

3.5 Location and sites

Grenley (a pseudonym to protect the study area’s anonymity) is usually characterised by its multiple disadvantage: its high numbers of children in ‘workless’ families; its prevalence of social housing; high crime; low educational achievement and poor health outcomes. It has no central shopping or service hub and most of its residents live on social housing estates dispersed along a formerly thriving (but still comparatively prosperous) main road with comfortably large, albeit slightly run-down, post-war semis. A busy motorway now runs parallel to and bypasses this main road. It is a ‘forgotten corner’ of the city: an area where many of its residents contend with the less measureable issues of isolation, drug and alcohol misuse, poor mental health and domestic abuse, the latter described anecdotally as endemic. There were 16 ECEC settings in Grenley as well as numerous child-minders comprising about 160 EYEs

in total and about 1700 children under the age of five years living there when I conducted this study.

3.6 Sampling strategy

Respondents from each of the three cohorts with the following characteristics were invited to participate:

- Lived/worked in Grenley
- Cared for at least one young child (adult respondents)
- Aged between two and four years (child respondents)
- Range of ethnicities (but, regarding the adults, ability to speak some English), ages, and carer roles e.g. mothers, fathers, grandparents.

I did not have a more specific purposive sampling strategy because, as far as I knew, this study was the first to explore the (subjective) well-being of young children, so there were no grounds in the existing literatures to do so. However, given that this study focussed on children who live in low-income areas, I asked agents to try to recruit as diverse a group of parents/carers as possible but to focus on those whose two-year-old children were/had been eligible for 15 hours per week of funded childcare, as this is one particular indicator of poverty. I also asked agents to recruit parents who were receiving support from universal services or from a single agency only. Parents with 'complex needs' were not invited to respond, as per the 'medium risk' ethical contract approved by the university.

Pseudonyms are used for all the study's respondents. At the start of the fieldwork period I asked adult respondents if they wanted to suggest their own pseudonyms but, as these early respondents chose not to, I stopped asking them. Instead, I picked pseudonyms for all respondents that reflected their cultural heritages but still supported their anonymity within this thesis. In terms of identifying racial categories, the EYEs provided those for the child respondents. I do not know whether these categories were originally provided by the parents/carers of the respondent children

although the use of standardised terminology suggest they were not. During the course of the interviews with adult respondents, some (but not all) described their cultural heritage or ethnicity. For the others, I ascribed a standardised racial category dependent on my own understanding and knowledge of the respondents. These categories are intended to support their anonymity within the thesis.

3.7 Recruitment principles

One of the underpinning principles informing recruitment was ensuring that respondents were unconnected. This was for practical and ethical reasons. First, I did not want to overburden respondents. Had I sought views from 'trios' of respondents i.e. the parent(s) and EYEs about a particular child, this could potentially have been too onerous. Second, keeping the cohorts separate meant respondents were more able to express their views and understandings of (child) well-being without constraining or being constrained by the views of other respondents. As I had only five EYE respondents by the end of the 'individual interviews' phase of the fieldwork, I decided to approach the obliging school that had let me recruit the cohort of child respondents to see if any of the EYEs from the reception class would be interested in participating. This enabled me to maintain the integrity of the study's ethical contract, as none of those EYEs at that point was responsible for teaching the study's child respondents.

3.7.1 Recruiting Early Years Educators

Given that I had a managerial role in Grenley during the study's fieldwork phase, I had ready access to the field but was not the gatekeeper to any of the potential respondents. So, I contacted gatekeepers of ECEC settings and sought their permission for agents to recruit respondents. I had prepared a 'participant information sheet' for both of the study's adult cohorts to support this process (see Appendix 1.1). EYEs were the most difficult group to recruit, partly because it was sometimes difficult for me to reach or ascertain the gatekeeper of the ECEC settings (for example, the gatekeeper/owner of one of the private settings I approached lived

abroad and so I contacted the manager who, when I explained the study, agreed to be a respondent thereby obviating the role of agent) and partly because it was sometimes difficult to ensure voluntary participation. One of the EYEs told me at the start of the introductory meeting that she had been “asked to volunteer” in my study. Another told me she would timetable a colleague (who she was responsible for managing) into my study because she was an NQT and “it will be good for her CPD”. In spite of the ethical safeguards I put in place to support voluntary participation, and therefore the study’s trustworthiness, these were sometimes managed by powerful individuals within ECEC settings. Being aware of these particular manipulations (there may have been others of which I was not) meant I could check with these two respondents before our interviews they were happy to proceed. They both said they were, but really, how could they not? Seven respondents were recruited: all were White British women working in a range of different roles (from managers to practitioners) in different ECEC settings (from private, voluntary and independent provision to a state maintained school and an academy).

The respondents were:

Respondent	Ethnicity	Further details	Attended introductory meeting?	Attended interview?	Attended final meeting with parents?
Paula	White British	EYE in private nursery (Withdrew before the end of fieldwork)	Yes	Yes	No
Liz		EYE in private nursery (Withdrew before the end of fieldwork)	Yes	Yes	No
Sharon		Child-minder	No	Yes	Yes
Jessica		EYE in primary school	No	Yes	Sent written response to questions
Kerry		EYE in community provision	No	Yes	Yes
Katie		EYE in primary school	No	Yes	No
Sian		EYE in primary school	No	Yes	No

Table 2: Early Years Educator respondents

3.7.2 Recruiting parents and carers

The Children's Centres' Outreach Workers and Centre Assistants acted as agents in the recruitment of the parent respondents, and the former also acted as supporters at the introductory and final meetings, as per my ethical application. The terms 'parents and carers' and 'mothers' are often conflated in childcare contexts. My sampling strategy involved the inclusion of a range of parents and carers. However, agents were only able to recruit mothers. Accordingly, this cohort is now referred to henceforth as 'mothers'. Agents recruited seven mothers in total. Four of them were White British, two were Black African and one was White Eastern European. Between them, they had 18 children, 10 of whom were under the age of five at the time the study was conducted.

The respondents were:

Respondent	Ethnicity	Number of children (under the age of five)	Children eligible for two year funding?
Imani	Black African	3 (1)	Yes
Lisa	White British	2 (1)	Yes
Adenike	Black African	2 (2)	No
Rachel	White British	2 (2)	Yes
Michelle	White British	5 (1)	Yes
Stacy	White British	3 (2)	Yes
Ewa	White European	1 (1)	Yes

Table 3: Parent respondents

3.7.3 Recruiting young children

One of the local primary schools volunteered their support to recruit children when I approached ECEC gatekeepers with information about my study. The EYEs at this setting acted as the study's agents. They approached the parents of potential child respondents with information about the study, sought their consent and directed them to me for more information. I made myself available at specified times should any of the parents or EYEs have needed more information. I have also included in my analysis, the data from the children with whom I conducted a pilot study at the start of the fieldwork period. 20 children in total, from two settings, were recruited as respondents and 18 of them assented to the

study: nine girls and nine boys; 12 of them were White British, the other eight being from a range of black and minority ethnic groups. This was representative of the population of young children in Grenley. Ten of the children were in receipt of FSM or had been eligible for two-year funding, again typical for the area.

The respondents were:

ECEC setting	Name	Age	Ethnicity	Before and/or After School Club	FSM or 2 year grant	Friend's name	Age	Ethnicity	FSM
Private nursery (pilot study)	Pam (Girl)	3	White British	N/A	No	Emily (Girl)	3	White British	No
	Jack* (Boy)	3	White British	N/A	Yes	N/A			
	Olly* (Boy)	3	White British	N/A	Yes				
	Ned* (Boy)	3	Dual heritage	N/A	Yes				
	John (Boy)	4	White British	N/A	No				
	Amy* (Girl)	2	Chinese	N/A	Yes				
School nursery class	Evie (Girl)	4	White British	No	Yes				
	Marissa (Girl)	3 at 1 st interview and 4 at 2 nd interview	Black British	No	No	Aurora (Girl)	3	White British	Yes
	Cristal (Girl)	3	White British	No	Yes	Marissa: one of study's participants			
	Kamran (Boy)	3	Black British	No	No	1 st interview with a (girl) friend whose parents did not provide consent so I deleted this interview.			
	William (Boy)	4	White British	Yes	No				
	Jeremy (Boy)	4	White British	Yes	No	N/A			
	Alisha (Girl)	3	Dual heritage	Yes	Yes				
	Renny (Boy)	3	Black British	No	No				
	Kenneth (Boy)	3	White British	No	Yes				

Table 4: Child respondents

* These children were educated in a separate room according to their families' socio-economic status and eligibility for grant funding for their two-year olds.

3.8 Methods of data generation

The data generation took place over five consecutive stages: The first four stages aided my engagement with RQ2.

3.8.1 Stage 1: Introductory meetings with adult respondents

I held two introductory meetings: one with the mothers and the other with EYEs. I audio-recorded these meetings and manually transcribed them to support analysis. Some respondents were not able to come to either of these meetings so I had separate discussions with them that were not recorded but about which I made notes.

Aside from allowing us some time to get to know each other, the meetings involved two components. First, I introduced the study and invited them to explore what they understood by the term 'thrive' (and other related terms) and their views on what helps young children to thrive (or not) in Grenley. Second, I asked respondents their ideas about the kinds of data they could gather to exemplify some of their ideas. These meetings lasted about 1½ hours and took place in August and September 2016.

Rationale for the meeting

My intention was for all respondents to have an opportunity to begin thinking about the concept of 'thriving' and other of its proxies, before generating the artefacts, which would inform the next stage of the study, thereby attempting to include them in co-constructing the methods. I had intended, following a pilot study with parents in my second research paper, to be sensitive to our heterogeneities by incorporating multiple creative elicitation methods, considered useful for investigating complex social situations (Kara, 2015:7; Boeije, 2010:171). For ethical reasons too, I decided it would be more appropriate to use creative elicitation methods because many front-line professionals and families report anecdotally as suffering from 'evaluation fatigue' – not least the researcher herself! However, I also suggested some means of creating the artefacts in recognition that not everyone has the time or inclination to be involved in co-construction. These included photographs, videos, poems, scenes from a play, drawings – all based on their children when

they are thriving or otherwise. A couple of the EYE respondents suggested using their observations of children from their EYFS 'learning journeys'. This also allowed us to explore the consequent ethical issues as they would have needed to seek consent from parents to do so.

The introductory meetings (also with the children) enabled me to begin to build relationships with respondents and to mitigate any possible experience of the research as disempowering (as recommended by Salmon & Rickaby, 2014:32). I already knew several of the adult respondents owing to my presence in the field and so this introductory meeting was also important for me to explain that I was not an expert of well-being and to begin to de-centre my authority (as recommended by Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011:550) as a practitioner with 'role power' and as a doctoral researcher. Asking them about their views of the term 'thriving' and their preferred phrases was part of this enquiry.

3.8.2 Stage 2: Individual semi-structured interviews with adults

A month or so after the introductory meetings, allowing time for respondents to generate data in response to the research questions, I undertook a series of semi-structured interviews with each of them. These interviews were audio-recorded and manually transcribed for analysis. The questions I had prepared were shaped by the concepts I had derived from my initial review of the literatures on the term 'thrive' which are described in Chapter Two, Part Two. Each of these meetings lasted, on average, one hour and took place between October 2016 and May 2017.

Semi-structured interview schedule for adults	
General questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways are children (not) thriving in this situation? • Why are children (not) thriving in this situation? • What helps/hinders children from thriving in this situation? • What could be different? • What could there be more/less of?
Beings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think the child is feeling in this situation? • How do you think the child is affected by these circumstances?
Doings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the child like doing the most? Is this reflected in the picture? • How is the child being supported (or not) to develop the skills she will need to thrive in later life?
Havings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do/would material resources support children to thrive in this situation? • In what ways are children affected by the provision (or lack of) material resources in this situation?
Other questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any other situations or people that you have not been able to capture in these materials that you think throws any light on children's ability to thrive (or not) in this area?

Table 5: Semi-structured interview schedule for adults

Rationale for the interviews and issues arising

A couple of the mothers compiled lists of factors that helped and hindered their child/ren to/from thriving. Another mother audio-recorded her responses as she had thought of them, and we listened to the recordings in our interview, stopping her recording device when I wanted to ask questions or when she wanted to elaborate. Most of the adult respondents, however, cited lack of time as the reason they did not bring artefacts to our meetings.

“One shot interviews” are sometimes described as “over-rated” (Boeije, 2010:175) or intimidating (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011:551). The group meetings were intended to mitigate this potential effect. I also invited all respondents to bring a friend to our interview, if they wanted, but none of them did (apart from the children). It has been argued that focus groups,

...allow women to connect with each other collectively, to share their own experiences, and to ‘reclaim their humanity’ in a nurturing context (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011:550)

However, my experience of the individual interview/conversations with the mothers, to some extent, contradicted this claim. It occurred to me that the focus group might also have been a way of supporting disciplinary discourses. For example, one of the quieter mothers confided to me in our interview that she did not do some of the things one of the more extrovert respondents suggested in the focus group that she did to support her children's well-being. Another mother suggested at the end of our interview that it had been like a counselling session, an opportunity to unburden. The lack of access to 'talking therapies' by working-class women in comparison to their more affluent peers (Ballinger & Wright, 2007; Holman, 2013) may have had a bearing on this.

Perhaps more important than the questions I asked was how I asked them. I used the approach (with adults at least) described as the "interview guide approach" (Cohen et al 2011:413). I had developed several questions based on the sensitising concepts arising from the initial literature review, and used them as a framework for a conversation with respondents. I did not ask these questions in the same way or order for each of the adult respondents. First, because I wanted to ensure that they understood the questions in the same way (as recommended by Cohen et al, 2011:412). Their different responses to my questions also took me in different directions. And so,

The focus was therefore on responding to these stories in ways that were valuing and empowering by listening, attending to and recognising their care journey. (Salmon & Rickaby, 2014:32)

In retrospect, I was also guided by an understanding that there is "no intimacy without reciprocity" (Oakley, 1981:49). I was not expecting the conversations to be 'intimate' and the ones with the EYEs, on the whole, were not. But, some of the mothers disclosed very personal information and so I also occasionally and briefly disclosed some of my own. This felt like a natural, human thing to do, not only to "minimise status differences" (Salmon, & Rickaby, 2014:33) but because I was not, nor did I want them

to feel that I was plundering them for their data. I was careful that my occasional disclosures did not then result in a discussion about me, nor did any of the respondents use this to pursue my stories. The conversations with mothers in particular became more like oral histories i.e. “personal experience narratives” (Shopes, 2011:451) implying “a recognition of the heroics of everyday life, a celebration of the quotidian, an appeal to the visceral.” (ibid.)

3.8.3 Stage 3: Introductory ‘meeting(s)’ with the children

Researching with young children about their subjective well-being necessitated a different approach from that with the adults. It also required a different approach from that used by researchers of older children’s subjective well-being. Subjective well-being is usually measured in two ways (The Children’s Society, 2017): cognitively - through life satisfaction surveys; and affectively - through discussion or questionnaires relating to moods or emotional states. Increasingly, studies integrate both approaches (for example, see latest UNICEF report 2013 on child well-being in rich countries). Cognitive capacity, however, is always privileged in studies as it “is known to be a more stable concept affect” (The Children’s Society, 2017:8).

Studies involving children (all from the age of eight years) in considerations of their SWB (see for example, Cooke et al, 2018; Gonzalez-Carrasco et al, 2019) have focussed on the conceptualisation of well-being as principally concerned with one particular dimension i.e. hedonia (associated with affective states) and eudaimonia (associated with developed capacities for cognition). Gonzalez-Carrasco et al (2019) for example, who conducted their study with 9-14 year olds, claim that eudaimonia, including “having life objectives” (Gonzalez-Carrasco et al, 2019:18) was only relevant to older children. They conclude by suggesting this has implications for the education of young children (for whom a “hedonic conception prevails” (ibid.) However, it could be argued that again, these researchers’ interpretations are still predicated on a child development model and confined by seeing eudaimonia and

hedonia in binary ways, not recognising again, that these considerations might also be equally applied to the potential well-being, or otherwise, of adults.

The literatures suggest that involving young children in considerations of their own well-being is about more than method and that ethics are also crucial (Bath, 2013; Ben-Arieh, 2005; Palaiologou, 2014). In fact, the two go “hand in hand” (Ben-Arieh, 2005: 587). As it is often difficult for young children to express views about their well-being in ways that adults find easy to understand, they are reliant on inter-subjectivity and interpretation and therefore on more ethical praxis (Palaiologou, 2014:689). Commentators suggest that this is challenging work, not least because of prevailing deficit social constructions of young children, which partly inform the power differentials between children and adults (Bath, 2013:363; Ben-Arieh, 2005:587). However, many of these considerations are relevant to researching with adults, as these commentators also highlight.

As a result of these considerations, the methods of data generation with the children were similar to those with adults and represented an attempt to be sensitive to children’s heterogeneities. However, and crucially, I was unable, owing to young children’s embryonic cognitive capacities, coupled with their developing capacity to express their thoughts and feelings, to ask them directly about their views about their well-being. Instead, I used the sensitising concepts (‘beings’, ‘doings’ and ‘havings’) to ask them what they liked and disliked. I was guided by advice from Clark & Moss (2001) who developed the Mosaic Approach (and others who have used it, for example, Lancaster, 2003) to be sensitive to young children’s differential capacities for dialogue by employing multi-methods to create a mosaic of their views, to gain a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

This pedagogical process of ‘listening’ involved gaining the assent of participating children, not just relying on the consent of their

parents/carers. To do so, I spent a day playing with them in their ECEC settings, getting to know them and introducing the elicitation resources (described below). Those children whose parents had not consented to the research were also encouraged to play with the resources so they too had an opportunity to explore them alongside the others, to ensure that the study was inclusive.

The participating children, having gained some familiarity with the resources and having received verbal information from me about the study, decided whether and which of the resources to take home over the weekend/half term holiday to generate the data. I liaised with their parents about this to ensure that they were happy with and had sight of the information their children brought back to me, crucial for ethical reasons. Shortly following this, I spoke with the children in their ECEC settings to listen to their views, supported by their visual/audio data, on what they like and dislike (as indicative of their well-being). The children had the opportunity to withdraw their assent at various stages of this process. I tried to be sensitive to their different ways of expressing their wish to withdraw from the study. Spending time with them and their friends supported me to become attuned to their ways of communicating, which was important as I conducted the interviews without the presence of their key carers or parents, in order to safeguard the participating children's anonymity and privacy.

Similar to the adult respondents (and for the same rationale) the children had a range of ways they could generate the data, according to their interests. These were drawing/photographing/videoing/audio recording what they (dis) liked using a range of creative elicitation resources. These included clipboards with an integral tape recorder, 'Tuffcams' and a range of digital cameras. They chose one resource and took it home for the weekend/half term holiday.

The children practised using these resources within their settings and I retained these photographs for analysis (in the main study after the pilot)

having sought written permission from the school to do so. In the second ECEC setting, I also made observations (as per Shopes, 2011) of the children, following the pilot study, in recognition that some of the children were not able to fully articulate their views using speech. I returned to the ethics committee to seek approval for this additional method following the pilot study, and sought retrospective consent from the parents of the child respondent who, in the pilot study, did not speak but who responded creatively to the study and its data elicitation tools. The pilot study was conducted in July 2016 and the main study in February 2017.

3.8.4 Stage 4: Individual semi-structured interviews with young children

Again following advice from the authors of the Mosaic Approach, I conducted these conversations with each of the children and my sock puppet research assistants (Zig and Razor – the latter named by the children). Puppets were used as a means of engaging the children and also because young children often find it easier to share or confide information with puppets and dolls (Lancaster, 2003:43). I told them that these creatures were from Outer Space and had come to Grenley to find out what children like and dislike.



Zig



Razor

(Zig's side-kick who appeared later in the study)

The interviews were audio-recorded and manually transcribed for analysis. The shortest of these conversations was five minutes and the longest was thirty-seven minutes. On average they tended to last about twenty minutes. Similar to the other cohorts, the children were asked if they would like to invite a friend to the ‘interviews’. Several of them took up this opportunity, the only cohort to do so. The parents of many of these friends had not provided their consent for me to interview them, therefore, I wrote to them (See Appendix 1.3) seeking their retrospective consent. Some did not provide this consent so I deleted the interviews. I used broadly similar questions to those with the adults, shaped by the concepts derived from ‘distributive approaches’ to well-being. These were:

Semi-structured interview schedule for children	
Doings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you like/not like doing? • What do you like to learn?
Beings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel in this picture/when you do these things?
Havings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you like to have more than anything else? • What would you buy if you had loads of money?
Other questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there anything else that you like/dislike that is not in this picture?

Table 6: Semi-structured interview schedule for children

4.8.5 Stage 5: Final meeting with adult respondents

Six respondents attended the final meeting: Imani, Adenike, Lisa and Stacey (mothers); Sharon and Kerry (EYEs – but also mothers). An Outreach worker supported the meeting.

I had, in advance of this meeting, sent a synthesis of the anonymised data from the three cohorts, against the initial sensitising concepts (see Appendix 4). This meeting had two components. First, we discussed the initial findings thereby providing opportunities for some measure of member validation, supporting the study’s trustworthiness (Boeije, 2010:177). Second, respondents were invited to begin to consider some

of the conundrums arriving from the initial analysis of the data. Along with the synthesised data, I also sent the following questions to adult respondents in preparation for the meeting.

These were:

Questions asked of adult respondents in the final meeting
What are the roles of play in supporting children to thrive?
To what extent, if at all, are children's 'beings' and 'becomings' affected by focusing on their 'becomings' particularly in early years practice? If adults are mainly focusing on children's futures, what impact does that have on their current well-being?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of children going to school at increasingly earlier ages?

Table 7: Final meeting interview schedule with adults

These questions enabled me to continue to gather responses to RQ2 about conceptualisations of well-being, and also RQ3 about implications for policy and practice. I audio-recorded and manually transcribed this meeting for further analysis. This meeting lasted about 1½ hours and took place in June 2017.

3.9 Analysis

3.9.1 Data sets

By the end of the fieldwork period I had the following data sets:

- Transcriptions of the two introductory meetings with adult respondents
- Transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews with each of the study's respondents
- Visual/audio imagery from the children taken within their ECEC setting (main study).

- Written observations of some of the child respondents in their ECEC settings
- Transcription of the final meeting with six of the adult respondents. (Another of the adult respondents provided me with written feedback in response to my questions as she could not attend this final meeting).

Analysis of these data sets was conducted over two phases: first, during fieldwork and second, at the end of the fieldwork period following further literature review resulting, in turn, from the fieldwork. That said, because each of the respondent's and cohort's data sets were unique, they required supplementary methods of analysing them, as described below. So over an extended period, I employed analytical pluralism in an attempt to militate against arriving at a priori conclusions and searching for evidence to support my own socio-political positions (as advised by Clarke et al, 2015 & Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011:548).

3.9.2 First phase of analysis

Open codes were ascribed to words, phrases, sentences and images, and matched to the sensitising concepts ('beings', 'doings' and 'havings') they best fit. Sensitising concepts have been described as giving,

...the user the general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances...sensitising concepts suggest directions along which to look." (Blumer 1954 cited in Bowen, 2006:2)

The sensitising concepts enabled me to gain some initial purchase on the data. This preliminary analysis began to surface other issues that these sensitising concepts did not appear to accommodate. I reflected on these with other respondents I interviewed in the later stages of fieldwork, in keeping with the tradition of Grounded Theory, specifically Constant Comparative Analysis (as suggested by Fram, 2013 and Oktay, 2012).

Constant Comparative Analysis (an iterative analytic process that supports inductive and constant re-coding of data as the fieldwork is being conducted) can be used in tandem with Grounded Theory as a way of maintaining an 'emic' perspective ("experience-near concepts") with theoretical frameworks that maintain an 'etic' perspective ("experience-distant concepts") (Geertz, 1983:58). As a novice researcher I initially used the sensitising concepts deductively, but empirical work surfaced other missing elements and I returned to the literatures to explore these further, at which stage I introduced the concept of 'belonging'. This iterative process therefore involved a gradual synthesis of 'emic' and 'etic' concepts and allowed me to hold on to the rigour and close attention to the richness of the data alongside dispensing with the premise that data is neutral or value free.

So, for example, I started to ask additional open questions of adult respondents regarding their views of the relational nature of well-being, as it was a prominent feature of the earlier interviews, thereby introducing the possibility of falsification. Following this, a synthesis of my analysis of the data from each of the cohorts was presented to the adult respondents at the final meeting (see Appendix 4). Contradictions and complexities resulting from this initial analysis were used to shape further questions to the adult respondents at this final meeting. The rationale was to clarify and/or complicate their conceptualisations of well-being, thereby allowing further exploration of RQ2.

3.9.3 Second phase of analysis

In a similar way to the first phase of the analysis, open codes were ascribed to words, phrases, sentences and images from each of the cohorts' data sets, but this time matching them to a fuller iteration of the theoretical framework (outlined in Chapter 2). The findings from this process are presented in Chapters 4 - 6.

In both phases of the analytical process I attempted to be receptive to the following principles: first, and consistent with Constant Comparative Analysis (Oktaý, 2012:56) I particularly considered phrases that described or evoked strong emotions. Second, experienced practitioners of Constant Comparative Analysis advised caution regarding the analysis of the data against the theoretical concepts. In other words, concepts were not treated as simply categorical. Their different dimensions and/or interpretations were recognised (Oktaý, 2012:66). This led me, for example, to reflect on the ways 'belonging' was being used and interpreted.

Third, I also tried to be sensitive to the different data sets from each of the cohorts. So, for example, my analysis and presentation of the children's data drew from conversation analysis (as per Perakyla & Ruusuvoori, 2011) i.e. focusing on both the form and content of our conversations. This enabled me to reflect on the ways in which power and inequalities are reproduced and resisted in societies, especially in relation to young children. This approach spoke to the concept under investigation. Narrative portraits are presented of some of the mothers' data. Given the powerful nature of their data (which I have previously described as more akin to narrative or oral histories) the intention here is to maintain a sense of the holism and synergy of the interviews (as per Cohen et al, 2011:427). Again I suggest this speaks to another element of the concept under investigation. The EYEs data by contrast, given some of the injunctions to participate, demanded closer scrutiny of their discursive practices and this is reflected in their findings chapter. However, I used the theoretical framework as a uniting analytic mechanism while attempting to respect the different qualities of each cohort's data.

3.10 Trustworthiness, ethics & researcher integrity

To support my study's trustworthiness, information about the processes and safeguards I put in place in preparation for the fieldwork is available

in the appendices. Ethical considerations, especially important to this study involving young children, run like a thread through this chapter emphasising that they have under-pinned every aspect of the study's design. These include arrangements for permissions from gatekeepers, provision of information to respondents, the avoidance of coercion by the deployment of agents, the requirement for written consent, adherence to safeguarding measures and the use of pseudonyms to protect the privacy and anonymity of respondents and locations. In addition, the information sheets and consent forms were distributed to all interested respondents and a couple of weeks given for their deliberation. Respondents (and parents of child respondents) were informed that data used in any outputs or publications would be anonymised. Respondents were offered and reminded of opportunities to withdraw from the study at any time. Some adults did so owing to their relocation or before the data generation phases (and children did so in different ways). Digital data were stored securely with password protected accessibility. As such, I confirm that this study is compliant with the medium risk proposal(s) I submitted and was given permission to undertake. However, my approach (as I hope I have and will continue to demonstrate) was one that aligned with "situated ethics" (Wood, 2014:6 but also Chase, 2011: 424) and not just procedural compliance.

I eschew traditional positivist conceptions of research quality such as validity and reliability as endorsed by various commentators on qualitative methodologies (Boeije, 2010:172). Instead I provide other characteristics of quality: confirmability, dependability, transferability and credibility (ibid.). To do so, I have undertaken some member checking, negative case analysis, 'thick description' of phenomena and an audit trail. These are recommended as supporting the visibility and verifiability of conceptual development in qualitative studies (Bowen, 2006:3). In addition, and in alignment with advice about qualitative research, I have tried to include other criteria that are not necessarily methodological. For example, I have tried to treat equally each group's data (Boeije, 2010:172) because I wanted them to have parity. So, even though the

children did not have the same verbal skills and experiences as the adults (this can often be discerned by my asking them to repeat what they said “in a big loud voice”) I have chosen to represent them as equal players. This is in alignment with this study’s ontological and epistemological priorities. My treatment of the cohorts’ transcripts was another ethical issue. I chose to render respondents’ speech into what has been described as a “standardised” transcript i.e. one that replicated the conversations but created a coherent and readable text by removing a lot of the paralanguage (Smyth & McInerney, 2013:11). My rationale for this was, as I explained in my analysis section, that I drew on a range of analytical methods obviating a need for me to produce detailed ‘preservationist’ transcripts (ibid.).

Another common recommendation among commentators writing about qualitative methodologies is for the researcher to reflect on how their positions, identities and characteristics influence the co-construction of the data (Fram, 2013:12). Bates (2014:227) cites a range of ‘methodology’ experts who consider reflexivity to be “crucial for establishing authenticity in qualitative research and fundamental to the integrity of the researcher”. She extrapolates from these that reflexivity needs to involve detachment, self-distancing and self-restraint that “enable the researcher to recognise his/her epistemological influences” (ibid.). However, as I have already argued, my ‘epistemological influences’ were shaped by my socio-economic context and history and I was not ‘detached’ from them. Nonetheless, given my position in the field (i.e. my dual role as a researcher and a front-line professional in a position of authority employed by the Local Authority in Grenley) I was obliged in my application for ethical approval to consider how I might mitigate my ‘role power’. And so, in addition to the focus groups, I described militating against my potential over-influence on the three respondent cohorts by, for example, giving them as much choice as possible, within reason, over the venue and timing of the interviews.

However, there were other of my characteristics and identities possibly influencing data generation. My visible characteristics (white, middle-aged woman) and invisible but potentially discernible characteristics (class, sexuality, religious affiliations for example) intersecting with those of my respondents, may have also influenced this study, albeit differentially. These identities and characteristics may well, in turn, have intersected with those of others that were surfaced during some of the interviews: my own parental and marital status, place of residence, for example, or indeed others such as accent and body size. How these affected my relationships with the respondents and what they felt able or willing to tell me were, as Boeije (2010:175) suggests, difficult to discern and different for each of the respondents.

In commentaries on qualitative research, the practice of reflexivity is usually understood to be a hallmark of quality research (Skeggs, 2002:352). However, some commentators have cautioned against this view warning that it is a “manifestation of a ‘cultural obsession with the mirror’ and narcissistic tendencies” (Bleakley, 1999:320, but see also Skeggs 2002). Bates maintains that:

The discourse of reflection becomes a disciplinary mechanism producing an educated person who, in accordance with the current political doctrine, is employable, successful, ready for life and work in the ‘learning society’. (Bates, 2014:235)

So, for example, as previously described, one of the EYE respondents was timetabled into my study as it would “be good for her CPD” and therefore possibly into this “disciplinary ritual of forced reflection” (Bates, 2014:235). Similarly, in being positioned as a qualitative researcher, I was also harnessed to this disciplinary and potentially narcissistic project of ‘reflexivity’ that does not appear to be an expectation of quantitative researchers. Consequently, I suggest my positioning as a qualitative researcher along with having to use specific methods to conduct this study, owing to its socio-political context, could be seen as speaking to Skegg’s view that women have often been put to use for “voyeurism,

surveillance and appropriation in research” (2002:355). I have attempted to straddle the tension imbued in reflexivity i.e. to be accountable for the study as the researcher while remaining cognisant of the wider ‘dance’ in which my respondents and I were equally but differently enmeshed, as outlined at the start of this chapter.

That said, and more pragmatically, I had considered the potential vulnerability of my study’s respondents (including myself) in research papers 2 (Street, 2015a) & 3 (Street, 2015b), the effects that participation in my study might have had on the respondents and ways I might mitigate these. So, for example, a few days after an interview with one of the mothers, I had a discussion with her about some of the issues she raised. As a result, we completed a joint referral to a service to support her with some concerns she had about her child’s health.

Balanced against the potential pitfalls associated with my dual position as someone in authority conducting doctoral research, were some benefits. In spite of the bureaucratic turmoil described earlier, at the start of the fieldwork for this study, I had been working in Grenley for over a year. Given my longstanding presence (living and working in the city for several decades) I had extensive knowledge, understanding and experience of the conditions and experiences of local families with young children and those of EYEs. I was also aware of the type and range of services that would be available to them should they have been needed. Also, in some cases, I may have had the trust of the research respondents. This is not to say they may not have participated in a study conducted by an academic employed by a University or another local professional, for example, but that they may have told another ‘truth’ to them.

3.11 Summary

In this chapter I have outlined how I have designed the study to address RQs 2 & 3. I have described my positionality, the rationales for the methodology, resulting methods of data generation, storage and analysis.

Underpinning these, I have also considered the ethical issues arising from the study's design and their practical implementation, not least in relation to researching with young children. By so doing, I have demonstrated how I have supported the study's trustworthiness.

Chapter Four: Findings - The Children

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the data generated with the children are presented. They were achieved by analysing their data against the concepts emanating from the theoretical framework of child well-being outlined at the end of Chapter 2, Part One. In so doing the ways in which children conceptualise their subjective well-being are depicted. A new concept is also introduced: 'being done to' in contrast to 'doings', which I suggest begins to partly elucidate the social and institutional structures that potentially militate against (some) children's agential capacities to achieve well-being.

4.2 'Beings'

The children demonstrated overwhelmingly that they are 'beings' in the here-and-now. None of the children discussed what they wanted to be or do in the future, or even that they had much, if any, future intentionality. There were countless examples of this: Marissa, when I asked her what she most liked doing, answered, "Playing with Zig" even though they had just been introduced; William spent most of our conversation making explosion noises while playing with his "fire aeroplane" which he had just constructed from Mobilo; and Jack wanted to take photos of his friends in nursery during our conversation. The children were not future-oriented and appeared unconcerned about their 'becomings'.

These examples also begin to illustrate the abundant curiosities of the children, which they demonstrated in a range of ways, not only with me but also my research assistants and the data elicitation resources. They were curious in other ways too. Emily, for example, when I mentioned that Zig was tired and wanted to go to sleep mentioned, "But he hasn't got closey eyes" to which Pam contributed by asking, "What does he

close his eyes like?” This collaborative incisiveness on the girls’ part demonstrated a criticality that took me completely by surprise, as I had not considered the implications of this feature of Zig’s anatomy.

4.3 ‘Belonging’

What the examples above also begin to indicate is the predominance of the data that spoke to the importance of relationships to well-being. The children told me directly and intimated to me in a range of other ways, that relationships are crucial to their (well) being. Owing to the prevalence of data that speak to the influence of relationships on children’s well-being, I categorise them in what follows, to explore how each may influence their well-beings, although in reality these relationships become “tangled up” (Marissa: referring to Zig’s hair) and influence each other in myriad ways.

4.3.1 Relationships with their families

On the whole, the children spoke very lovingly of their relationships with their families, which for some included their pets (Olly – two dogs and a cat, and Jeremy – a big dog). This was also evident in their photos and videos. Olly, for example, took many photographs of his older sister who looked lovingly into the camera at him. He also spoke of his concern for her as, he told me with a worried expression on his face, she had bumped her head earlier that week and had cried. Some children imagined the existence of additional siblings (Evie and Isla for example) and talked to me about them as if they were real. Jeremy too, told me at both interviews that he had a younger sister who lived with his grandma. His teacher told me he was an only child.

Family and extended family members often helped children with their learning. Alisha mentioned she and her grandma had read together in the half-term holiday; William and Evie had visited a museum (William with his mum, dad and older sister and Evie with her dad and brothers) and

Jeremy had been aeroplane spotting with his dad and uncle. Marissa during her half-term holiday, which she spent abroad with her mother, older sister and brother, took a camera with her. The photographs and videos she took showed how she and her older sister had played and experimented with it, fully exploring all its applications.

What was characteristic of most of the images the children showed me, however, were the loving relationships with their families: Olly's mum for example, pulling her tongue out at him and Jeremy's mum waving at him as the boys took their photos. Some of the images the children took at home depicted their parents at rest or relaxing: Olly's dad asleep on the living-room settee, for example, and his mum making a woollen blanket. Most showed the busy-ness of the children's parents: John's mum, for example, was a blur in the kitchen as she was cooking and he told me that his dad home-tutored on top of his full-time job as a teacher.

4.3.2 Relationships with each other in the ECEC settings

What was abundantly clear throughout my contact with the children in their ECEC settings was the significance of their relationships with each other. Being in an educational setting gave most of the children the opportunity to make friends. Six of the children invited a friend to the interviews. Most of the children told me, or at least demonstrated to me (in the case of Amy who could not speak {English}), that they like to develop friendships and play with their friends. The games and activities I observed them playing often necessitated the involvement of others: hide and seek, card games, the role-play corner, for example. Other activities that could be undertaken singly were often enjoyed with each other: riding bikes, playing with the Mobilo and play dough. Most of the children appeared to be adept at making friends, not only by inviting others to their interviews with me, but also by the way they communicated and developed affiliations with each other. For example, Evie and Isla showed how they developed their affiliation and friendship with each other by

jointly undertaking and supporting each other to observe and explore Zig on the first occasion they met him:

Martina: Zig would like to know...she would like to know what do you do at school?

[Girls ignore Martina's question and start to observe and point to Zig]

Evie: Red

Isla: Red
= Evie: And blue

Isla: And blue [they are pointing to Zig's rainbow coloured neck]
=Evie: And red

Isla: And grey

Evie: And green and yellow and orange and red and red and green and yellow and orange [Isla is simultaneously humming rhythmically to Evie's words]

Each of the conversations with respondents, who invited friends, involved one or both of them helping each other in some way. During the conversation with Cristal and Marissa, for example, Marissa offered to return to the main room to fetch Cristal's medicine. Supporting one another in these ways enabled the children to participate in games (Evie and Isla), stay healthy (Cristal), work out how to use the equipment (Pam and Emily), take pride in their achievements (John), demonstrate their caring and empathic natures (Marissa), develop their language and communication skills (All) and have fun (All).

Yet their relationships with each other were not always mellifluous. Marissa, for example, disclosed that there were bullies in her class and that she did not like it because "they don't follow our values". When I asked her what her values were, she told me:

Marissa: Listen

Martina: Listening?

Marissa: Yes, that's our values

Aurora: [rolling onto the floor] My values are fall over

Martina: Your values are falling over? [Laughing]

Aurora: Yeah

Martina: [laughing] Yeah, I can see your values are falling over

This extract suggests a number of things about children's relationships and potential to be well-beings (and to treat well other beings) in ECEC settings. First, that it provides them, not only with opportunities to bully and be bullied but also to learn how to deal with conflict and bullying. This particular ECEC setting provided the children with a set of values they could potentially use to protect themselves. Marissa demonstrated that she was willing and able to whistle blow on others' transgressions and lobby powerful adults for her own protection as well as that of her friends. However, that she appeared not to let her brother play with her camera on holiday, for example, may indicate that she was able to mistreat others as much as she was able to call it out. Aurora, on the other hand, may have been trying to participate in our conversation and used the word 'values' as a semantic lever to do so but may also have been indicating, inadvertently or otherwise, that she was capable of deciding upon her own values which, as if to further emphasise her intervention, she physically demonstrated too.

4.3.3 Relationships with the wider community

Some of the children seemed happy to take on the mantle of being representatives of children as a group when I introduced them to Zig. Marissa, for example, mentioned "we" like to play in answer to Zig's enquiry, as if she were acting as spokesperson for all local children. This connected in various ways to some of the children's sense of 'belonging', both to their geographical place and also to each other as a group.

Amy, who was two at the time I conducted the study and who could not speak (English), did not play very much with others, possibly because she did not yet have the language to do so. Instead, I observed that she would mainly hang around unobtrusively observing others. She delighted in the audio clipboard when I introduced the data elicitation resources to the children, and on one occasion, when I was chatting with a small group of children outside by the willow den, unbeknown to us, recorded our conversation. When she played it back and we heard this conversation, all started laughing, as it was a surprise to us to hear ourselves. When we stopped laughing, Amy again pressed 'play' and everyone heard our previous laughter as she had again unobtrusively recorded it. The other children, hearing their laughter, thought this hilarious and laughed all the more. This could be interpreted as an attempt on Amy's part to create a connection between herself and the other children at nursery and to 'belong' to the group by making a creative intervention into their play. She performed this clever and spirited act in spite of not yet being able to speak English.

As part of their interest in the wider community, beyond their homes and education settings, was their love of playing outside which virtually all the children spoke about with great enthusiasm.

4.3.4 Relationship with Zig and Razor

The children were also, for the most part, very keen to become friends with Zig and demonstrated their concern for him in different ways. Ned, for example, after checking if Zig was a dragon or was "dangerous", offered the puppet an imaginary cup of tea and pretended to feed him. Ned also told me that he would look after Zig, save him from "the bad guys" and showed Zig how to look after a (toy) baby. Olly too was equally affectionate with the puppet and gave him a kiss at the end of our conversation. Another boy who approached us, curious to find out what

we were doing, put an exploratory hand in to Zig's mouth and was admonished by Olly who told him Zig did not like it when people stick fingers in his mouth. This incident also intimated some of the tensions between their caring natures and their curiosity.

Zig also provided John with an opportunity to reflect on one of the ways he told me he enjoyed learning and to berate me for thwarting Zig's ability to learn, in a way that indicated his incredulity at the injustice I clearly meted out to my research assistant:

John: I never knew he could stay in a bag [tuts in disgust]

Martina: You don't sound very impressed

John: I actually never knew [tuts again]

[Martina laughs]

John: It's weird

Martina: Why is it weird? Where do you think he would live?

John: I thought he would live in your office

Martina: He does! He lives in a bag in my office.

John: But why does he have to live in a bag? Why wouldn't you put him on the side?

Martina: Oh maybe I should

John: And he can watch you

Martina: Oh yeah that's true actually yeah...it's kind of obvious really isn't it?

John: My dad always lets me watch him tutor

Martina: Watch him what, sorry?

John: Tutor...tutoring

Martina: Oh does your dad tutor?

John: Yeah he lets me watch him work

John's dad was a science teacher and he went on to describe his own joy and sense of achievement when I asked him if he was good at science too:

Martina: ... Are you good at science as well John?

John: Yeah, I've done it because I got a pink [indistinguishable] put a bit of pom pom in it [indistinguishable] wash on it and then I stirred it with a paint brush and it turned pink

Martina: Did it? How did you feel when you were doing that?

John: I feel so happy

Martina: Really? How come?

John: Because it was really fun doing it. It was chemical...I used chemicals!

4.3.5 Relationships with the researcher

I approached the data generation with the children expecting them to provide answers to my research questions (which they did) and, given their young ages, to do so in unexpected ways. What I had not accounted for was how my relationship with them, i.e. our inter-subjectivities, could illuminate aspects of supporting and hindering their well-beings (and mine).

The children, for the most part, seemed keen to make friends with me and were generally helpful and cooperative. For example, Olly deferred his exploration of a discovery of spiders in the playground to show me his photographs and answer my questions. Jack wanted to take photos of his friends outside but complied with my request to show me the photos he had already taken. Other examples of this happened inadvertently when the data elicitation equipment either did not work when the children took them home (Ned - which resulted in a conversation during which we just played together and made friends), or I struggled to work the IT

equipment advertised as suitable for use by three year olds. This suggested a number of well-being's ingredients. First, was their joy at being, and being acknowledged for their competences. Second, I sometimes had no choice but to give up some of my power and knowledge and admit that I could not work the equipment and did not know what I was doing with it, so we were more equal in these exchanges. Third, it provided opportunities for some of them to demonstrate and practise their photography and IT skills by sharing them with me. Lastly, it also provided us with opportunities to make friends.

That said, the children sometimes drew on my status as a powerful adult with usually more knowledge and different experiences (most of the time I was able to show the children how to work the equipment). In the following extract, Emily called upon me for an explanation:

Emily: Er...Dertina [mispronouncing my name] why has he got two teethes? [Referring to Zig]

Martina: Why has he got two teeth?

Emily: Yeah

Martina: So he can eat his food...and chew his food

However, apart from modelling the commonly accepted plural form of 'tooth', my knowledge, or perceived expectation that I should be the knowledgeable adult, prevented me from initiating questions that might have supported them to imagine and explore their views about why Zig might have only two teeth. This may perhaps have supported an aspect of their well-being (i.e. the freedom to critically and creatively explore their environment).

Many of the children also called upon me for protection of themselves (Marissa for example, as previously mentioned) and their resources. During my conversation with Pam and Emily, for example, we were

ambushed by John and Olly who came over to check out what was happening:

Martina: I'm just talking to Pam and Emily guys, so I'll see you later Olly.

Olly: I want it. It's mine [referring to the audio clipboard with which the girls are playing]

Martina: Olly, that's Pam's. Please could you give it her back? [Olly has snatched the recorder from Pam] Pam wants that back please Olly. You can play with something else Olly.

John: Can I play with that?

Martina: No John. I'm talking to Pam and Emily and when you bring your camera in, we can play with that.

John: What is it?

Martina: It's a recorder. Right ok John, scram! I'm talking to Pam

Pam: [wailing] He's not going to give it me! [Referring to Olly]

Martina: [to John] I'll talk to you tomorrow when you bring your camera in.

John [ignoring Martina] Why does he squeak? [Referring to Zig]

Pam: [wailing] Give it back! Go and get it! Give it back to me!

Martina: [calling on the help of an EYE in the room] I just want to talk to Pam and Emily.

During the course of generating data with the children, particularly in the school nursery unit, incidences like this happened regularly and I was often called upon to intervene and protect those who felt aggrieved. My role as an adult who brought exciting new resources into the ECEC settings, initiated some complex responses from the children. Renny for example, was not in the group I included in the study but I was open to including other children who demonstrated an interest in it. Renny was the only child who managed to impress upon me his interest (although there may have been others I missed) and his father consented to his participation.

Along with the other children, he too demonstrated that he conceptualised his well-being, if he could be said to conceptualise it at all, in the present moment. He was not especially interested in answering the questions I used my sock puppet research assistants to help me elicit, but largely to play with them and the camera equipment. When I reflect on the interview (and even during the course of it) I recognise that he may have been using his ingenuity to work out ways of getting his needs/wants met (i.e. to play with the sock puppet) by indulging me – the powerful adult who had brought lots of interesting but limited resources into the nursery unit.

Martina: So would you mind asking...would you mind answering some questions that Zig has?

Renny: I can do that. I can put my hand on [meaning 'in'?] that.

Martina: Can you?

Renny: Yeah

[Squeaking noises from Zig]

Renny: I can do it now

Martina: I know but shall we have a chat with Zig first?

Renny: Yeah

Martina: Hang on he wants to ask a question.

In this passage Renny mentions a couple of times that he is able to operate the sock puppet and would like to have a go “now” but I was clearly hell-bent on meeting my research agenda and ignored these obvious cues. This interview took place towards the end of the day and I remember being exhausted. During the conversation that followed, Renny diligently answered the questions with which I bombarded him: what he liked doing at school, who his friends were, what he liked doing with his friends, what he liked playing with, what else he liked doing, who he played with at home, if he had any brothers and sisters, if he had any money what would he buy, before finally asking,

Martina: He [i.e. Zig] wants to have a little chat with you. Can he have a little chat with you?

Renny: Yeah

[Squeaking noises from Zig]

Martina: What did he say?

[Silence]

Martina: What did it mean?

Renny: He said he wants to go to the shop *with me* [emphasis added]

Martina: He wants to go to the shop?

Renny: Yeah, *with me*

Martina: With you?

Renny: Yeah

Martina: Why does he want to go to the shop?

Renny: because he wants to...*with me*.

Martina: He wants to go with you...because are you two friends?

Renny: Yeah, he wants to go to the shop so he can buy something *for me*.

Martina: Aw, that's nice

Renny strokes Zig

Martina: Are you stroking him?

Renny: Yeah

Martina: That's' very nice. He likes that. Oh he likes you Renny

Renny: Yeah

Martina: Cos you're very friendly to him

Renny: Cos he's gonna...he's gonna buy something. I'm gonna buy something for him...a chocolate.

Martina: That's very nice. You are going to buy something for each other?

Renny: Yeah

Squeaking noises from Zig

Martina: D'ya know Zig, what he said... he said...cos he's going back to Outer Space tonight but he's coming back after the half term holiday

Renny: Yeah

Martina: And he said 'would you come back and to talk to him and tell him things that you like doing in the area

Renny: Because he's going to call to me....can I have a turn?
[Meaning to put his arm in Zig and control the pupp.et]

Martina: Go on then [taking puppet off arm and handing it to Renny]

Renny's actions could be interpreted as attempting to prise Zig (an interesting toy/ limited resource – not my fantasy research assistant) off my arm by deploying a number of sophisticated tactics. First, he repeatedly emphasised that Zig wanted to go to the shop *with him*. Second, he started to stroke Zig, not necessarily because he wanted to demonstrate how friendly he was (and I asked several leading questions to encourage this), but perhaps because at least he was now getting his hands on the resource he solicited. Third, Renny could be seen as attempting to reassure me by suggesting that Zig was in good care in his hands and that he could be trusted to go to the shop with him. And finally, when he realised that I was drawing the interview to a close because I had got what I wanted, he asked me directly if he could have Zig. I relented and after this the roles were reversed: he controlled Zig and I had to play along with the charade. Renny was the only child in the cohort who managed to wrest control of Zig (the resource) in this way. He may have had to employ little of his ingenuity to do so.

In our subsequent interview, Renny continued to outwit me, or so it might be interpreted. On this occasion, he had the camera to play with and was willing to show me the photos he/his father took during the half-term holiday. During the course of the conversation he showed me a photograph of a local church (which I recognised as Church of England)...

Martina: Do you go to church Renny?

Renny: Yeah

Martina: Do you?

Renny: Yeah my [indistinguishable sound] church

Martina: To what, sorry?

Renny: [indistinguishable sound] church

Martina: Say that in a big loud voice

Renny: [Indistinguishable sound] Church

Martina: [trying to sound it out] Babamooer Church?

Renny: Babamapooer's Church

[Silence]

Martina: Babamapooer's Church?

Renny: Babamapooer

[Silence]

Martina: What's that?

Renny: Babamapooer's Church! [Beginning to sound impatient]

Martina: Is that what it's called?

Renny: Yeah

It may well be that there is a church at which Babamapooer is practised, but having asked several people who were as bewildered as I about this

religion, he may have been experimenting with language, using a personal-to-his-family term or having fun with me and inadvertently, or otherwise, resisting my agenda to privilege his own.

The regularity with which he could be interpreted as resisting my attempts to find out about his half-term holiday may not have been about wanting to withdraw from the interview, because I asked him several times whether he wanted to return to the main room in the nursery unit. Instead, he may have wanted to stop me, in ingenious and playful ways, from asking all the questions while he got on with playing and learning how to use the camera, knowing that when the interview ended so might his possession of the resource. Perhaps he also enjoyed the opportunity to resist. Many of the children who participated in this study employed a range of strategies to stop me from asking so many questions relating to my research agenda so they could focus on their own: playing.

In addition to the strategies employed by Renny, others ignored me, used delaying tactics, changed the subject, issued commands, distracted me, or laughed and giggled together. Evie and Isla collaborated to keep me out of the game they wanted to play together, and on a couple of occasions I was told directly to “stop talking” (Isla). And while I mentioned previously that Marissa demonstrated her caring and empathic nature by volunteering to fetch Cristal’s medicine, it could also be interpreted that she had decided to walk out of the interview, quite possibly out of boredom, and used Cristal’s medical needs as a polite excuse to do so. As the (sometimes) more skilful and certainly the more experienced communicator, in nearly all these instances, I managed to get the children to privilege my agenda, often by dogged and relentless persistence, which was exhausting. It is a tribute to the ingenuity of most of these children that they made it so difficult for me, and speaks to their agential capacities as capable operators. I often had to use all my ingenuity to get my agenda back on track.

However, the children had differing abilities to resist my agenda or even to participate in it. One example of this was with a child who I came to view as one of the most vulnerable in the school's nursery unit, Cristal, whose very vulnerability enabled me, albeit inadvertently and with the best of intentions, to manipulate the most. On my first occasion in the nursery unit, at the end of the school day, Cristal approached me to help her zip up her coat. As I did so, she whispered to me, "Will you come and talk to me later?" She clearly wanted to make a connection with me and I agreed but did not do so because I was distracted by all the other children who wanted my attention. She told me on both occasions I interviewed her that she did not like school. On the first occasion, she refused to go back into the main room, started to cry and told me she wanted to go home. I was aware that had she disclosed she had been abused there would have been a clear 'child protection' procedure for me to follow. All I felt I could do, in this instance, was to distract her and try to humour her back into the room she said she did not want to go. That she told me on two separate occasions she did not like school indicated to me that this might not have been a passing mood, but a genuine view. Cristal borrowed the audio recorder during the half-term holiday and, the following excerpt is taken from our second interview when I attempted to ask her what she (dis) liked:

Martina & Cristal: [Operating the audio clipboard to listen to what Cristal has recorded at home, which turns out to be nothing]

Martina: It didn't do very much there. *Shall we* do another one?
[Emphasis added]

[Pressing button on audio recorder]

Martina: *Shall we* press that button once? You show Razor how it works, if you press that button once. What *shall we* say?

Cristal: Er...

[Having just been recorded by Cristal, Martina can be heard saying, 'What shall we say?']

Martina: That's my voice isn't it?

[Pressing button again]

Martina: *Shall we* hear Razor's voice? *Shall we* press that once?

[Pressing button again]

Razor starts squeaking

Martina: Press it again

[Sound from recorder: Razor starts squeaking and Martina heard saying 'Press it again']

Martina: You could hear Razor's voice and you could hear my voice but we couldn't hear your voice. So Razor would like to hear your voice so *will you speak?* You tell Razor in to the recorder what you like doing when you are not at school? In a big loud voice. Are you ready Cristal? What you like doing when you're not at school? Let's press 'record'

[Sound of 'record' button being pressed]

Martina: Go on

[Cristal presses 'record' button off]

Martina: Oh, you stopped it!

Razor starts squeaking

Martina: *Shall we* have another go? Go on then, you tell Razor in a big loud voice what you like doing.

[Sound of record button being pressed]

Martina: Hang on. Go on

[Sound of recorder. Then sound of Martina repeating last line "Hang on. Go on"]

Martina: Oh! [Laughing] We can't hear your voice Cristal

Cristal: Heeee [laughing]

Martina: Oh! Are you being shy?

Squeaking noise from Razor

Martina: Hang on! Razor is saying, 'Please could you...this is what Razor is asking...please will you ask Cristal to say in a big loud voice what you like doing when you're not in school'

Cristal: [whispering so inaudible]

Martina: [also whispering] In a big loud voice

Cristal: I going outside

Martina: You like going outside? Shall we record it? You say that again really loud.

Cristal: [in a louder voice] I go outside

Sound of recorder button being operated.

Martina: Listen to it again

Cristal: [on the recorder – repeating last line] I go outside.

Martina: Well done Cristal! That sounded brilliant!

Cristal: [plays it again] "I go outside"

Martina: That's your voice

Cristal: [plays it again] "I go outside"

Martina: Shall we do another one?

Cristal: [nods]

It is clear that what I meant by my repeated invitation, "Shall we...?" was really "We shall". Cristal did not get the option not to participate in this activity even though she may have been attempting to resist by switching the recorder off and by whispering inaudibly. However, I chose to interpret Cristal's actions as resulting from shyness. As a little girl who hated school when I first started it, but who later learned to love it, I wanted Cristal to have a sense of, or to develop the confidence I could see other children in that nursery unit developing: again, my agenda. But this does perhaps speak to the tension with which many adults struggle, with the benefit of hindsight, when wanting to support children's 'beings' as well as their 'becomings'. After all, Cristal did eventually hear her own

recorded voice and wanted to keep listening to it and record another example. Many adults know, from experience, that learning often involves being discomforted. Cristal was discomforted in nursery generally, and in my interviews in particular but whether this discomfort was tolerable enough to support her well-being within the ECEC setting and beyond, was unknown (to me).

The research methods I employed to generate data with the children about their well-being provided differential opportunities for them to participate. My interview with Kenneth, for example, did not generate any data I felt able to use to address the RQs because he did not yet have enough of a command of spoken language for me to understand and appreciate what he was trying to tell me. He talked about “poo” most of the time and was absent from school on the last day of term so had not taken home an elicitation tool. Kenneth was the only respondent who did not talk about having/liking to play with friends, although when prompted, he did talk about liking to play with William. Kamran too provided little data that I felt I could use to address the RQs. Like Kenneth he did not have enough of a command of spoken language and I found it difficult to understand what he was saying. My main method of generating data with these children, i.e. through dialogue, had excluded these children from fully participating in the study. I did not manage to observe these boys in the nursery unit.

4.4 Being done to

Children’s resistances or acquiescence to (and ability to participate in) my adult agenda could be brushed away as due to my lack of hands-on early years experience. I’m not an EYE after all and never have been: my role in the area was an administrative one. A skilful practitioner would certainly have generated different data. Yet, my observations of the children in both settings and beyond indicated that the rights of children are often not acknowledged, in a number of different ways.

First, while observing Cristal in a phonics session, I noticed that she clearly struggled to complete the task as instructed by her teacher, which was to write the letter 'd' on her whiteboard. Cristal just wanted to scribble but the expectation was to write single letters. She could not do this. She kept looking at me and came over to show me what she had done. I interpreted this as a need for reassurance as she could also see that most other children were more or less able to write the single letter they were instructed and encouraged to write. As I put my arm round her to give her a hug and to tell her how well she had done, I could feel her physically relax. She seemed happy that I was pleased with her work. I wondered later if her earlier appeal to me to come and talk to her may have been an attempt to solicit the help of an adult stranger who she might have imagined may have been able to get her out of a place she disliked being, and a routine from which she appeared to have little choice of deviating.

Indeed the expectation, not only during these phonics groups but also at many other sessions during the day, was for the children to sit with their "hands in your baskets" i.e. in the well formed by crossing their legs. With such a large number of children in the room, albeit divided into groups, it appeared necessary for the teachers to maintain tight control. The control of the children was apparent in other ways too. A significant number of the almost 500 photographs taken by the children in the school nursery when I spent a week there getting to know them, were photos of the fences surrounding the nursery unit. These of course were to protect the children and keep them safe: crucial to their well-being. And yet some of the angles and close-ups of these images were surprisingly reminiscent to me of bars in a prison.

Second, I observed Marissa excel at this same phonics activity. She not only wrote perfectly the letters instructed by her teacher, but also drew a daisy in the corner of her whiteboard to enhance her work. She was highly praised by her teacher for so doing and photographed with her

exemplary work, which was to go in her 'learning journey' as evidence of her achievement. It appeared to me that perhaps Marissa was encouraged never to miss a learning opportunity: from enthusiastically participating in the phonics sessions, being an active respondent in my research project, diligently observing the school's values and being excited about the educational toys she received for her birthday. These may well, of course, speak volumes about her well-being: she clearly loved learning and excelled at it, but I also wondered, as she arrived at school tired and grumpy on the Monday morning after her half-term trip abroad (possibly as she got home late from the airport), about children's right to be average.

Third, Marissa was not the only child I observed to be tired in the school nursery unit. Alisha, one of three children whose parents both worked and were in receipt of FSM, attended school full-time, along with all the others in nursery class, but also Before and After School Club. One day at hometime when some children were being collected by After School Club staff, Alisha was found asleep on the floor in a corner of the nursery unit. She was woken up and shepherded out of the building. I knew the After School Club she attended, how busy it was with children of all ages up to 11 years, that it had nowhere for children to take a nap or to have some privacy or quiet. This may well have been an isolated incident but speaks to children's right to rest and sleep as intrinsic to their well-being.

Last, practitioners often asked me, in spite of their understanding of the ethical contract to which I was working, for the names of the children, when I related stories about what they had told me. They often appeared surprised when I told them I could not share this information as I had promised their anonymity in the same way as that of the adults. It was almost as if it were an unspoken expectation that what children said and by whom, was everyone's business to know.

4.5 'Doings' and 'Havings'

Alongside playing, relaxing, sleeping, befriending, relating, conversing, resisting, fighting, negotiating, laughing and giggling, bullying and being bullied, loving and being loved, the children told me they also liked eating. Most of the children either spoke about or photographed their food (usually both). They mainly talked about sugary foods – biscuits, chocolate, Oreos, lollipops and cake were mentioned, but also occasionally, sausages, beans, bananas, strawberries, fruit and yoghurt. Pam, echoing Bart Simpson, told me she liked to eat, “flowers and shorts”!

Given that playing and eating were among the most commonly cited of the children’s likes, it is perhaps unsurprising that toys and food were most mentioned by them when I asked what they would buy if they had lots of money. The foods they most enjoyed have already been described and the toys they spoke about wanting and having and those they photographed included “kinoculars”, toy kitchen/home corner, a “Ghostbuster™ toy”, “a toy shot gun – a toy one”, Spiderman™, Transformers™, iPads™ and Toy Story™ toys.

Some of them also spoke of and photographed other resources they clearly enjoyed. Jeremy, for example, spoke of (photographed and videoed) his enjoyment of playing in the park, eating in a restaurant and visiting the airport; William and Evie spoke (and photographed) their trips to the museum; Marissa enjoyed her holiday abroad. Other children photographed more local resources suggesting their importance: Renny photographed the local park, library and church; Kamran spoke of having to visit the GP when he was sick over the half-term holiday and Cristal mentioned that her house had recently been “fixed”.

In spite of my often ham-fisted, indeed sometimes iron-fisted ways of generating data with the children in the school nursery unit, I quickly

came to feel part of their community. On the last day before the half-term holiday I had to return to school to be available at hometime to distribute the resources to my respondents and to chat with parents to answer any of their further questions. To get to the nursery unit, I had to walk through a hall in which the children were having their end-of-term assembly. I tiptoed along the back of the hall trying not to disturb the teacher leading the assembly but when the children saw me, they turned and simultaneously started waving and saying “Hi Martina”. Assembly had to be suspended while all 60 children smiled, waved and greeted me warmly. At that moment I felt loved and accepted by them, in spite of having often thwarted their play and learning processes to privilege my own. Their easy capacity for forgiveness might speak to the spirit of well-being, although it may also speak to their already learned expectations to have to comply to adults’ agendas and accept them as their own.

4.6 Summary

In sum, the children could be said to have conceptualised their well-being in the here-and-now. They demonstrated that they were unique ‘beings’ differentially capable of actualising their quests (‘doings’) to fulfil their self-defined (but common) needs: to play and explore (especially outside); to have fun with friends; to rest; and to eat. The children had differential agential capacities. Some were more adept than others at realising their needs or resisting injunctions and circumstances that limited their quests. Most children wanted to participate in the study and others did not. Children’s relationships with peers, family members and other adults were integral to their sense of (well) being and doings. Resources (‘havings’) were conceived as individually (toys, for example) or community oriented (local park, for example) and their acquisition of, or access to, these resources were important means to support them to realise what they wanted to do and how they wanted to do it i.e. mainly through relationships with friends and family members.

Chapter 5: Findings- The Early Years Educators

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings from an analysis of EYEs' data about child well-being. As in the previous findings chapter, this data is read with and against the key concepts outlined in the theoretical framework of child well-being at the end of Chapter 2, Part One. There was a noticeable difference in importance this cohort placed on some of the concepts compared to those of the children.

5.2 'Becomings'

In contrast to the children, each EYE generally conceptualised children's well-being as in the future. Their language was redolent with discourses pertaining to children's 'becomings'. Most practitioners spoke of children taking their "next steps" (Katie, Liz, Kerry, Sharon and Paula), "making progress against their starting points" (Katie), and getting them to "think ahead" because "it's going to be more productive when they actually go and do something" (Katie). Children needed "to move forward" (Paula, Sharon), avoid "plodding along" (Paula) and "missing opportunities" (Paula) so that they could "get better" (Kerry & Sharon). Children's well-being was linked to "learning skills and then moving on to the next skill" (Sharon), i.e. "meeting their developmental milestones" (Kerry). EYEs' language, particularly that of those working with children below the age of three, focussed on the micro-interventions to support children to be "ready for school" (Sharon & Paula). One of the benefits for children was depicted as the development of a "work ethic" (Jessica, Kerry, Sian and Katie). If children were not meeting the developmental milestones seen to be requisite for a successful transition into school they were, according to Kerry and Jessica, "lacking" or "failing", but Paula talked about some children being "set up to fail" if they were not "academic". That said, at the

final meeting with adult respondents Kerry (one of several EYEs who was also a mother) mentioned, “There’s a lot of pressure” on both EYEs and parents to support their children’s development. She lamented that she felt children “get compared too much”.

5.3 ‘Beings’

Even though children’s ‘becomings’ appeared to be privileged, this did not necessarily preclude their ‘beings’. EYEs spoke of children as being unique and consequently the importance of

Let[ting] them develop their own imagination, their own skills and then add onto it so you are supporting rather than taking over their development. (Paula)

Relatedly, Kerry mentioned that, “Success for children is different – according to the child.”

According to many of the EYEs, children’s unique beings needed to be respected. This could be achieved by acknowledging and appreciating what children can do. Sharon mentioned that, children “need praise to keep [them] going. If you didn’t get any praise you’d be ‘is it worth it?’” EYEs told me that measuring children against the EYFS framework was not suitable for all children and particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (hereafter SEND). More appropriate were the ‘characteristics of effective learning’ as these were based on “things that they know” (Jessica) and so were more inclusive. Jessica elaborated that these characteristics enabled all children to

...think[ing] of their own ideas of how to do something. I think quite often we tell them how to do things rather than letting them find out for themselves.

Nearly all EYEs spoke of their joy and yet struggles to support children with SEND. Jessica described supporting several boys with autism and a girl with Down’s syndrome who she described as “gorgeous”. She told me

these children were enthusiastic learners but had “specific barriers” to their learning which were often not adequately addressed within the ECEC setting because of “delays” in securing funding for additional assistance. Some EYEs related they were sometimes able to support children with SEND in their settings but that this was at the expense of other children.

Jessica told me,

It's a massive impact...It can slow down your whole teaching because you've got someone to deal with...it does have an impact especially when you've got a child with very specific needs and there's no support for that child ...Other children will miss out then and I often find it's that quiet lower middle who just sit there and don't do much and you've got to be really really aware of that so that those children don't miss out.

Consequently, children with SEND were described as having an adverse impact on other children's learning outcomes. Children with SEND therefore became conceptualised as in deficit, i.e. as in what they took away from other children in the settings and not what they were able to offer. There was a tension in EYEs' data between valuing children with SEND and the pressure to support all children to reach individual 'expected levels of development'. The EYFS was viewed as a necessary but imperfect tool or broad framework that they had to use their judgment to navigate to best meet the needs of unique children. Liz, for example, told me that it was important to,

Use[ing] that framework as a tool really cos the children don't always fit directly in the boxes. You can't do that so you just have to make it work as best as you can for you, I think... 'What else do I need him to experience so he is getting this broad framework, so he is having access to this whole curriculum?' cos otherwise his play is going to be quite limited, his experiences are going to be quite limited.

In this extract Liz was describing the use of the EYFS as a tool to support children to have a range of experiences. In other instances, however, implementing the EYFS was sometimes viewed as interrupting children's unique interests:

Paula, for example, explained:

Sometimes they have a specific flair in one area, like say music, and that's all they want to do but we are too busy trying to enforce, 'Oh what's next to the tambourine then?' You know we are trying to incorporate other things all the time and we are pushing it on to them and I feel it can be quite frustrating for them really that they are not valued for the particular thing that they like to do...you know, and it is just like an adult, I mean if I was forced into doing maths I think I would be like distraught cos it's not my forte but something creative and I'm there and I'm like 'Yeah, yeah, let me do it, I'll take over that'.

This comment provoked a short discussion between us about girls/women sometimes having a self-perception of not being good at maths. This, in turn, highlighted a tension between backgrounding children's 'interests' (and potentially putting them off education) to focus on the 'Early Learning Goals' deemed necessary for their 'school readiness', and attempting to provide them with the educational foundations (particularly the 'prime areas' of the EYFS) to enable them to better access the curriculum when they start their statutory education.

There were other tensions too. Kerry told me that:

I think a lot of our parents primarily want their children to be happy and want their children to be safe in the setting they're in. I don't get many parents that come in and go, 'Have they hit this target? Have they hit that target? Are they on track?'

But later:

We all want the children to reach their next milestone. We all want our children to be exceeding; even as parents we want that. 'Oh is my child like Einstein?' We all get that when parents come in. 'You know my child is two years old and he can count to 100!'

These tensions were also replicated in the final meeting with adult respondents. Kerry and Sharon were particularly vocal about what they saw as the importance of supporting children's play in the here-and-now against the pressures of tracking and monitoring their progress against

GLD descriptors, particularly when they were inspected by Ofsted for so doing. However, Kerry elaborated there were pressures from parents too:

I think as practitioners too you want parents to know that you're doing your job right for that child. You don't want a parent to come in and think, 'Oh they've not reached that. Well, why not?' That's why we're there to do that cos parents want to see them reach the next bit, cos I would.

I suggest this contradiction may exemplify the tension and anxieties parents and EYEs experience in their efforts (and injunctions) to support children's 'beings' as well as their 'becomings'.

In spite of these tensions, there were common features understood to support all children's well-beings and ability to learn. Of importance, they explained, were security and safety, both emotional and physical, i.e. when children can take risks and move "out of their comfort zone" from a place of safety. In addition, being confident was considered by most respondents to be important to children's well-being. Sharon spoke about the language-screening tool sometimes being a measure of children's confidence rather than their language ability if they were shy or under-confident. Children "being independent" (Katie & Jessica) was seen to be crucial to some practitioners and if children were not, they were considered to be "needy" or could not "lead their learning" (Katie).

5.4 'Doings'

Children's 'beings' but especially their potential 'becomings' dictated what EYEs supported them to do in ECEC settings. Because of the plethora of data that spoke to children's 'doings' I categorise them in what follows, to explore how each is considered to influence their well-beings:

5.4.1 Playing (out)

According to all EYEs, play (and especially playing out) was the natural expression and corollary of, what were considered to be, children's innate curiosities. Kerry told me that play is "all they know" and Jessica, that being outside was important even for a baby. Free play, according to most of these respondents was something that was crucially important to and for young children. Play enabled them to learn and explore (all), have fun (Kerry & Liz) and to laugh and giggle (Katie). Katie spoke about the importance of giggling, especially for those who she felt were not thriving:

I just get them to go out and try to make them laugh, you know tickle them, do anything because we've not heard them giggle, we've had them for nearly a year and we've never heard them giggle ever.

Linked to playing, was the importance of children's imagination to their learning and well-being. Katie too talked about the vital importance of the imagination and lamented what she saw as the dwindling interest in creativity within the EYFS curriculum. "It's almost like our government don't appreciate the arts," she told me.

However, in the final meeting with the adult respondents, the window for young children to play was described as being a small one. Some participants (mothers and EYEs) expressed that children needed to work to learn, rather than play to learn, especially when they started their statutory education at five years old. Sharon (and Adenike) reported that they felt it did not matter if children had fun and that they could anyway thrive without it and that stopping playing and having fun was a preparation for adulthood. Sharon explained,

As they're getting older that's the way their life is going to be, learning throughout all their school years, isn't it? I mean, obviously when they are two, three, and four they love the play but they can't play forever can they?

5.4.2 Participating

According to many of the EYEs, children's enjoyment of play often depended on their ability to access and participate in classroom activities with others. Katie, for example, described a boy in her group with delayed speech as compromised in his ability to participate in the curriculum or make friends. She described children who are not thriving as:

...quite lonely children, socially lonely and this little girl who I said is very anxious, she's lonely as well.

5.4.3 Doing routine

All EYEs raised the importance of routine to children's well-being which, in turn, was understood to establish safety but also aid discipline and organisation. Being in a good routine supported children to have "organised minds" (Katie) and meant they can "lead [their] learning" (Katie):

Katie: So we have 20 minutes exercise, so from that they will then go off into their phonics groups. So it will be ability phonics groups, so they'll go into there and we will deliver a phonics session where we're teaching them something. It's always through games. It's always through play. They're always active learning so it's not that they are sitting down getting bored you know, 'Can we go and play now?' type-of-thing. They're playing within it.

This passage exemplifies the ubiquity with which 'phonics' was discussed by most of the respondents and conflated with broader literacy practices. In fact, most of the EYEs discussed two 'specific' areas of the EYFS (maths and literacy) more than the 'prime' areas (outlined on page 38). This passage also calls into question the notion of "active learning", one of the three "characteristics of effective learning" in the EYFS (described on page 40) but which, in this passage, seemed to be appropriated for the purpose of children's attainment of a 'Good Level of Development'. Practitioners were described as "delivering" and "teaching" which

suggested instruction, passive learning and a “banking” approach to education (Freire, 1970) rather than children’s own explorations.

Routine was described as essential, particularly if children came from “chaotic families” (Katie) or “hectic home[s] (Kerry). Liz described a boy with SEND as being supported to engage with other children in the group through the setting’s routines because he was otherwise solitary. That said, Sharon talked about the importance of routine to support children’s well-being but also mentioned that children like to be spontaneous, do different things and go on adventures, which might perhaps necessitate a break from routine.

5.4.4 Following instructions

As a consequence of children being in a routine, organised and disciplined, EYEs felt that children could more easily follow instructions, thereby facilitating their development and, hence, well-being. Parents were expected to comply with this understanding too. Jessica, for example, told me that it was important for parents to ensure their children are ready for school at three years old, which was indicated in large part by their children’s ability to toilet themselves. When I asked why following instructions was important for children, Sharon explained:

Cos they need that in their life [laughing]. They need that throughout their life. But for me what we concentrate on when we get them from that age is getting them ready for school cos we only have them for a couple of years so once they go into school for me key is routine and following instruction because their day is structured. It is more structured than ours isn’t it?

Again, this passage also indicates that childhood was very much understood as a preparation for their adulthood and one that required compliance.

5.4.5 Aspiring and maximising

According to some EYEs it was important for children's (future) well-being to have aspirations and to "break[ing] that chain, you don't have to do what your mummy's doing" (Sian). Supporting children to achieve these aspirations, according to most of the EYEs, appeared to mean that children needed to have "get up and go" (Jessica) and always be "busy" (Sharon), that children "make the most of what [they're] doing all the time" (Katie). According to Jessica as long as children had their basic needs catered for then they "can do anything" if they have the "desire and eagerness".

5.4.6 Adapting

EYEs also told me that children's well-being is enabled when they can adapt well to their environments. A propensity for speedy adaptation was considered to be a quality in their favour. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the environment to which they were most expected to adapt was that of their ECEC settings'. Some EYEs recounted how children make the transition to an ECEC setting was indicative of their current well-being. Sharon, for example, explained that one of the reasons it was important for children to be able to adapt to the school environment was not only that it facilitated their learning but also that it helped them to learn to be resilient. When I explained to her that I had been interviewing children in a school setting and that there were sixty of them in one room, she advised:

Sharon: It's quite frightening really when you look at it from a different angle, I think you know, you're having to fend for yourself aren't you?

Martina: Yes! [Laughing]

Sharon: [laughing] And if you don't, you've had it!

That the 'doings' EYEs mentioned as supporting young children's well-beings (following instructions, routine, adapting, aspiring and maximising in particular) might also mirror their own 'doings' within their ECEC settings was prominent in the data from these respondents. While Kerry told me that, "On paper a child who is thriving is on track [with their progress]" it became clear that EYEs were also considered to be thriving if they were on track too as "...Ofsted love targets and tracking" (Kerry). Sian told me,

If I think of children in my group, the ones that are really thriving in terms of assessments as well, they are higher up there which is what everyone's... or what the SLT is interested in is outcomes.

It appeared that the success of the children and the practitioners within the ECEC setting was inter-related. Paula too mentioned that she and her staff team felt under pressure to get children 'ready for school' otherwise "you're not doing your job cos you're not getting them there". She elaborated,

...[s]ay I'm checking a file and I think, 'Right you've got observations there but you've not got enough. You've not brought them on. Why have they not gone forward in literacy?'

It could be argued that these comments suggested that the pressure some of the EYEs felt to 'bring children on' could affect the learning and well-being of children and their EYEs. The fear of an unfavourable Ofsted judgement was underscored during the fieldwork when one of the respondents, the manager of a private nursery, was unable to attend the introductory meeting owing to an Ofsted inspection which resulted in a judgement of 'Requires Improvement' for the ECEC setting and her consequent dismissal as its manager. Sharon too, reflecting on her first Ofsted inspection four years prior to my interview with her, mentioned that during it "there weren't all this big talk of teaching". She criticised her second most recent inspection even though it resulted in an 'Outstanding' judgment for her because

I know I'm going to have to up my game. I hope I'm not doing it by then [laughs].

The impact of this pressure to 'up it' on EYEs' well-being was also highlighted by Paula who talked about their poor remuneration. She described there being not much incentive for EYEs to undertake further training because "the pay is not there at the end of it". She reported EYEs' lack of recognition as having an effect on children's ability to thrive.

Kerry mentioned that "the amount of paperwork staff have to do is ridiculous" and that it was stressful to her team. She questioned the value of completing the paperwork, particularly as she felt EYEs at school nurseries and reception did not get the time to look at it owing to the large numbers of children they were dealing with. That "paperwork" might also be about making money for some businesses was evoked by Sharon who explained,

I think they do it [instigate change] so you don't get set in your ways cos they do, they change it all the time don't they? I keep thinking why do you think all the supermarkets keep changing all the shelves around? So you've got to walk further round the shops and you buy more.

That said, EYEs valued some aspects of the EYFS curriculum and other assessments used alongside it, including language-screening tools. First, Sharon talked about using the EYFS framework and language-screening to ensure that parents did not push their own children's development inappropriately or expect too much of them. She told me that she had printed off a "what to expect and when" explanatory sheet of young children's development,

Just to put her mind at rest because I knew she [daughter] was doing everything. I mean in my EYFS, if I looked at her age range, she was making the sounds. She's doing that, she's babbling, she moved on. But I think mum wanted her to speak quicker than she were, and I said to her, "Believe you me, she will be talking before you know it." So as I say, I printed off that sheet, give the sheet to mum and I think it just gives them piece of mind thinking 'oh yeah'.

Second, Liz mentioned that assessing children particularly for potential language delay ensured no child was missed, and that assessment could support helpful conversations with parents about their children's development as some parents, she felt, genuinely do not know how to support their children and appreciate help and advice, especially if they have no support. Describing a home visit to a parent Liz told me:

...it was only mum and baby at the house and she just said, 'Liz, I didn't know how to talk to him. I know now so I'm not going to let that happen again with my baby.' So she had learnt from that but she said 'I'm on my own in this country.' She was from Jamaica I think, and she was saying, 'I haven't really got any role models or support and I didn't know I had to talk to him'. And it just broke my heart that. To me it's a natural thing to talk to your children and to hear it coming from a parent that clearly it's not always a natural thing to do cos she just didn't know.

It is common in my experience for parents to be uncertain and sometimes unaware about how best to meet their children's needs. Parents (whether they are from low-income areas or not) often require support, especially if they are isolated. Liz and other EYEs were not deriding these parents or policing the working class/poor. They were providing support and information to women who, for whatever reason, have been/continue to be disadvantaged or unlucky enough not to have received it. But this support crucially, as Liz pointed out to me, depended on the skill and sensitivity of EYEs and other professionals so that parents did not feel judged or pressured to perform.

5.5 'Belonging'

The development of individual children's skills were highlighted as being necessary for their well-being and considered to lead to futures which could be self-determined. However, there were other simultaneous understandings expressed, i.e. that children's well-being is deeply connected to others' and to their contexts. Jessica, for example, told me that, "real life human connection" was crucial to well-being, and Sharon that, "dealing with different people, I think they learn to trust people" and

that it is important for children, to move out of their “small little bubble”. In addition, ‘beings’ were understood to be connected inter-generationally. Kerry for example, talked about “a vicious circle” of families repeating cycles of ill-being. Given the abundance of data relating to the importance of children’s relationships and ‘belonging’, I have categorised these to explore how each is considered to influence their well-being. The emergent themes were their relationships with people in the ECEC setting, their connections to the neighbourhood contexts, and relationships with family members:

5.5.1 Relationships with people in the ECEC setting

Many of the EYEs spoke about the importance of establishing good relationships with their “key children” (Kerry) and to understand their “little ways” (Paula) which made it easier to address their needs and, by implication, their well-being.

Kerry spoke about providing children with love and care in their ECEC setting as these might not always be experienced if they lived in an abusive home. This was not just about what EYEs could offer but also what the children were able to provide too. Many of the EYEs spoke about important friendship bonds formed between children and how these were important to their well-being and learning. That said, the difficulty of learning to share, but the importance of being able to do so, was considered to be crucial to well-being and foregrounded the social and inter-relational aspects of well-being highlighted by the EYEs. Liz described the friendship and bond between two boys as beneficial to them but, because they were physically boisterous and had little spatial awareness, their play affected other children’s physical safety if they were in their vicinity. In other words, these boys were thriving in each other’s company but at the same time, distressing others. Liz explained that the EYEs’ task here was to ensure the well-being of all children. This meant supporting the boys to learn to restrict their behaviour in order to respect

others'. This echoed the views of other EYEs who stated that children cannot have everything they want and that they need to learn to accommodate others' needs (Paula & Jessica).

EYEs understood children's well-being as being inter-connected. This was underscored by Sian who described her setting as promoting a set of common values. She told me that these "values" were:

... 'listening', 'try our best', 'respect each other' and 'keep each other safe'. They're our values but they've really taken it on board and they'll tell each other off and say, "You're not keeping each other safe" or they'll fasten each other's shoes laces to keep each other safe....It does work really well. It's like a community with each class. They all stick together and follow the values...well...obviously not all children...

She explained that at the end of each week a "VIP" was chosen from each class based on their promotion of the school values, not their academic or other achievement.

5.5.2 Connections to the neighbourhood contexts

Most EYEs spoke of the importance of children's environments and the importance of outdoor play or of being outside as an important component of children's well-being. However, most respondents privileged the family home(s) and ECEC settings as being the most important of these environments.

An exception to this was Kerry. Speaking also as a mother and as a former resident of the significantly 'disadvantaged' estate her ECEC setting served, she described the anxieties she had about raising her boys there given the levels of crime and unhealthy behaviours ("smoking weed") in which her eldest son had started to get involved. Kerry could be seen as recognising that her son's, and therefore her family's, well-being was interdependent with the people on their estate. Consequently, she

decided to move to a neighbouring area for her children's and her whole family's well-being and 'becoming'. This suggests that, even though her eldest boy was doing well in school and she and her partner were both working in good jobs, she felt this estate had more of an effect on his well-being/becoming than their socio-economic status and his educational achievements. She explained she had to act on behalf of his best interests because she felt he could not. She was worried that in the future her son would start getting into trouble with the police and that they "wouldn't be able to bring him back". Fortunately for her, she had the resources to move. She told me her son, at the time of our interview aged 13, spent a lot of his free time in his bedroom on his computer where she believed him to be safe.

5.5.3 Relationships with family members

The view among these EYEs was that young children's well-being was largely, if not solely, the responsibility of their parents. The parents who were considered to be supporting their children's well-being effectively were those who were on board with and supporting the EYEs with the settings' agendas. Given the pressure on EYEs to focus on and privilege the EYFS' 'Early Learning Goals' for each individual child, this appeared to cause some frustration among many of the EYEs if parents were not, or appeared not to be, on board with the EYFS' agenda. Katie, for example, mentioned that,

We've got about 15% that haven't joined [online tracking system] in EYFS...we found that those are the parents who are the hard to reach parents, the parents who will say 'We haven't got internet access' but we know full well they're on Facebook and they're choosing not to be engaged.

As a result, many parents were held solely responsible for their children's "lack of support" (Jessica) evoking well-rehearsed deficit views of parents in low-income areas (Brown, 2015:5; Tyler, 2015). Parents were described as believing that learning happens only at school (Katie &

Sian), could not “be bothered” (Kerry, Katie & Sian) or have no aspirations (Katie). There was a tension between blaming parents but at the same time recognising the difficulties many of them faced and how this impacted on their children.

All EYEs without exception spoke about the impact of “chaotic home lives” (Katie) on children’s well-being. Domestic violence, parental anxiety, drugs and alcohol misuse were among the most common issues mentioned. Sian, for example, highlighted that children cannot be in the here-and-now and concentrate at school:

...We’ve got I think 6 children who... erm... come from families where mum and dad don’t get along and they are very anxious and they come in crying to school and they’re worried about mum and dad and I think that affects them thriving because they’ve got that in their head cos a 5 year old...they’re thinking, ‘Oh is mum going to be ok because I know she’s gone home’ and they see dad shouting at mum so, ‘If I’m not there is something going to happen?’ So it’s a lot for them to think...to have in the mind of a 4 year old. It’s a lot isn’t it? It does affect the children from doing well in the areas, doing well in phonics and maths cos they’re just like off...they’re just daydreaming, like they’re sat there but they’re not there. They are thinking about what’s going on at home.

According to Sian some children then become responsible for their equally, if not more vulnerable, parents:

We always say you know like we are a family together and we’ll help. Some of them will come in and say “My Mum’s been sad at the weekend. Can you talk to her?”

This passage typifies a view held by many of the EYEs that children’s well-being was inter-related with that of their parents’ who were perhaps just as vulnerable as their children, albeit in different ways. Parents, who some EYEs described as not being able to read or write, were seen to be especially disadvantaged and disadvantaging to their children, thereby affecting their confidence and making them feel isolated and different from other children (Sian). But Sian also described how she worked with one parent in particular to try to ensure that her daughter was not

stigmatised because of her own partial/illiteracy when she won the VIP prize that week and had to complete her daughter's reading diary. Significantly this parent was reported as feeling able to approach Sian for this support in spite of the stigma surrounding illiteracy.

This potential relational empathy, however, often appeared to be frustrated among some of this cohort. Several EYEs (Katie, Sian, Jessica, Sharon) told me that parents (especially mothers) are occasionally not ready for their children to go to school (ironically reversing the understanding of children as needing to be 'school ready') because they are lonely:

Katie: A lot of them are single mums so it's literally been child and mother and they're not always well supported mums by their own families. We've got a family at the moment who's got their own child in nursery and a child in reception and the mother, the mother doesn't have any family and the mum doesn't like bringing the children to school cos she gets lonely so their attendance is shocking. She's constantly fabricating illnesses in these children so they don't have to come to school because she is lonely...They are the families that really need the support because that lonely mum would never have taken her child even if they were eligible [for two year funding] because she didn't want to be on her own which you can sort of understand if you've brought a baby up by yourself you would be worried about...you know it's all the attachment disorder from parent to child, separation and then it passes down and the child ends up getting like that about the parent, a two-way thing so I think...

Martina: It's supporting the parents as much as the children?

Katie: Well, supporting the parents first I would say.

And to do so, Katie told me with great pride that a video of her reading a bedtime story had had over "100 hits" in the few days since they had uploaded it onto You Tube. The idea was that parents who could not, or did not want to, read to their children could have Katie do it virtually for them instead. Supporting children to reach a 'Good Level of Development' appeared to be of paramount importance. Not wanting to miss an opportunity, Katie felt the need to intervene at a popular time of

connection and intimacy between children and their adults – whether they read a story or not.

In sum, it could be seen that even though the EYEs' practice was to support and privilege individual children's well-becomings, the consensus was that they could not do so unless the children's contexts, particularly their parents, were on board with their agenda. In other words, that children's 'beings', 'doings' and 'becomings' were dependent on their parents 'beings', 'doings' and 'havings' and, to a lesser extent, the area's 'beings', 'doings' and 'havings' – i.e. on the children's 'belongings', and perhaps inadvertently, underscoring the importance of their interdependencies. This might cast some light on why the transition of children to school and their separation from their parents was seen to be problematic and was also prominent in the EYEs' data. Jessica told me:

... sometimes it is so hard peeling children off their parents when they are upset but I often say to parents it's the best thing because of...it's like a sticking plaster isn't it, you've just got to rip it off.

And Katie described a girl in her group who was similarly struggling to make the transition into the setting:

And that is just completely getting in the way of everything. It's like a mist that's over her all the time. She's forever fretting. It's like 'mum, mum' and if she's not with her mum, if we manage to prise her off her mum or off her nanna in a morning she's got to be so close to one of us otherwise she is having a complete emotional melt down....we are finding it so difficult to snap her out of this and this is really affecting everything because she has sort of lost her independence.

So, while EYEs on the whole exemplified and privileged child well-being as being/becoming an independent individual, this seemed at times, as it does with the examples above, to clash with or to preclude their interdependencies with their m/others. Some EYEs with their own children recognised this difficulty. Sharon, for example, explained, "separation anxiety... is worse for the parent than it is for the child".

5.6 'Havings'

According to Jessica there have to be “basics” in place to support children’s well-being which she described as, “warm house, food, clothing, love, care and attention.” She also felt that material things were less important to children’s well-being than was currently understood. This was a view that was generally echoed among most of the other EYEs. However, to some extent in contradiction, by the end of our conversation, Paula told me that,

I think whether it is, resources or whether it’s staff, it’s money... So it boils down to money... You can argue about the way that it’s spent but it’s still down to money.

Of more importance to many of these EYEs were children’s experiences at home. Some children were described as not having “basic resources” like pens and paper (Sian) or “toys and books” (Katie) at home largely because, it was explained, parents did not know the value of them rather than because they may not have been able to afford them. Also children were described as having nothing to do at the weekend and being bored during the summer holidays because their parents just took them to Tesco. Interestingly, none of the EYEs mentioned that having a broad range of experiences might necessitate having enough money to afford them.

Even though I sometimes prompted heavily for EYEs to broaden their descriptions of resources useful to children’s well-being, nearly all of the EYEs understood resources to mean equipment for learning at home and within the ECEC setting: pens, crayons, a “reading, writing and maths shed” (Sian) were highlighted. Liz provided the only exception to this when she talked about the importance of housing to children’s well-being and commented that living in high-rise flats was restricting because of the lack of outdoor space. That said, implicit within what EYEs were saying was an understanding of wider shared resources which they felt are

important to support children's well-being: parks (Sharon, Jessica, Paula, Katie, Sian), museums (Sharon), public transport systems (Sharon) and libraries (Sian, Sharon).

5.7 Summary

In sum, EYEs partly conceptualised children's well-being as occurring in the future. Children's individual well-becoming was therefore privileged. EYEs saw their purpose as to support each individual child to develop the skills and dispositions to be 'school ready'. This necessitated 'every child' reach the EYFS' normative standards and so their 'doings' were privileged above all else. EYEs outlined that parents should be in sympathy with this agenda otherwise they were failing their children. However, and to some extent in contradiction, EYEs also viewed children as unique: having different skills, aptitudes and abilities. This was especially so of children with SEND, many of whom the EYEs felt demonstrated the EYFS' 'characteristics of effective learning' but had specific learning barriers. EYEs felt these children needed to be respected for what they could do and that their learning could be developed from this understanding.

EYEs, conceiving their role as supporting children's 'becomings', privileged, and in some cases appropriated, activities (especially play) to achieve EYFS curriculum goals. To do so, EYEs felt it was necessary for children to be in a routine, able to follow instructions and to make the most of every opportunity. EYEs also felt that children's well-being was inter-related with that of their parents and other family members. Family difficulties were spoken of as undermining children's well-being and affecting them in the ECEC setting. However, children's well-becoming was also seen to be inter-related to that of their EYEs, the latter having to demonstrate children's attainment of 'developmental milestones' with paperwork and Ofsted inspections to ensure compliance.

Chapter 6: Findings - The Mothers

6.1 Introduction

As my schedule of questions in Chapter 3 indicates, I did not set out to ask the mothers about their own childhoods nor about their well-being, but they all told me either explicitly or implicitly that their children's well-being was inseparable from their own. None of the women was considered (by professional agencies) to be vulnerable at the time I conducted the fieldwork. In my interviews with them, however, each one (without exception) disclosed at least one, and more usually a complexity of challenging circumstances they had experienced and/or were currently enduring that often impinged on their own well-being and influenced that of their children.

Moreover, a week before interviewing Rachel, a colleague of mine with whom I had worked for over ten years and who lived in Grenley, was murdered by her husband. The shock challenged my own equilibrium and affected the interviews I conducted around that time. Sadly, my colleague's murder highlighted the injustices perpetrated against many women. No child was murdered in Grenley during my fieldwork, not least because of the extensive infrastructure supporting the safeguarding of children on the understanding of their vulnerability. Such an infrastructure does not exist on the same scale for women even though they are murdered more regularly (Women's Aid, 2018). My colleague was in her mid-forties when she died and had a grandchild under the age of five who also lived in Grenley. I suggest this speaks powerfully to the inter-related nature of (well) 'beings'. This incident underscores the need for a different approach to the presentation of findings in this chapter: portraits of four of the mothers are presented to illustrate this inter-relatedness. In doing so, I use the additional concept I introduced in the children's findings chapter ('being done to') and introduce several new ones: 'not havings' and 'unbelonging'. In the second part of this chapter I resume a thematic

description of the findings, against the full theoretical framework, as in the previous two findings chapters.

6.2 Lisa

Being done to – unbelonging

Lisa was a single mother with one child aged three years when I interviewed her. However, during the course of our conversation, she disclosed that she had two sons but that 11 years previously her first child, Oscar, was removed from her care on the grounds of neglect when he was nearly two years old. Her exposition of the circumstances leading up to this event and its repercussions highlighted a number of issues that related directly to her own well-being at the time of the interview and potentially that of both her sons. Her oldest son's removal from her care also impacted on the possible well-being of other 'shadow' people involved – from the social workers who earn a living from having to do this work to the adults who eventually adopted him and gained a son of their own. In her account of the events, her well-being always appeared to have been the least valued.

She described a number of events occurring during her childhood that she felt had adversely affected her well-being (and that of her siblings). These included her mother's death when she was a child and her father's inconsistent parenting: his numerous and temporary "other women", his moving her and her brothers around to evade social services' scrutiny of their welfare and then his "dumping" of them onto her auntie and uncle when he "couldn't cope". She struggled with postnatal depression after her son's birth when she was 17. Her depression was compounded after the death of her father when Oscar was three months old and when they moved into a "domestic violence shelter" following her partner's abandonment of them. Lisa explained that as a result of this catalogue of misfortune, she struggled to cope with her baby.

Decisions to remove children from their parents' care are not taken lightly. However, the irony of the neglect she described experiencing during her own childhood and the lack of responsibility shown by her son's father were surfaced by Lisa in our discussion. She stopped short of implicating national/local policy makers/implementers who could/may have provided services to support her, or more importantly her own father, to try to prevent these misfortunes from occurring. In the following extract, her use of passive verbs to describe her predicament and that of her sons' is indicative of her 'being done to':

Martina: So now he's adopted you don't see him?

Lisa: I'm not allowed to. It went through family court and they changed his last name. I'm not allowed to know his last name. I'm not allowed to know where he lives. We started off doing the letter-box scheme but they've stopped it because it's voluntary. They don't have to do it so I've not had letters in about three years off them so I've had no pictures or nothing. I still write twice a year and the adoption social workers send it off to them but I don't get anything so I aint got a clue what's going on. But he knows he's adopted.

Lisa's actions (and those of her son) were closely controlled by the authorities' child protection apparatus. He was removed from her care for the rest of (what is considered to be) his childhood and early adulthood because she had not been able, at that time, to meet his basic needs. And these basic needs appeared to be understood as her responsibility alone.

The understandable impact of this on her mental health made her vulnerable to other pressures which affected her 'beings and doings' and, in turn, those of her younger son, Levi. Describing various reasons, for example, why she had never taken him swimming she told me the "main reason" was because she did not have "a costume body". Lisa appeared to have internalised the shame associated with being an over-weight woman when she told me:

It's easy to say you've just got to get over yourself and get on with it but it's hard cos it's all up here [pointing to her head] innit?

That she felt the need to protect herself from this stigma, not only compromised an aspect of her own well-being but also her son's: his physical development and the opportunity to begin to learn how to swim aided by her, had not been available to them.

The fragility of her mental health was further compounded by there being very little to do in the area, and so not much reason to go out. She told me she did not like going out much and only did so if necessary. And because she did not go out much, neither did her son. Little wonder perhaps, that he preferred to stay at home too and watch television than go to the park, for example, though once there, she complained that it was difficult to persuade him home again. Lisa mentioned that his wanting to be outside was further compromised by not having any friends to play with and she described him as "lonely". A telling metaphor for their confinement and isolation was her description of having his paddling pool out in her first-floor living room because he had no-one to play with and did not want to be outside in it. Lisa's (and therefore Levi's) isolation was yet further compounded by living some distance away from her family and not seeing them often, partly she explained, because of poor public transport and money issues. And so, both their well-beings could be seen to be affected by this separation: hers, because closer proximity to her family might have meant more support and his, because he would have had more people with whom to play and connect. She told me that it took two lengthy bus journeys to see her family and that he got bored and started to misbehave. Their mutuality of beings and doings were further impacted by their 'havings' i.e. the resources that could support their well-beings.

Being done to: 'Not Havings'

Money: personal income

Lisa explained that because she was on benefits, they did not have much money and she had to spend most of it on food and bills. Her life would

be easier, she mentioned, if she “was working and had a good job and had a good pay cheque”. Because she had previously been in debt, Lisa was anxious to ensure all her bills were paid. She described herself as “lucky” when she realised she had £11 “extra” to spend following her accidental overpayment of a bill.

Lisa felt there was nothing she could not afford to support her son. That she only mentioned toys (regardless of whether they came from a charity shop) and not going on holiday, trips to the cinema or theatre, learning to play a musical instrument or specialised clubs that might offer him opportunities to explore potential hobbies and activities he might then have reason to value, did not appear to cross her mind, at least in this interview. Some of his toys, she explained, especially his tool kit helped him to develop his fine motor skills but she also complained that he very rarely played with many of them. Her description of him as lonely may suggest that some of these toys, for example, his paddling pool, were interesting to him mainly as a means of playing and sharing experiences with others.

6.3 Adenike

Born and raised in Nigeria, Adenike had joined her husband in England 11 years before my interview with her to study at a local university. They had two daughters, both under the age of five years. She described England as being an attractive country to raise a family: they could already speak English for example; it was safer away from the “political instability” in Nigeria; studying in England was a privilege because it was “the height of education” and they believed she was more likely to find a job here. However, she told me at the start of the interview that she had “various things as barriers for myself not for the kids”. She elaborated that she was unprepared for the different cultural practices surrounding childbirth. In Nigeria, she told me, there were “dozens” of people – extended family members - to help after childbirth. According to her, a new mother “was in a paradise on her own” as all household chores were taken care of. This was “*entirely* different from this European way of life”:

...here you are the only one – you and your partner. Your partner has to go to work...so you are alone. That’s the thing. That cannot work. I won’t use ‘depression’ but thinking how am I alone, nobody to help. So it [well-being] has to balance to the mother itself not the child.

She described her very different experience in England and her isolation from her extended family as having had an impact on her eldest daughter’s ability to thrive. First, she explained that she did not know what to expect of her daughter in terms of her development or what to do to help her. Second, there were fewer opportunities for her daughter to communicate and develop her language, which was consequently delayed. This would not have happened, she expounded, had she stayed in Nigeria as there were far more people with whom her babies could have bonded. However, Adenike learned about a different cultural norm when she started attending a ‘Parent Survival’ course at the children’s centre, i.e. the expectation that children are attached to one main care giver, usually the mother. She told me that this course had been a great

help to her as a parent. This is perhaps because she had started to become acculturated to another way of being to help her cope without the support she had felt it necessary to leave behind in Nigeria. Adenike looked up to England as providing opportunities for a longer and “better” life. She and her husband came to the conclusion that their children’s ‘becomings’, could be better catered for in England. And so they appeared to be willing to give up the benefits of being in Nigeria – the support from their extended family – to privilege the resources they believed were available to them in England.

Not havings – personal income

Her husband’s job meant they were just over the threshold for their children to be eligible for two year ECEC funding and they could not afford to pay for it. Adenike felt this was a setback for the development of their daughters’ communication skills. She had previously had agency work as a support worker in a local hospital on minimum wage and a zero hours contract before her children were born. Since then, even though she wanted to work, she described at length the difficulty of getting well paid enough work to afford expensive childcare and to balance family life, particularly as she told me, it was culturally expected for her to do all the household chores. Again, it appeared that some people’s well-being was more valued than others’.

6.4 Michelle

'Havings'

Michelle, a self-defined single parent, had five children at the time of our interview and described her youngest child, a boy aged two, as thriving. My interview with her was the penultimate of this cohort and so I asked her view about the impact of parents' own well-beings on that of their children's, as this had been a key feature of other interviews. She expressed uncertainty about this, explaining that when her youngest child was a baby her own well-being might be viewed as thwarting his because she had tried to take her own life and been hospitalised as a result. She described it as "an extreme step" but the only way she felt she could get the help she felt she had needed for years. She told me she had suffered from depression from the age of 11 because of "things that happened".

Cataloguing a series of misfortunes leading up to her suicide attempt, she described taking drugs to "escape[d] life" before the birth of her first child and the grief she suffered following the death of her second after giving birth to him prematurely. She explained she felt this grief contributed to the postnatal depression she experienced following the birth of her third child who had some "autistic traits". Several years after this and splitting up with her partner owing to the domestic violence perpetrated against her, she decided it was "my time" and enrolled in a college course. However, she fell unexpectedly pregnant with her fifth child to a new partner. They had previously decided against any more children and so she told me she started "spiralling back to being just a mum". She continued to spiral into postnatal depression following her son's birth. She described her suicide attempt as a difficult but "crucial step in my recovery" because she finally got the help she had felt she needed since being a teenager. She speculated that, "maybe that is why [my son] is so well rounded because I feel stronger now".

She described her recovery from her suicide attempt as contributing to a different parenting approach to her youngest child. So despite telling me at the beginning of the interview, like many of the other adults in this study, that boundaries and especially routine were crucial to children's well-being, she later admitted:

...but I needed [her son] as much as [he] needed me this time, I think. D'ya know I have never let any of the other children sleep in my bed ever. They've had their routine and it's been important for children to have that or that's what I told myself. But [son], I have always let him creep into my bed cos I've needed those cuddles the same as he has.

Prosaic routine, understood (perhaps rightly) as a necessary part of the conduct of everyday life had given way to a more fundamental need: love and connection - reciprocal and mutually enhancing.

Not Havings: money – personal income

That love and connection, albeit crucial, were not enough to support anybody's well-being was discussed at length by Michelle. She commented that children (being "small humans") need basic provision such as shelter and a balanced diet and that it is important to prioritise these needs. And to do so, Michelle worked every weekend as a mobile carer, the children's dads taking on responsibility for their care while she did so.

She was also studying full-time for a degree in social care. The family care arrangements seemed complex enough to arrange and maintain, and were compounded by the "murders" she described as having with the Kafka-esque type bureaucracy that was student finance. She described at length the difficulties of juggling her student loans and her childcare and parents' learning allowance, among other things. She described being "knocked back and knocked back and knocked back" and that, after filling in a battery of forms and "waiting and waiting and waiting", being told she would receive no financial support despite being entitled to it.

Fortunately for her, her father was able to subsidise her temporarily while she contested this decision.

That she felt she was being 'done to' was emphasised when she told me:

And I just thought no matter how hard I try, I can't seem to better myself because I'm just getting knocked back on every stage.

She was struggling against a financialised education system, trying not to adapt her preferences but fighting to lead a life that she had reason to value, although her 'choice' of pink-collar work is typical of working-class women.

6.5 Rachel

'Havings'

Rachel was a single parent with two children, a girl aged four and a boy aged three years. She explained that some of the difficulties she faced as a parent living in Grenley were engineered:

To be quite fair there's not much you can do really, is there? It's just society and the way the government allow it to be.

However, she also thought her upbringing was responsible too. Rachel described some of the difficulties she experienced getting her children to and into school. This, she thought, was because she often moved house, a pattern she felt she had inherited from her mother who used to move around a lot when she and her sisters were children. Rachel explained that her mother was an "aggressive" alcoholic and suffered from depression. Her mother had had a part-time job in a pub but used to stay drinking after her shift had finished. Rachel had been a young carer, responsible for her mother and her two younger sisters. She also mentioned that when she developed PND after the birth of her first child at the age of 21, a counsellor had told her that she had been depressed from the age of 11 because she had not had a childhood.

When I asked her if her father had been aware what she was going through, she explained that he lived elsewhere and that she had withheld from him the full extent of it:

Because [pause] I felt like...I knew that...he would do something and remove me from the situation but then I wouldn't be there to protect the younger ones, if you get what I mean.

Rachel was willing to compromise an aspect of her own well-being for the sake of that of her younger sisters. Had she left them to live with her father, an element of her own well-being might have improved as she would not have had to care for her mother but, on the other hand, it might have suffered as she would have had to leave her younger sisters. And

so from a young age she reconciled complex feelings to achieve a balance she could manage within the constraints of her daily life, and with what appeared to be, no support.

Rachel explained that her childhood experiences had a number of repercussions that affected her and her children's beings and doings. Alongside her experience of PND and the disruption caused to both herself and her children's education as a result of moving a lot, she told me that prior to doing a parenting course at one of the children's centres she often struggled to manage her emotions, emotions she would inadvertently take out on her children. She described her mental health as making her vulnerable to other pressures, thereby creating a vicious circle. At the time of the interview she was due to move again and had already completed transition paperwork for both of her children into new ECEC settings. But she explained that her daughter would have to attend the same school at least for the final term of the school year and they would have to get up at 6.30am to catch two buses to get there on time.

Not havings

Money – personal income

At the time of the interview Rachel had recently taken up part-time employment at a local shop, her income being supplemented by working tax credits. She told me she paid her bills with her wage and that she was "surviving" on her tax credits from week to week. This seemed cruelly ironic given my preference at the time for asking these women how they support their children to thrive, when clearly they were just trying to make ends meet.

Rachel was determined to avoid getting into debt (so as not to be like her mother). She explained that she budgeted very carefully ensuring that all her bills were paid first and then doing "cheap stuff" with her children: watching rented films at home, baking cakes or going to the local parks. Rachel managed what money she had very carefully and she clearly did

not have much disposable income. Holidays, clubs and activities that parents with more money may take for granted were not mentioned.

Not havings - housing

Rachel's constant moving was not just prompted by her childhood experiences. She explained that housing, specifically rented accommodation was problematic in Grenley. It was expensive and, in privately rented accommodation, "you can't do nothing nowadays": you could only paint with neutral colours; could not mount anything on the walls, including pictures or a television; could not take the carpet up or make any home improvements. Alternatively, she explained that moving into social housing costs "an arm and a leg" to do the necessary work to make it habitable because housing associations no longer had budgets for decoration.

Rachel was in a good place when I interviewed her. She had come off anti-depressants, was moving into a home with her children's father and they were going to "try again" to make their relationship work. Her partner's parents were giving them a house, which for the first time in her life was "fully bought".

6.6 'Not Havings': The neighbourhood

Contrary to the introductory group meeting during which some of the parents told me Grenley was not disadvantaged, all of them, without exception, in my individual interviews with them, described the negative impact the neighbourhood had on their well-beings and becomings. I was told that their children loved playing outside (apart, perhaps, from Lisa's son) because, among many things, it opens their imagination (Imani & Rachel). However, they all felt the area was "dangerous" in different ways and that they had to be "constantly eye watching" (Rachel) when they went out with their children. Their main concerns were other residents (including other parents) and the paucity of local amenities.

6.6.1 Other residents

Alongside Rachel's experience of rented accommodation, she explained she was moving because of her "horrendous" neighbours. She described one of them as a "paranoid schizophrenic" who could control neither his children nor his dog and was constantly shouting at them at "all hours of the night". This resulted, she told me, in her daughter falling asleep at nursery. Her daughter was also "petrified to stay in her room" when she heard another next door neighbour "screaming at his girlfriend" because she thought he was "coming through the wall at her".

Other neighbours, who Rachel had been informed by the letting agency were Hungarian, she described as "overcrowding" their home, having "parties every night of the week", demanding money and, on one occasion, trying to burgle her house. Lisa had mentioned that the police were not as visible in the area as they once had been and the diminution of neighbourhood safety was amplified by Rachel who explained that she was told by the police, following this attempted burglary, that they did not have a car available and they had anyway been "pushed down the queue" because they had more important matters to deal with.

Imani highlighted that the neighbourhood could be differently dangerous. She told me that she and her children had had stones thrown at them by a group of Year 6 children, paint thrown at her door when she first moved to the area and that her mother-in-law had been slapped when she came to visit. But she did not describe her family as being victims of racism and was reluctant to do so. When I pressed her about this, she told me if she thought about it too much she would be reluctant to go out, was sceptical about the impact the police could have on these attacks and was resigned to staying because if she moved "how many houses are there going to be?". Imani was the only mother who told me she asks her children about their days at school because she was worried about bullying. She had good reason to be concerned. She was the only parent

who discussed the possibility that her children might not be safe at school.

Some of the effects of the neighbourhood on children's ability to thrive were attributed to other parents. Several of the women in this cohort criticised another parent at some point in the interviews but some were more judgmental than others. Ewa described parents who "couldn't be arsed" and let their children watch too much television; Imani and Stacey mentioned that some of their neighbours let their children play out too late and for too long. Rachel was the most critical in her appraisal of other parents, some of whom she told me "don't give a shit" and provided me with some graphic examples to illustrate her point. She tempered her view though by saying that these parents do care for their children but that some of them may have mental health problems. However, such parents, including her mother, do/did not ask for help - largely because she felt they were selfish. She explained that some of them just want to "holiday and party", and that they feel that because they have had children their lives are over and they cannot do what they want. These parents may not have wanted or been able to cope with the expectation of "passionately involved parenting" (Henderson & Denny, 2015:365) privileged in our society.

All the women in this cohort, during the fieldwork phase of the study, were single parents (apart from Adenike) although all (except Lisa) had partners who played a role in their and their children's lives. Lisa highlighted that these atomised and/or nuclear arrangements might entrap both parents and children when she told me:

Lisa:...I don't know if this is relevant but I've put [referring to a written list] not having many visitors as he only has me to play with and he must get fed up of me sometimes which I think is true cos I must do his head in. I know he does mine in.

Martina: Yeah, cos you are with each other...

Lisa: 24/7

Martina: 24/7 every single day of his life. Have you ever had a break from each other?

Lisa: Just when he has been in nursery or school. I don't do nights out. I don't get nights out cos I've no one to have him. It's just me and him, me and him, me and him.

Her isolation compounded and was compounded by her son's affecting both their well-beings and 'becomings'.

6.6.2 Local amenities

Several of the women told me of a series of problems with the local parks which made some of them virtually unusable: broken glass, needles, empty cans and wine bottles were the detritus left behind by disaffected teenagers who no longer had access to out-of-school services of their own. Rachel also mentioned that local parks were crime hotspots and told me about a recent stabbing of a teenager to illustrate her point. Unsurprisingly, these issues affected the use of the parks by the families of young children for whom they were principally intended.

There were other problems too. Michelle told me that, "the crime, the drugs everything round here, it's rampant". Most of these women and particularly those with older children were concerned about this. Imani described it as "frightening" and worried that her children would grow up to think drugs and crime were "normal". Not only could children become interested in taking and selling drugs, but the presence of drug taking and dealing in the area, together with people with alcohol addiction, meant that these women felt the area was unsafe, with "too many random weirdos" (Rachel), "druggies" (Michelle) and "bloody convicts" (Stacey) living in close proximity to their children.

All the women told me there was nothing to do in the area. Lisa explained that even the local shop on her housing estate, which her son "loved", had recently closed owing, she said, to the owners not being able to afford the structural repairs. She described this as having an effect on

him because he had previously been able to choose and pay for his own sweets. That he had an opportunity to develop his language, which Lisa described as being important to his ability to thrive, and to recognise and develop a relationship with a familiar person (they both knew the name of the shop keeper) was something that was now not available to him. Lisa described him as being “a nightmare” in Tesco’s - the shop they now had to start using - because she felt there were more opportunities for him to misbehave. Adenike, also mentioned that there was very little to do in the local area and that, partly as a consequence, one of the favourite things her girls loved was to go to Tesco’s. So even if they had nothing to buy, she often took them there to play. Lisa explained that she needed to travel outside of the area to access activities her son might like. She, and others, pointed out these activities were often expensive and more, that her ability to support her son to access them was compromised by her reliance on a de-regulated and privatised public transport system whereby the cheapest fare meant they could only travel on certain buses. This too, she described as an additional financial burden, especially during the summer holidays.

What few resources and activities these women told me were available were often run by volunteers and/or local churches. But there were some problems with these too. Imani especially, but others who attended the introductory meeting, complained that activities were not family oriented, that they were age specific. They explained it was a tricky juggling act for those with several children when one of them was attending an age-specific activity, especially outside of Grenley when this was compounded by reliance on public transport. Stacey described being puzzled at some of the age restrictions and how they had been arrived at. For example, her son was old enough to attend Beavers but a friend in his class was not. She also spoke of her daughter being interested in dance and drama but not knowing where she might be able to take her to develop this interest or whether she would be able to afford it if she did. Imani preferred to take her children to a madrassa, several miles outside of Grenley, which they could attend as a family.

Young children's vulnerability and requirement of basic needs provision was, according to these women, exacerbated by and enmeshed within their personal and shared environments. That a local area could significantly affect children's well-being was suggested by Rachel who attributed her daughter's cleverness to her having spent her earliest years in another 'disadvantaged area' but which had received significant financial investment in pre-austerity times. She described there being more resources on their doorstep in this area: a well-resourced park and boating lake, swimming pool and various activities organised by local community groups.

6.7 'Havings': ECEC settings

Little wonder, given all the barriers to supporting their well-being let alone that of their children's, that these women (without exception) highly valued education as being the best, and possibly only, chance of delivering their children's better becoming.

All the women spoke at length about the range of benefits that ECEC had had on their children and, in particular, access to two year funding. Aside from the important provision of childcare that enabled some of them to take up or return to paid employment as soon as possible, rather than "wait around" (Stacey) until children start their statutory education, it was also beneficial for their children. Importantly, it helped to build their child/ren's confidence. Lisa, for example told me that going to nursery, "brought [Levi] out of himself" and that his confidence had "shot up" when he started school nursery a few months prior to our interview. She informed me that he was no longer lonely, had made lots of friends and was "dead popular" at school.

Their children's communication skills were key (particularly, but not only, for those women whose mother tongue was not English and were integral

to their children's social and emotional development. Rachel, too, explained that she was still guessing what her two years old son wanted because his communication skills were delayed. However, this changed once he started nursery and she attributed this to his interacting with other children.

These women also valued good relationships with school. Imani, for example, was able to communicate with teachers about her debilitating illness and they were able to arrange for her children to be picked up while she went to hospital. There were other benefits too. Many of these women reported that attending Sure Start children's centres helped them as much and as well as their children and therefore had a multiplying effect on their well-beings. Lisa for example, pointed out that attending her local Sure Start children's centre had enabled her to meet Adenike with whom she had become friends. She described Adenike as the only friend she had on the estate and, in turn, it meant that Levi had an opportunity to make friends with Adenike's daughters. In addition, Levi's attendance at ECEC from the age of two years was helpful (to both of them) because it helped with "that separation" as he was "clingy". It gave her more time and allowed him to connect with others.

These mothers were generally supportive of the schools' agenda. Stacey for example, was delighted that her son could spell by the age of six. She attributed this to the phonics system that she had also taken the trouble to learn (twice) at an adult education course at the Sure Start children's centre. Stacey was concerned, given her own struggles growing up in Grenley, that her children had good jobs when they grew up, as well as being happy with children of their own. She viewed their education as the means to enable them to achieve this. She was proud that in spite of the difficulties she (and her children's father) had experienced, they had persevered with their own education to become skilled professionals: she as a hairdresser and he as a plumber. For some of these women with few of the kinds of capitals that might provide an easier journey for their children into more satisfying and higher paid professions, the acquisition

of educational credentials were the only means available to them to have even a chance of doing so.

The pressure and worry that some of the women experienced regarding their children's schooling as a means to their 'becoming' was highlighted by a number of the mothers. Rachel, for example, amplified the complex consequences of privileging exam/assessment success above all else. She seemed to relish the standards used to measure children's educational success when applied to her clever daughter but did not return to the health clinic when she was told by a health professional that her son had delayed development:

Rachel: She's really clever like...she's in top set for everything...

Martina: How old is she?

Rachel: She's 4... When she started nursery I got told she is like really highly advanced and they have different groups so starting from nursery so they have like Owls, you've got Foxes, they've got Squirrels and they've got Hedgehogs and she is in the Owls...and then, what she's in now, in reception there's Diamonds, Emeralds, Sapphires and Rubies and she's in Diamonds cos Diamonds are like the highest gem of them all and they have like maths groups and phonics groups and she's in the top set for maths and phonics.

Her daughter was 'exceeding' at school and meeting their performance agenda, which delighted Rachel. But when she took her son to a health drop-in the health professional made her feel "like a failure" because he was not yet drinking from a cup, so she never returned. Rachel told me:

...if you force a child to do something they are going to be more persistent and they're not going to do it. You need to let them know in their own way and a lot of people put all kids on the same spectrum of a level. Every child should be like this at the age of two but what they don't get is that other kids have got different situations. Every child is different at development.

But what long-term impact (if any) this system of 'success' and 'failure' might have on her children's well-beings or becomings, if they continued

along this trajectory, could only be speculated upon in this study. Rachel bought into the agenda promulgated by my research question by telling me that “parents and teachers have got to be the biggest influence on kids” even though she spoke at length about the neighbourhood’s effects.

Stacey too highlighted the pressures that parents faced in trying to balance children’s current ‘beings’ with a concern about their ‘becomings’. At the final meeting with adult respondents, she described play as a difficult balance between “learning fun and playing fun”. She elaborated:

Stacey: The more you put it off, the more they end up having to do. It’s like homework, Cameron [aged 6], he had like four different bits of homework – it was over a few different weeks and he’d do a little bit and I said, ‘well if you don’t finish it off, you’re going to have more to do when you get more on Friday’. And then he got frustrated because he had to do all these bits of homework. And I said, ‘No I’m not doing it. Well you don’t get the iPad, you don’t go out on the trampoline or whatever until it’s all done. You’re not putting it off no more.’

Martina: So let me just check with you, that’s interesting that Stacey, so are you saying that he had to stop playing...

Stacey: Yeah

Martina: to do his learning?

Stacey: Yeah

But some of the mothers (Kerry, Imani and Stacey) also recounted that some of their children complained vociferously about giving up their playtimes. Kerry for example told me,

My youngest who’s five said to me the other day ‘I don’t want to go in Year 1. You have to work. It’s no fun’...Cos they’ve been to visit Year 1 and ‘All you do is work. No play.’

However, some of the women described their children as adapting to the situation with which they were presented (Stacey and Sharon) and eventually stopping complaining, although Stacey, in contradiction, also

said she “never used to have an issue with homework” but her son was not happy at having to do it, as the earlier quotation signals.

Imani also questioned this injunction to performativity, but differently. She expressed concern about the effect of too much schoolwork on her children (even though, ironically, she also described herself as being shocked that they did not have much homework). She advised that it was more important to her that her children “be open minded and confident so they fit in with society”. For her, education appeared to be about much more than an individual’s achievement. Lisa, Imani and Rachel spoke about their children doing things when they were “ready” to do so (Rachel’s daughter happened to be ready sooner). Lisa told me she was not worried about Levi’s speech ‘delay’ and that “he will talk when he is ready to talk”. We did not explore in our discussion why she felt this way (it felt inappropriate to do so), especially given the concern she told me other professionals (health visitor and early years educators) were expressing about the delay in his language development. Lisa may have accepted that each child is unique and develops at different rates (which Rachel explicitly drew on regarding her own son’s ‘delay’). She may have also found it difficult to accept that because of the wider circumstances she described, his development may have been being delayed.

All parents talked about children having a diverse range of experiences as crucial to their well-being. School appeared to be the main way these parents believed their children could get these diverse experiences and take them beyond what had otherwise been made available to them. That said, at the final meeting with adult respondents, their children’s internet use became the focus of quite a lengthy discussion. Adenike described her children’s use of it as being good for their education but Stacey and Imani complained that school’s expectation for them to have a computer and various ‘apps’ was a financial burden and that the connected advertising also had financial implications because of the “mither” from their children for the associated toys that accompanied it.

6.8 Summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings from the mothers who responded to the study. In sum, children's well-being was conceptualised by this cohort as interdependent with their m/others and their wider social and material circumstances and environments. They were therefore mutualities of 'beings' and their 'doings' and 'becomings' were inter-related. The circumstances described indicated that children and their families experienced (or were at risk of) poverty (not havings) and social exclusion (unbelonging). The importance of ('havings') resources (especially but not exclusively, personal incomes) was emphasised by this cohort. Accessible and affordable family-friendly resources and activities were also seen as important to all their well-beings. Lack of community-oriented resources in the neighbourhood for others (activities for teenagers, for example) also affected the well-being of young children. Some respondents also felt that uncommodifiable resources were also important to well-being: friendship, trust, love, and solidarity. These were often seen to be supportive of well-being in that they were reciprocal and mutually enhancing. ECEC was also considered, among this cohort, to be an important resource to support their well-beings.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I respond to the RQs outlined in Chapter One (apart from RQ1, which is addressed in Chapter Two, Part Two). For RQ2, which focuses on how the three respondent cohorts conceptualised child well-being, I consider the study's findings against concepts privileged by each theory summarised in the theoretical framework of child well-being (page 37). In so doing, I also reflect on what this reveals about the theories of well-being as they are applied to young children. To address RQ3, I suggest how the different cohorts' conceptualisations of (child) well-being may be mobilised to shape ECEC policy specifically, and socio-economic policies more generally in ways that might better leverage support for children's well-being in low-income areas in England.

Part One: RQ 2 How do parents, early years educators and young children themselves conceptualise child (their) well-being?

7.2 'Distributive Approaches'

7.2.1 Primary goods theory

The study's findings suggest that the mothers and EYEs conceptualised child well-being, at least in part, in keeping with PGT. All the mothers spoke unreservedly about the importance of 'havings' (material or commodifiable goods) as means by which their children could achieve well-being. These included individual-oriented 'havings' e.g. personal and/or family incomes (financial capital); knowledge and skills (human capital) through to neighbourhood-oriented 'havings' e.g. schools, libraries and services – such as policing and public transport (built capital) and safe parks (natural capital). Mothers stated unequivocally that their low incomes combined with the reduction in (quality of) services militated against their (children's) current well-beings. Lack of material resources,

in turn, compounded and contributed to the area being “dangerous”. This finding is consistent with others reporting the vital importance of material resources as means to well-being (Brown, 2015:22; Cooper & Stewart, 2017; Gupta et al, 2014:344).

Given the constrained material contexts of many of the people resident in Grenley, these mothers may have been all the more motivated to value their children’s ECEC. These women were delighted with the provision of ECEC, especially those whose two-year old children accessed the funded offer. In this sense, the enactment of Rawls’ ‘difference principle’ (described on page 22) within ECEC was very much welcomed by these women. Adenike, who had been unable to access this offer because her family’s income was slightly above the threshold, complained that her children’s ability to thrive had been delayed as a result. These mothers were fully aware of the importance of education as means to their children’s well-becoming. Adenike was prepared to move half way round the world and away from the support of her extended family as a trade-off for “the height of education” she so highly valued for herself and her daughters. Any ‘failure’ that the children of these women might experience during the course of their formal education could not be attributed to their mothers’ lack of commitment to it.

ECEC was seen as an important preparation for their children’s statutory education and ultimately their adulthood. This view was fuelled partly by the socio-economic pressures these women had experienced as children and were continuing to experience as mothers, alongside powerful narratives about ECEC providing the means to a ‘better life’ (see for example Field, 2010). Rachel, for example, was delighted with her four-year-old daughter’s achievements in the “top set” for “maths and phonics” and thus valued as a “Diamond”, highlighting the potential exchange value of her education.

Similarly, EYEs drew on discourses emphasising the importance of an equal distribution of educational ‘goods’ i.e. individual skill-sets and

dispositions. These 'goods' would apparently be the means to support children's successful trajectory through school and beyond and potentiate their becoming 'successful' agential individuals. Jessica, for example, provided an example of this belief when she declared that children "can do anything" if they have their basic needs provided for.

However, the study's findings suggest that ECEC policy (and following this practice) undermined some children's well-beings in ways that meant they might be less able to achieve the educational outcomes and life chances their parents valued. In what follows, I describe how mobilising narratives of social justice informed by PGT (conceptualising children solely as individuals and as 'every child') may contribute to this.

Children as individuals?

The findings indicate that the process of 'supporting' children to achieve "the best possible outcomes" (DfE, 2017a: 10) began with the practice of separating children from their parents to facilitate the former's transition into education settings. This practice was often described in ways that suggested it could be harsh. Words and phrases indicating some children had to be "prise[d]" or "rip[ped] ...off" their parents suggested that children's early atomisation may have been distressing to some of them (and to some of their parents) and affected (both) their current well-beings. The importance given to becoming an independent individual solely responsible for one's own well-being was also surfaced by Sharon when she mentioned that children had to learn to "fend for themselves" and "if you don't, you've had it!" The disposition to be a resilient individual appeared here to be privileged before social and collective values.

That said, assisting children to separate and become independent was described as helpful by some of the mothers, especially those with little support, and ECEC provision facilitated this process. According to these mothers, separation supported their children's socialisation and language development in particular, through the formation of friendships and wider

relationships. However, other mothers described or were described as struggling with this process of separation. Sharon, for example, stated it was harder for her than for her daughter. So rather than children being 'ready for school', it was sometimes more difficult for parents to be ready for their children to start school. Katie interpreted one mother's actions as "constantly fabricating" her children's illnesses to avoid sending them to school because she was lonely. This mother was, perhaps, finding the process of separation painful signalling the inter-relatedness of their well-beings. Her children were about to start their school careers but it is not clear from the data whether she had as much to look forward to. Conceptualising children as individuals, as privileged by PGT, might therefore be seen as potentially undermining children's well-being as it misrecognises its relational nature.

Once children had been 'successfully' separated from their parents, EYEs believed they could support each child to develop the particular skills deemed necessary for their 'becoming' adult. EYEs articulated that supporting children to learn the skills privileged by the EYFS meant that children had to be independently disposed and self-reliant, able to adapt quickly to their learning/work environments otherwise they were "needy". Children were considered to be "lacking" or "failing" if they did not meet defined "milestones" within the expected timeframes, and therefore in deficit against normative standards.

Supporting young children, and especially those living in poverty, meant that they had to be separated from their mothers in other ways. Sian, for example, spoke of EYEs' role as "breaking that chain that you don't have to do what your mummy's doing". This was typical of a view among some of the EYEs and appeared to draw from a "moral underclass discourse" characterising poverty as a choice (Brown, 2015:1) and/or working-class jobs and lives as morally inferior. It also spoke to the misrecognition of the importance of mothers' reproductive labour. However, the findings from the mothers indicated that because of their wider social and material constraints, the children who were more likely to be considered as

“lacking” were those whose families were experiencing, or at risk of, poverty and were therefore lacking the material goods necessary for their educational foundations and social inclusion.

Children as tabula rasa?

The explosion in growth of ECEC, particularly for economically disadvantaged families, could be said to be aligned with Rawls’ ‘difference principle’ (outlined on page 22) and therefore welcome as an attempt to ameliorate some of the differences between children living in poverty and their more advantaged peers. However, meeting national targets for inclusion of growing numbers of eligible young children in ECEC, alongside ensuring as many children as possible reached the GLD standard, put pressure on EYEs. EYEs in the nursery unit with 60 children in one room were compelled to ensure order. Consequently, these three-year olds were required to learn to be physically contained. Injunctions that they should sit cross-legged and have their “hands in your baskets” during regular teacher-led activities, is an example of how ECEC policy influenced institutional practices and pedagogies in ways that may undermine children’s well-being. Sharon, too, spoke of children’s school days as being “more structured” than adults’.

Relatedly, EYEs spoke of implementing pedagogies that influenced children’s ‘becomings’ as productive, routinised and compliant. EYEs mentioned children’s ability to follow a routine as important to support their well-being, that this would facilitate children’s developing “organised minds”. This, in turn, would enable children to follow instructions and be “productive” because “they need that throughout their life”. However, these tightly controlled pedagogical practices and measurement requirements appeared to be based on and in turn, reinforced a conceptualisation of children as tabula rasa being spoon fed (hidden) curriculum goals. Treating children as passive recipients appeared to contradict the future agential capacities privileged by PGT and that ECEC

was supposedly meant to facilitate. References to the importance of children being “productive” and developing a “work ethic” support a particular conceptualisation of their ‘belonging’ and social integration into the labour market.

Children as ‘every child’?

The study’s findings also suggest that labelling some children, as “lacking” against pre-defined and privileged outcomes appeared to militate against their well-being. Kerry, for example, lamented that children get compared too much (both by parents and EYEs). Rachel too described not returning to the health professional who had applied measurement standards to her younger son, and judged him to be “delayed”. These examples underscored the potentially harmful effects on well-being of expecting all children to achieve the same educational ‘goods’. By implication, children’s ‘success’ or ‘failure’ against normative standards appeared to be a reflection of Rachel’s abilities as a mother and she railed against these judgements. Further, that some children’s ‘success’ necessitated others’ ‘failures’ began to illustrate how the dependence on normative standards to make judgements about children underscored the dialectics of their inter-relatedness.

Pedagogies that might have been supportive of children’s well-being, were affected in other ways too. Play, for example, (a key capability outlined by Nussbaum, 2011:33 & 34) often appeared to be in hock to curriculum goals and measurement expectations (hence, ‘eduplay’). The ‘characteristics of effective learning’ (see page 40) described by Jessica as supporting inclusive pedagogy, also appeared on occasions to be appropriated in the service of children’s attainment of a GLD. Katie’s description of children’s “active learning” as involving the EYEs “teaching them something” was an example of this. This practice then drew from and contributed to deficit social constructions of young children. However, most of the mothers were happy to align themselves with pedagogical practices privileging “learning fun” above “playing fun”. A

belief in education as a means by which their children had a future chance of combatting some of their current social and material challenges appeared to motivate this view.

In addition, reception-aged children were described as experiencing grouping practices based on their current attainment in maths and phonics (by Katie and Rachel) and on their socio-economic status (as observed in the private nursery in which I conducted the pilot study with children). These practices may have been taken for pragmatic reasons (re socio-economic status groupings) and/or pressures imposed upon EYEs to achieve 'quick results' against the GLD standard. However, these practices are contrary to the recommendations made by Mathers et al (2014) about supporting quality practice by ensuring social mix in ECEC settings, especially for economically disadvantaged two year olds. The findings from a recent study on the impact of grouping practices on children from the ages of three to seven years (Bradbury & Roberts-Holmes, 2017) mirror those of other studies of older children (see for example, Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Reay, 2017). In combination, these studies convincingly argue that grouping practices can negatively impact children's confidence and self-esteem, and hence, their well-being. These practices often result in children in poverty being placed in 'low ability' groups with subsequent implications for their educational outcomes, perhaps prefiguring their (dis)positions as adults in society's social structures. Grouping practices may then have the potential to influence children's 'becomings' through learning to belong to society by adapting to and maintaining its socially stratified status quo. It is therefore suggested here that grouping practices adopted to support children to achieve equivalent educational goods may in fact serve to reinforce inequalities.

That said, EYEs relied on 'ages and stages' models of child development not just because of performativity pressures. There was also a sense in which some EYEs felt the need to protect some children from their parents' unrealistic expectations for their children to be, as Kerry

described, “like Einstein”. Practitioner knowledge of children’s ‘developmental milestones’ acted as a tool that supported EYEs to do this. So, these ‘milestones’, criticised in some literatures as being developmentally inappropriate, were seen by some EYEs as protecting some children from overbearing or anxious parents. Assessment tools (language screening especially) were described by the EYEs as helpful to identify and appropriately support children who, for various reasons may be experiencing ‘delays’ in their development compared with their peers. However useful these assessments might be, they were often undermined by the (sometimes harsh) judgments that resulted from them, and the subsequent expectations for some children to speed up to attain pre-determined standards within a defined timeframe. Some parents resisted this approach to assessment, not wanting to force their children. Lisa, for example, steadfastly repeated that her son would develop at his own pace, perhaps instinctively protecting him from these harsh judgements that might undermine (their enjoyment of) his development. There was a tension between using assessment to support children’s unique development needs and using assessment to measure and compare their development against normative standards. According to Liz, balancing these tensions required EYEs’ sensitivity and skill. However, accepting children’s differential development rates could be viewed as an excuse to tolerate low achievement, especially that of some children living in preventable poverty, an issue to which I later return.

Another of the consequences of these educational practices was that EYFS measures were not only constitutive of children’s ‘progress’ but also that of the EYEs. EYEs’ professional trajectories depended on their ability to demonstrate their settings were able to meet the GLD targets, thereby enabling a good (or better) Ofsted judgment. Sharon, for example, described the pressure of her Ofsted inspection and feeling that, despite being judged to be an ‘outstanding’ practitioner, she still needed to “up my game”. In other words, it is proposed that EYEs were also being reproduced through policy as routinised, productive and compliant. What this also begins to illustrate, is that the privileging of

individual children's acquisition of skills in pre-determined ways belied the inter-relational connection between the well-being of children and that of their key carers. This connection underscored the inadequacies of conceptualising children's well-being as solely about becoming self-reliant single entities in pursuit of self-actualisation. Their well-being within their ECEC setting was partly inter-related, it is suggested, to the recognition and support of their EYEs as skilled and competent professionals. However, there appeared to be financial gains to be made from misrecognising EYEs. Ensuring 'every child' achieved a GLD, in the guise of social justice, was alluded to by Sharon when she compared ECEC to supermarkets and having to "buy more". This view chimes with others' questioning the profits that can be made from testing and measurement technologies that increasingly influence ECEC policy (Roberts-Holmes, 2019).

In sum, this study suggests that foregrounding PGT within the EYFS individualised children, separated them from their social and material contexts and treated them as tabula rasa. This was at odds with children's relational well-being and development of other functionings and capabilities that they valued and had reason to value: especially to play, to rest and to have fun. These findings are consistent with and contribute to those critical of current ECEC policy.

7.2.2 The Capability Approach

All respondents demonstrated they had broader conceptualisations of young children's (their) well-being alongside of (mothers and EYEs) or instead of (children) those reflected by PGT. Some of these broader views spoke to the CA's emphasis on the 'ends' or choices and opportunities that unique 'beings and doings' were able to achieve.

Children as unique?

Consistent with the CA, children demonstrated that they were unique 'beings' and indefatigable in their quests ('doings') to pursue and explore their valued 'ends'. Their well-being within their ECEC settings appeared to depend, at least in part, on their abilities to focus on the inter-subjective possibilities available in the here-and-now. They did not appear to be concerned about their 'becomings' and were either blissfully unaware of and/or resistant to the "cunning development programmes" (Sen, 1999:11) adults (including me) had upon them, however well intentioned. The mothers were proud of the uniqueness of each of their children and tried to resist what they sometimes articulated as the unfair expectation that they (children, but by implication, their mother/s) measure up to a pre-determined normative standard, particularly when they were found to be "lacking". Rachel, as previously described, provided a striking example of this.

That children are unique was also strongly emphasised by the EYEs who spoke (without exception) about their misgivings and struggles to support children with SEND, in particular, to reach a GLD when it was clear that they might never be able to attain it, or at least within the expected timeframes. Sharon, for example, mentioned the importance of valuing children for what they could do as they were able to derive motivation from this. Jessica described the limitations of GLD judgements imposed on children with SEND when they might have the EYFS' 'learning characteristics' in abundance (i.e. capabilities – 'means' and 'ends'). These 'characteristics' were still conceived of in individual terms but were measured using EYEs' qualitative interpretation, congruent with relational approaches. Using assessment *for* learning rather than *of* learning, and assessing children on their own merits speaks to the CA (and relational approaches to well-being) as valuing children for being unique.

While there was widespread support for and appreciation of the qualities and dispositions of children with SEND there was also concern that

adequate resources were rarely available to support these children at times when they might be most needed. EYEs described this delay as having a “massive impact” on the other children – which then became a frustration because of the pressures to increase the numbers of children reaching GLD. In other words, underfunding of institutions (in this case, ECEC settings) to support children with SEND had an impact on the pedagogies that might support the well-being of all children (and EYEs) in the classroom. In this sense the combined effects of different elements of ECEC policy impacted not just on individuals’ well-being but on those of others too, speaking to its inter-relational nature, which I will more fully address in the next section.

That some children may also have their capabilities differentiated and therefore be and become differentially capable agents owing to structural constraints (and in particular in this area, poverty) was also highlighted by the study’s respondents. These constraints intersected with other enabling and/or disabling social structures (such as gender and race). Some children had more power and command over desired resources than others. The boys ambushing the girls for the prized resources was suggestive of social structures enabling the boys’ and constraining the girls’ procurement of resources, and hence possibly their functionings and capabilities.

Children with choices and opportunities?

Some children were better able to articulate and negotiate what they wanted: Renny and Marissa, for example, who were confident, social children. This is suggestive of other structural influences (in this instance perhaps their non-FSM status) on functionings, differentially impacting on children’s capabilities, and potentially their well-being. This is not to suggest that children on FSM were under-confident and unsocial but, consistent with studies suggesting poverty does influence children’s educational outcomes (Brown, 2015; Mazzoli Smith & Todd, 2019;

Simpson et al, 2018), it appeared to be having an impact on some of the children in this study too.

The ECEC settings in this study provided children whose families were in different socio-economic positions, with the opportunities to become friends (Marissa and Cristal, for example) but it was also likely they would be in separate groups in their following reception year, with Marissa in a 'higher ability' set than Cristal. That learning might benefit from friendships, which support children to develop the positive educational identities underpinning achievement, has been highlighted by authors (see for example Brown, 2015:28). This study only allows for the possibility to consider the effect that grouping practices might have on the two girls, if any, when and if they reflect on the reason they might be separated, and the kinds of messages that they (and their parents) may learn to assimilate about their own ability and worth. These messages may potentially become constitutive of the identities and activities (i.e. beings and doings) of these children and shape their acceptance of the nature of the 'well-being' they may, at least in part, have been being prepared to accept.

Other children too appeared to be potential candidates for this differentiation. Kenneth for example, (on FSM) was communicative but could not yet speak as fluently as others and may also have been a strong contender for a 'lower ability' group. Amy (already grouped according to her family's socio-economic status) could not yet speak English and so would likely 'fail' to meet her two-year development check, in spite of her other abilities. Unless she was able to make very rapid progress, the 'ages and stages' model privileged by the EYFS and subsequent labelling might misrecognise Amy's skills. These concerns would require further exploration, perhaps in a longitudinal or ethnographic study.

The provision of a wider set of goods (as outlined in 7.2.1) were strongly highlighted as necessary to their children's well-being by the mothers in

this study. Most of the mothers, for example, discussed the importance to their children of having a range of experiences and activities to support them to work out what they might value. These women viewed their children's access to ECEC neither as a means of control or surveillance of their parenting practices nor of reproducing society's status quo. Instead they valued ECEC as providing their children (and themselves) with the means to achieve valued current and future goals or 'ends': a good job and the opportunities to have experiences they otherwise might not have at home. Stacey, for example, valued school as an opportunity to provide her children with the credentials to get good jobs, principally because her own experiences of growing up in Grenley led her to believe that her children might also struggle. Far from decrying ECEC as in hock to their children's preparedness for the labour market, these mothers wanted (their children) to be able to participate in the labour markets derided by commentators critical of human capital theory. ECEC also provided the means by which these women could also access their own education (Michelle) to broaden their own capabilities, which also included their labour market participation. In addition, ECEC provided some of the mothers the means by which they could have important recuperative space from the challenges of being a (single) parent. In other words, these mothers focussed on the 'means' as well as the 'ends' that social goods (including education) could contribute to their well-being, including that of their children.

However, these opportunities were compromised by their personal incomes and also by the dis-investment in the neighbourhood (the local shop, parks and youth centre, for example), which historically had few assets anyway. Playing out in this neighbourhood (described as important to children's well-being by all three cohorts) was widely reported by the parents as "dangerous". Witnessing and experiencing the effects of being outside could be seen as increasing children's opportunities/capabilities to get into crime and anti-social behaviour or else to become the victims of it (especially - but not exclusively - in the case of Imani's family). The mothers suggested that, consequently, their children's geographies were

being reduced. These reduced opportunities/capabilities could be interpreted as influencing children's desire to play on their iPads or watch television, as they had few other 'choices' their mothers were happy with. While adult respondents reported these activities as having some educational import, mothers also complained of the constant petitioning for new toys these activities initiated. Their concerns and experiences spoke to Sen's description of 'adaptive preferences' (outlined on page 24). The mothers were fearful that their children were learning to accommodate and adapt to their neighbourhood's social and material circumstances in ways that meant, as it did for Kerry, they might not be able to bring their children back.

Most of all, children wanted to play (especially outside) and have fun and pursued these activities as valued 'ends' as well as (and not just) the 'means' to satisfy their abundant curiosities. This is not to say that parents or EYEs did not value fun/laughter as being important for children's well-being. Katie, for example, mentioned it worried her that she had never heard some children laugh and giggle. But fun and spontaneity (so highly-prized by the children in this study) appeared, to some degree, to be in tension with the routine that was privileged by most of the adults as being essential to support children's future well-being and, to some degree, adults' current well-being.

In addition, the mothers, while being cognisant of their children's current well-being, also took a much longer term (or eudaimonic) view of their well-beings. Their desired 'ends' for their children were different according to each of their experiences and beliefs. Adenike wanted her daughters to have a long life (consistent with Nussbaum's conception of central capabilities) in a politically stable country, which she suggested, had been shaped by her experience of living in Nigeria. Imani, on the other hand, wanted her children to be confident of their futures, so (like Sen perhaps) was reluctant, in my interview with her at least, to prescribe what these might be. Stacey wanted her children to have 'a good job' but also wanted them to be happy with children of their own. Consistent with

CA, she believed that 'a good job' is both constitutive of and instrumental to well-being. She described both her and her partner as having "good jobs" i.e. not just a means to an end but also an end in itself providing an opportunity for her (as a hair dresser) and her partner (as a plumber) to be both creative and problem solving. It could be interpreted that these 'pink' and 'blue' collar jobs are typical career 'choices' of working-class people (hers especially) and exemplify 'adaptive preference'. However, these jobs, which are essential to society (and highly satisfying, as Stacey recounted) are generally undervalued and poorly remunerated (especially hers), and indicative of the kinds of positions within the societal structures for which most of the children in this study area were being prepared, if they were lucky: a society that especially undervalues the forms of (re)productive labour in which many of the mothers in my study were already engaged. As such, it appears that 'adaptive preference' (as articulated by Sen) is a limited concept in explaining people's 'acceptance of their lot'. Sen highlights the importance of people having opportunities to lead the lives they "value and have reason to value" (Sen, 1999:291) but less, people being valued for the lives they lead. Stacey and her partner may well have chosen these professions even if they had several others from which to choose. I submit that, in this sense, the CA alone is inadequate in its application to young children's well-being because it does not take enough account of structural factors militating against well-being.

Further, Lisa did not articulate 'ends' for her son or processes by which they might be realised. This study did not specifically seek to address these considerations but Lisa and Rachel especially were so consumed by making ends meet that they could be said to be caught in (an impoverished form of) hedonia. These findings suggest that, in some instances, 'eudaimonia' – commonly understood as a process of well-becoming (or of having choices to achieve valued ends) might only be available to those who have enough capitals to expect to be able to have some vision of their possible futures rather than surviving from day to day. The agential capacities of the parents (and by implication, their

children) were being curtailed. They were not only 'beings and doings' in the here-and-now but inter-related 'beings' that were 'being done to' experiencing, or at risk of, poverty ('not-havings') and social exclusion ('unbelongings'). Lisa's view that she could not appear in a public swimming pool without shame echoes Adam Smith (1776:691) who famously described the need for a linen shirt because working men would be ashamed to appear in public without one. Her inability to appear in public without shame reduced her capabilities and therefore her son's. This speaks to Sen's assertion that poverty needs to be understood as far more than material deprivation (Sen, 1995:40). Many of the mothers were sharply cognisant and critical of the barriers they faced and spoke of their struggles to use their agency against and within the societal systems and structures they inhabited and which, in some instances, inhabited them and became embodied (Lisa: "it's all in your head").

7.3. Relational approaches to well-being

The findings from this study suggest that, in spite of the huge efforts directed at individualising children, conceptualising them as vulnerable-only future adults, misrecognised children. Children's individual ecologies were differentially enfolded within those of their m/others and their wider environments.

Children demonstrated that their knowledges and the well-being that might be derived from their pursuit or innovation were often co-created. In other words, it was sometimes difficult to see how their learning could be individually assigned. Their learning was richer because of their collaborations. It was difficult for me, in reflecting on the interactions, to discern who 'owned' this criticality in a way that is required of EYFS measurement protocols. This suggests that their joint enquiry (and well-being) was happening in the interstices of their friendships. The children who responded to this study appeared to want to relate as intrinsic to their well-being, with some of them making up the existence of other

siblings. Children who were not thriving were, according to Katie, isolated and could not connect because they were “socially lonely”. Most EYEs saw an ability to speak as crucial for this connection but my observation of the two-year-old, Amy, suggested ways in which pre-verbal children might also demonstrate their sociability without spoken language.

Even though the EYFS assessment procedures privileged children’s individual skills and knowledge (or particular conceptualisations of these), this did not confine some EYEs and their settings. Liz, for example, described how two boys’ lack of awareness about their physical boisterousness affected other children’s safety in the ECEC setting, and hence their immediate well-being. This example illustrates the importance EYEs placed on individual children’s personal social and emotional learning (one of the prime areas of the EYFS) not just as a personal skill but also as a shared value. The background possibilities of this more social practice were foregrounded in these instances and especially in the ECEC setting that introduced other values around collective responsibility: “we keep each other safe” emphasising the inter-relatedness of ‘I’ and ‘we’.

In addition to essential material resources were other uncommodifiable resources, indicating that well-being, as White (2015) suggests, was happening ‘in between’ and in the dance of relationship. There were many examples of this: the friendship between Lisa and Adenike which benefitted both them and their children; Rachel’s compromise of her own well-being to look after her younger sisters; Michelle’s acknowledgment that she needed her son’s cuddles as much as he did; and the community of children who collectively greeted me on my return to school. Solidarity, trust, love were priceless values indicating *how* rather than *what* well-being is.

Interviews with the children and the visual images they created indicated how important their relationships were to them. Most of them enjoyed their ECEC settings (and other neighbourhood, city and, in Marissa’s

case, international resources) for the opportunities they provided to make, play with and admonish their friends and family. The mothers reinforced this view. Lisa, for example, described her son as no longer lonely once he started his ECEC. Some of the mothers also described their children as complaining about their reduced playtimes once they started Year One – and their statutory education.

EYEs also conceptualised children's well-beings as interdependent, at least with those of their families'. So, it was often not the vulnerability of some of the children to which EYEs referred, but to that of their parents. Some children were described as having to help parents who were vulnerable. Some of these children were described by EYEs as not being 'present' at school (even though they were physically) because of the anxiety they might be experiencing about their parents' beings and doings. So, children as 'beings and doings' in the here-and-now appeared to be a privilege that was not available to some of the children living in the high-poverty contexts outlined by many of the EYEs. In these instances, they described the difficulty of gaining purchase on these children's 'beings' to support their 'becomings' (albeit in particular ways).

EYEs were, on the whole, cognisant of the impact of parents' personal vulnerabilities on those of their children prompting Katie to comment that parents needed to be supported first. However, ECEC policy (currently not joined up to other social policies – Lupton & Thomson, 2015) foregrounded the abstraction of children from their wider social and material contexts. I suggest this facilitated an understanding among some EYEs that some parents (and particularly mothers) were sometimes wilfully obstructing EYEs from getting on with their job of educating their children. Katie's comment about knowing "full well" that parents had access to the internet, may have been an example of this. This may well explain why deficit views of parents, and particularly those living in poverty, were prevalent in some of the EYEs data (and some of the mothers'). Burman, albeit discussing the ways in which women and

children's rights are (in her view, wrongfully) disaggregated within refuge settings, states that,

...what looked at the outset to be about women vs. children turns out to be about women vs. women, or rather particular women vs. the state. (2008:190)

This highlights the tensions and competition that could occur between mothers and EYEs when the focus was solely on young children's well-being.

Focusing on and pressuring children to be 'school ready' (and harnessing EYEs and parents to this agenda) as potentiating social mobility and well-becoming masked the consequences of the asset stripping in Grenley that mothers reported as crucial to all their well-beings. So, Sian's understanding that children's well-being was about, "breaking that chain that you don't have to do what your mummy's doing" diverged from mothers' descriptions of their lives, powerfully exemplified by Michelle's feeling constantly thwarted in her attempts to "better myself". Many, but by no means all, of the EYEs appeared to discount the impact of structural, spatial and temporal influences on children's learning and well-being (specifically historical poverty) because they were compelled by ECEC policy to conceptualise children as single indivisible entities, needing to start their statutory education with the same educational goods represented by the EYFSP. Consequently some parents had to be bypassed. Katie, for example, interjected herself at children's bedtimes to read a story to them on YouTube. That this might impact on children's well-beings in other ways has been highlighted in a recent study albeit with older children suggesting their sleep, or lack of it, (and therefore possible impact on their well-beings) is being affected by increasing screen-time exposure (Gireesh, Das & Viner, 2018). It also speaks to a concern among some commentators (see for example Brown, 2015:12) about the increasingly acceptable custom and practice of schools and teachers encroaching upon the private social worlds of children and their families, but at younger ages.

All the mothers either implicitly or explicitly rejected the premise that their children's well-being was separate from their own or that of their neighbourhood's. Each of them recounted the multiple barriers to their own well-being and linked these to those of their children. Many of these barriers were prefigured by their own parents' struggles, suggesting inter-generational mutualities of beings. Imani's father suffered from the same debilitating disease as she did, for example and some of those who (had) suffered depression described their own parents as having likewise experienced it. Lister (2004:125) describes depression as a "collapse of agency" and most of the parents suggested this influenced their children's agencies too, especially if they had no other support. This study suggests therefore that Nussbaum's contention that the 'capability to affiliate' (Nussbaum, 2011:33) is one of the central human capabilities does not adequately explain this phenomenon of inter-relatedness and is consistent with others' understandings (Walker, 2017: 13-15 mins.) as 'affiliation' is a choice between individuals and not the choice-less mutuality of being described by most of the adults (and mothers in particular) in my study.

7.4 Extended summary of the key theories as applied to ECEC

Reading against the concepts privileged by each of the theories, as outlined in this study's theoretical framework of child well-being, the findings suggest that adults simultaneously held conceptualisations of child well-being consistent with all three well-being theories. However, those views that accorded with PGT appeared to support an understanding of 'belonging' as individual children needing to be 'ready for school'. This would prefigure their readiness for adult life (as apparently independent and agential, albeit differentially so) and their preparedness for the labour market. The CA, acknowledging children's uniqueness, was reflected in the findings of all three cohorts. 'Belonging' in this sense emphasised each individual being supported to lead the

lives they value or have reason to value. The CA also provides the conceptual space to emphasise that children are unique beings, thereby demanding a different approach to assessing their well-being. Both theories, however, conceptualised 'beings' as individualised and, in the case of PGT, abstracted them from their social and material contexts or, in the case of the CA, limited understandings of supporting their well-being to the removal of individual "conversion factors" (Sen, 1995:100). Relational well-being was also reflected in the findings of all three cohorts. Well-being in this sense was seen to be happening in between the dance of relationships. Children's (well) beings and doings could not be abstracted from their social and material contexts as they 'belonged' to and were indivisible from such contexts.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, given the focus on children's individual trajectories within ECEC settings, many of the EYEs focussed solely on the material resources available there. 'Havings'/resources therefore supported children's individual becoming and were individually oriented: skills and dispositions (human capital). Material resources focussed on supporting the micro-interventions necessary to support children's acquisition of skills. Some EYEs felt that too many material resources could be damaging to children – of more importance was a range of experiences to enable children to decide what they value. This is a view they shared with the mothers. That a range of experiences might necessitate a good income and a well-resourced neighbourhood was only indirectly highlighted by most of the EYEs in my study although it was strongly vocalised by all the mothers. So in addition to the individual-oriented resources emphasised by EYEs, mothers underscored the importance of both individual-oriented and community-oriented resources. The children also valued access to resources as means to achieve the 'ends' of making friends in places that brought them together: outside, in their ECEC settings, libraries and places of religious worship, for example.

A more extended summary of the key theories as applied to ECEC policy accommodating the differential theoretical influences on 'belongings' and 'havings', could therefore be depicted as:

Theoretical orientation	Focus on...	Conceptualisation of children as...	Social constructions of children mainly as...	Key concepts privileged	Concept dimension emphasised	Principal approach to measurement	Hasings (Concept supportive of well-being)	Belonging (Concept supportive of well-being)
Primary Goods Theory	Means	Every child	Vulnerable only Tabula rasa Future adults	Becomings	Individual/Self defining	Quantitative Comparative	Individual oriented: individual rights, human capital, personal incomes	Individual ready for school/society
				Hasings	Distribution of resources to provide equal means to become			
Capability Approach	Ends	Unique	Vulnerable only Tabula rasa Future adults	Beings & Doings	Individual unit of moral concern	Quantitative Evaluative	Individual & community oriented, personal incomes, human, social, built, natural capitals.	School/Society ready for the individual
				Becomings	Self-defining			
				Hasings	Distribution of resources according to self-defined goals that people value and have reason to value			
Relational well-being	Ends	Social and collective	Capable social actors	Belonging	Mutuality of beings and doings	Qualitative Interpretivist	Un-commodifiable resources: trust, faith, hope, love for example.	Well-being happens in between: School/society ready to support and be supported by all interconnected and interdependent beings
				Belongings	Interdependent with others and temporal & spatial context			

Table 8: Extended theoretical framework of child well-being as applied to ECEC

Part Two: RQ 3 What are the implications of these conceptualisations of well-being for policy and practice?

Broader conceptualisations of (child) well-being, described by the study's three cohorts, have a number of implications for ECEC policy and practice in particular and wider socio-economic policies more generally. It is suggested that incorporation of these broader conceptualisations into national and institutional policies may better leverage support for everyone's well-being, and following this, that of young children too. To address this question therefore, I begin by recapitulating the conclusions to RQ1, which focussed on how current ECEC policy conceptualises child well-being. This is followed by a consideration of the conceptual spaces within current ECEC policy that could offer possibilities for foregrounding practices in keeping with children's 'beings, doings and becomings'. I conclude my response to this RQ by suggesting changes to broader socio-economic policies that might then better support everyone's well-being, especially those in low-income areas.

7.5 Recapitulation of RQ1

As argued in Chapter 2, ECEC policy draws predominantly from PGT and is influenced by and contributes to deficit social constructions of children. Policy narratives posit young children as capable of being and becoming agential and independent. However, this is undermined by measurement practices, which in the name of social justice, recreate young children as individual tabula rasa dependent on the acquisition of 'equal' educational goods. Early childhood pedagogies and curricula are thus narrowly-conceived as they are subservient to measurement requirements that position children as 'every child'. However, ECEC policy in England also describes concepts relating more to the CA and to RWB (as outlined in Chapter 2.6), which as this study suggests, have real meaning for the people experiencing ECEC policy. I suggest these offer the background possibilities to recalibrate current ECEC policy and other socio-economic

policies in ways that would be more supportive of everyone's well-being, including that of young children.

7.6 Implications for ECEC policy in England

7.6.1 Reconceptualising childhood: recognising children

This study suggests that reconceptualising childhood away from deficit social constructions and recognising young children as capable agents may have a positive impact on their well-beings, and not just those in low-income areas. The children who responded to this study may not have been cognisant of their rights (to participate for example) but they certainly desired and were differentially capable of 'expressing' views that they appeared to believe supported their present well-being. It may well be that children are aware of (some of) their rights (albeit tacitly) but, because of prevailing narratives that mobilise conceptualisations of children as in deficit only, many adults do not recognise (or choose to ignore) that they are trying to claim them. Children then had to learn to adapt to their circumstances. However, the statutory guidance on EYFS measurement (Standards and Testing Agency, 2018) now includes the requirement to involve young children in the assessment of their own learning. Even though it is still conceived in individualistic terms, it provides a basis from which to develop pedagogies recognising children as capable operators. Such practice contrasts with the somewhat contradictory attempts to shoehorn baseline testing of young children into ECEC policy and practice (Standards and Testing Agency, 2019).

Current ECEC policy could accommodate a more nuanced conceptualisation of young children's 'beings, doings and becomings' by foregrounding understandings about well-being from the CA. This theory provides the conceptual space to recalibrate ECEC practice to acknowledge children's uniqueness, build on their current capacities and interests, and pursue educational objectives that are both 'means' and 'ends'. There is wriggle-room within current ECEC policy to do this. For example, the EYFS' 'learning characteristics' (page 40) appear to provide

a good starting point. Jessica mentioned that all children are able to achieve against these 'outcomes'. That said, these 'characteristics' were also seen to be appropriated (by Katie, for example) to support children to reach a GLD.

7.6.2 Recalibrating ECEC policy and recognising EYEs

Findings from this study suggest that recognising, and thus supporting, EYEs to develop 'child-centred' curricula and pedagogies, as in other countries, would likely be enriching to the well-being of all three cohorts. Current ECEC policy in England could accommodate a more nuanced conceptualisation of young children's 'beings, doings and becomings' by foregrounding understandings from relational approaches to well-being. Developing pedagogies and curricula that acknowledge and promote shared values may be one way of doing this. Again, there are spaces within current ECEC policy to respond in ways supportive of 'mutualities of beings' with some of the EYEs reporting that their settings also promote collective values. Following Brown (2015:170) and Burman (2019:11) it is suggested that ECEC pedagogies might also focus on respecting and supporting relationships and social learning: how learning occurs rather than what is learnt i.e. processes rather than the products of learning. So too, curricula could develop in ways that valued and accommodated diversity (uniqueness) by focusing more directly on children's interests instead of, or alongside, the EYFS's 'prime areas' of learning. In this study, the emphasis on "phonics and maths" seemed to detract from a focus on the 'prime areas'.

While recalibrating ECEC policy in the ways suggested thus far may help support all children's (well) beings and doings, it will not be enough to support those children who live in poverty (especially those in low-income areas). As the study's findings suggest, these children (and their families) have their capabilities differentiated in ways that may contribute to their social exclusion. All EYEs in this study were seen to be concerned about and non-judgemental of children with SEND (i.e. those children who

clearly had differential capabilities) but less so of children from families living in poverty (i.e. those with differentiated capabilities). This may have been motivated, as Brown (2015: 1) suggests, by a powerful societal narrative of poor parents' moral turpitude.

Findings from this study reflect those of the study conducted by Simpson et al (2017) who report how EYEs in England and the US tended to “downplay poverty status and to interact with children in a similar way to other children” (2017: 182). I suggest this may be because of a belief (influenced by PGT) that viewing children as ‘every child’, supports social justice. These commentators discuss how this normalisation may result in the voices of children in poverty, for example, being “organised out” (2017:184). To address this issue, at least in part, these commentators call for a ‘pedagogy of listening’ that would understand and respect the macro-level influences on the lives of children and their families who live in poverty. This ‘pedagogy of listening’ might include a variety of approaches. Brown (2015:173) for example, suggests assessing the needs and monitoring the progress of individual and groups of children who are more likely, because of their social and material contexts, to be disadvantaged by the educational system. However, this study’s findings suggest that such assessments would need to incorporate the needs of children’s families reflecting the inter-relatedness of their well-beings.

The assessment of children’s (and families’ needs) would be supportive of assessment for their learning. Re-calibrating ECEC practice to foreground ‘assessments for learning’ of unique children might also contribute to safeguarding children from some anxious parents’ unrealistic expectations. Achievement of learning outcomes might then extend across educational phases rather than be confined to arbitrary stages, based solely on children’s biological age.

In addition, and crucially, this study’s findings also endorse a recommendation calling for more resources to be directed to educational settings in low-income areas. Lupton & Hempel-Jorgensen (2012:602) for

example, call for such settings to be able to employ more teachers, and parental support and liaison roles. By extension, this would also involve workforce training to enable EYEs to consider and change the ways in which current practices (e.g. grouping and expectation for parents to purchase expensive equipment) may contribute to children's social exclusion. Recognising the important role that skilled EYEs have and could further develop around supporting young children's well-being would therefore necessitate EYEs of children under the age of three being afforded the status of teachers with comparable access to CPD as colleagues in other stages of education.

7.7 Implications for wider socio-economic policies

7.7.1 Recognising m/others and spatial/neighbourhood influences

The findings from this study are also consistent with others (see for example, Minh et al, 2017:171) suggesting there are other socio-economic policies influencing the educational outcomes and well-being of families living in low-income areas and especially those in poverty. However, ECEC policy is currently directed at 'improving' ECEC and home learning environments alone (see for example, DfE, 2018). It is suggested here that the importance of "enabling environments" (DfE, 2017a: 6) to children's educational outcomes and life chances might usefully be extended to include their neighbourhoods.

While capability and relational approaches may provide more sensitive understandings of (child) well-being, the findings from this study suggest their wider application to better support the well-being of children living in low-income areas especially. Anand & Roope (2016:833) state,

The capabilities or skills that young children possess are indicators of what they can do, but it should be recognised that these are essentially 'small world' indicators. They do not tell us much, if anything, about wider issues such as the life chances they will enjoy, stemming for example from the social status of their family or the human capital they acquire as a result of educational inputs in childhood and beyond. The set of things a child can do by virtue of his or her abilities provides only limited insight into the set of all things they will ultimately be able to do in their life-time.

Drawing from Fraser (1999) I suggest children in low-income areas, and particularly those living in poverty, are “bi-valently oppressed groups” in that they “suffer both maldistribution and misrecognition” (Fraser, 1999:75). Further, and crucially, that children’s bi-valent oppression is exacerbated by their enmeshment within that of their m/others who are similarly and differently ‘bi-valently oppressed’. Consequently, supporting children’s well-being requires the adoption of policies allowing not only for their ‘recognition’ but also that of their m/others and environments.

Similarly, Gewirtz cautions that recognition of children against their ‘cultural domination’ should not result in the creation of another “special interest group” (1998: 474) but be related to wider struggles for social justice and recognition. In other words, recognition of children’s beings and doings within their ECEC settings alone would not change the wider social and material conditions which children, their families and neighbours in low-income areas have to contend and which impact all their well-beings. So too, recognition of children alone should not be mobilised to strengthen existing narratives (from which my own overarching research question mistakenly draws) privileging children’s ‘outcomes’ (potentially for instrumental purposes) above that of their carers’.

Crucially therefore, including young children in decisions that affect them is not to say that these views should be privileged. The best interests of the child are not necessarily paramount because children’s well-beings, as this study suggests, are interdependent with those of their m/others. Recognition of children’s rights to participate, for example, does not preclude recognition of their interdependencies with those within their ECEC settings and beyond, especially with their mothers’. So, supporting children with adequate provisions to deal with the ‘conversion factors’ possibly militating against their capabilities, needs to be considered alongside how these intersect with supporting the capabilities of their m/others, particularly those living in poverty who may have had, and

continue to have, their own capabilities foreclosed (Burman, 2008; Llobet & Milanich, 2018:172). Burman (2008:180) notes the

...indivisibility of the relationship between women and children, the interconnectedness of their conditions and positions and, beyond this the impossibility of separating an intervention for one from that for the other.

However, this 'indivisibility' is "necessarily structured in tension and contest" (Burman, 2008:177). To address this 'indivisibility' and ease the 'tension and contest' would also require, I suggest, a '(re)distribution' of resources.

7.7.2 Distribution

This study's findings are, at least in part, consistent with a conceptualisation of well-being as a dance and "is not the property of individual dancers" (White, 2015:11). The relational 'dance', in Grenley, could be said to connect all its individual residents in ways that allow a window into understanding embedded and longstanding socially unjust treatment. But the question remaining is how to ensure that all "dancers" enable and are enabled to/by (the) dance(s). Recognition (of children generally and of children and their m/others in low-income areas in particular) is essential to their well-beings but so too is its intersection with distribution of (non) material resources. After all, 'dancing' necessitates good health, the possession of appropriate footwear, the existence and maintenance of dance halls, and the availability of and trust in the capabilities of other dancers, for example.

I suggest these distributive concerns involve three inter-related components. First, that children's well-being, including their educational achievement, is predicated not just on their access to quality childcare provision but also on the totality of their (and their families' and neighbourhoods') experiences. Just as children are nested in their social and material environments, so too are the institutions that support them.

Seeing ECEC settings' role as divisible from that of other services and institutions, is obstructive to well-being, as the mothers who responded to this study indicated. The study, therefore, emphasises the importance of joining up policy areas at national and regional levels, and consequently institutions, for the local provision of quality, affordable and accessible public services and 'goods' including food, transport, housing, health, policing, green space, leisure and cultural services. For example, findings from this study suggest that investing in the upkeep of local parks might encourage more families with young children to use them. This in turn, might then support children's educational achievement by providing them with opportunities to play with their friends outside of school. More families with children being outside might then lead to a growing sense of community safety and perhaps even a reduction in mental health issues resulting from isolation. In other words, the objectives of one policy would reinforce the objectives of others. This, however, clearly necessitates significantly more investment in low-income areas.

Second, and similar to a recalibration of ECEC that would enable children's inclusion into shaping it, so too supporting adults in low-income areas (some of whom may also be parents) to lead lives they value or have reason to value would involve their inclusion and participation not only in the provision of a range of learning and employment opportunities, but also in their ownership. These could be achieved, at least in part, with significantly more investment in adult education (or more inclusion in their children's formal education), free at the point of access including vocational education (the latter with enhanced value and status). This would include the profession of EYEs, which might then start to attract more men, a current problem. Such initiatives may provide a useful basis upon which to build, if desired alongside parenting responsibilities, a job enough in itself.

And while the financial (or commodified) economy is necessary to provide this investment, so too is the acknowledgement of the third element of this dimension, i.e. the (uncommodifiable) gift economy. Many

commentators (Alderson, 2016:126; Rosen & Newberry, 2018; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018:30 for example) including Oscar Wilde (1892) have pointed out the dangers or misguidedness of reducing 'everything' to a price or commodity. The kindnesses, connections, love, joy, solidarity, trust and forgiveness that were spoken of and displayed by many of the respondents during the course of conducting the fieldwork - albeit often overshadowed by the cruelties and 'hidden injuries' which surfaced in the interviews with mothers in particular - spoke to the importance of a parallel gift economy shared, uncommodifiable happenings in between and within the 'dance' of relationship. These were mainly within the private spheres of family life (as often, were the cruelties), but children's education, in spite of its many drawbacks, could also be seen in this study as providing these opportunities for public demonstrations and development of the gift economy.

7.8 Summary

In this chapter I have synthesised the findings from each of the cohorts to address RQs 2 & 3. These findings suggest that insights provided by RWB offered a fuller and more meaningful conceptualisation of well-being in this study. Respondents' 'beings' and 'doings' could not be abstracted from their social, material, spatial and temporal circumstances. These interdependencies were apparent within and beyond ECEC settings. At institutional level, insights from RWB could support the development of curricula and pedagogies more reflective and accommodating of children's 'mutualities of being' and their contexts. The study's findings also suggest that RWB may be supported (at ECEC or institutional level) by understandings emanating from the CA, even though these theories are, to some extent, in tension. For example, operationalising an understanding that children are unique (or as Robeyns (2003:44) suggests, "a unit of moral concern") may lead to more sensitive ways of assessing and supporting children's educational development. This would, by necessity, involve a departure from current normative expectations of insisting and expecting children to be 'every child'. The

findings from this study suggest that drawing upon PGT at institutional level to 'support' children to be 'every child' may inadvertently (or otherwise) undermine young children's well-beings.

RWB could also be seen in this study to support an understanding of the benefits of joining up differential socio-economic policies at macro-level in the service of people's well-beings. To support this, understandings both from the CA and PGT could be mobilised to advance arguments for the (re) distribution of essential material resources to make up for long-standing disinvestments in low-income areas. In this sense both the CA and PGT (in particular, the 'difference principle') may, as Brighthouse and Unterhalter (2010:193) suggest, be complementary.

In sum, RWB (which focuses on the dance but not at the expense of the dancers) supported by the CA (at institutional level) and the CA and PGT (at societal level) may offer the potential to support the well-beings of all who live and work in low-income areas, and hence those of young children too. However, and crucially, recalibrating ECEC policy alone to accommodate the insights provided by the findings from this study, without macro-level reform would be insufficient to address social and material inequalities.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Summary of the findings in relation to the over-arching research question and contribution to knowledge

'Well-being', a term used increasingly in policy narratives generally (Bache, 2019) and in ECEC policy specifically, is under-theorised and conflated with other terms. It is suggested that this leads to an implicit understanding of the term (and its proxies) and results in confused practice. In addition, the already complex and multi-dimensional term is further complicated by deficit social constructions of young children as vulnerable-only, potential 'well-becomings'.

The literatures suggest two main approaches to the conceptualisation of well-being. First, 'distributive approaches' which incorporate PGT and the CA. These focus on the differential impact of resources or 'havings' (broadly conceived) on individuals' well-being. PGT holds that societies need to be organised in such a way as to ensure an equal distribution of 'goods' ('havings'). Within ECEC policy and practice, this translates as the perceived necessity to equip all children with the same (level of) skills to ensure their 'school readiness'. In this sense, young children are conceived of as 'every child'. The CA, on the other hand, proposes that the organisation of society and its institutions needs to take account of the differential conversion opportunities that each individual has to convert 'goods' into valued functionings: in other words, that people need to be recognised as unique.

While both these approaches are visible in ECEC policy, understandings of well-being emanating from PGT were seen to be privileged. This resulted in the confusing expectation for all children to be concurrently 'every child' and unique. The implications for practice, and specifically for measurement of young children's educational outcomes, put significant pressure on young children and their parents and EYEs in ways that might undermine all their well-beings. This theoretical confusion within ECEC policy could be interpreted at best as a misguided attempt to

promote young children's equal outcomes (regardless of their socio-economic status, for example) and, at worst, as instrumentalising them in the service of economic growth.

Second, RWB offers another conceptualisation of well-being – one which specifically focuses on the concept of 'belonging'. This approach incorporates a conceptual shift from deficit views of young children to acknowledging and respecting them as differentially competent agents capable of contributing to social life. As such RWB highlights that children's well-being is one thread in the broader fabric of well-being: the thread is protected by and protects the others and the strength of the fabric is dependent on all threads being intact. Consequently, it emphasises an integrative approach to well-being - one that does not abstract children from their social and material contexts. Child well-being in this sense, happens 'in between' and is held to be affected by the well-being of others for whom children care and by whom they are cared for. ECEC policy, while accommodating the importance of 'personal social and emotional development' does so in individual terms. So relational skills were conceived of as the property of an individual i.e. *what* well-being is rather than *how* it is.

All three of the cohorts had broader conceptualisations of well-being than those emphasised in current ECEC policy. The mothers and EYEs reflected views akin to PGT, often owing to performativity pressures. EYEs were seen to be particularly concerned about inspection judgments and some of the mothers were anxious about their children's futures given some of their own struggles. Education was conceived by many of the adult respondents as providing a route to a 'better life' for children, and hence their well-being.

Respondents from each of the three cohorts emphasised conceptualisations of well-being more in keeping with the CA and RWB. The mothers offered the broadest conceptualisation of well-being indicating that their child(ren)'s well-being was indivisible from their own

and that of their neighbourhoods. In this sense they resisted my injunction, espoused within my over-arching RQ and informed by ECEC policy, to privilege their children's well-being above their own.

Because well-being is complex and multi-dimensional, responses to its conceptualisation and implementation within policy and practice need to reflect this complexity, particularly for families in low-income areas. ECEC policy specifically could better leverage support for young children's well-being (and various of its proxies) by incorporating a reconceptualisation of childhood and recognising young children as differentially capable social actors. So too, recalibrating ECEC policy to foreground the currently visible but backgrounded principles emanating from the CA and RWB would have profound implications for the measurement of children's 'outcomes'. Similarly, recognition of EYEs, is also seen to be important to support well-being and would necessitate more investment in their status, remuneration and training. In turn, this would support them to recognise, educate and encourage those children who are differentially capable and/or those whose capabilities may be differentiated by wider social and material factors (poverty and its intersections with ethnicity, gender and [dis]ability for example).

While such changes in ECEC policy and practice might better support all children's well-being, this study suggests that they would not be enough to significantly change the educational outcomes of those children living in poverty, especially in low-income areas. The term 'well-being' while being a useful concept with regard to young children in that it supports their present ontologies against potentially instrumentalising future agendas, is also limited in that it obfuscates long-standing deeply embedded injustices perpetrated against those people who live in, or at risk of, poverty in low-income areas. This study suggests that to address these factors would involve recognition of the impact of broader social and material factors influencing the well-being of young children's m/others and their shared environments. It is suggested that this requires m/others' recognition as differentially capable agents with adequate

remuneration and investment in their well-beings and becomings. Crucially, this would involve the re-distribution of (non) material resources to low-income areas to address these historical and deeply embedded injustices.

This study therefore has enabled me to make several conceptual and empirical contributions to knowledge. Principally, I have developed a theoretical framework which provides for a more holistic conceptualisation of young children's well-being generally and those in low-income areas in particular. This addresses a concern in the literatures that well-being is under-theorised. I have developed the framework by drawing on empirical work with children, mothers and EYEs and by bringing together diverse strands of early childhood and well-being literatures, the latter previously applied only to adults and young people. In so doing, the study has incorporated a conceptual shift away from deficit social constructions of young children, generally espoused by 'distributive approaches' to well-being. In this way it may be said to have broadened both the field of well-being and that of ECEC policy.

By employing this theoretical framework, this study also makes two further contributions to knowledge. First, it is the first study, to my knowledge, that reports the subjective well-being of children under the age of five years, thereby offering an empirical contribution to the field of well-being. Second, it could inform the development of ECEC policy specifically and social policy more generally by highlighting the conceptual space and rationales to suggest ways that might better operationalise support for well-beings in England, including those of young children too.

8.2 Limitations of the study and implications for further research

My main contribution to knowledge is theoretical, thereby obviating a requirement for a big data set more usually required in quantitative research paradigms. However, the study had several limitations, which

more research could address. First, the parent cohort involved only mothers and only one low-income area. Further research involving other parents/carers and low-income areas would further test this theoretical framework for its application to others. Second, this study involved only mothers who were not disinterested (or felt judged as being disinterested) in their children's well-being or who would not deliberately harm their children. It may have attracted mothers who were more or less comfortable with the prevailing disciplinary discourse of "passionately involved parenting" (Henderson & Denny, 2015:365), which my over-arching RQ could be seen to privilege. Another study could address this gap, perhaps by reframing the over-arching question to be potentially less judgmental and/or by the involvement of parents/carers in its co-production.

Third, while the study offers a broader conceptualisation of children's well-being than that privileged by current ECEC policy, and suggestions to inform policy and practice, it could be further developed by arriving at alternative metrics of well-being. This study suggests that, while assessment of children for learning is helpful, measurements of their learning and comparisons of them against each other are not. Given the complexity of well-being it is suggested that measures need to be multi-dimensional to account for much broader factors influencing the well-being of the wider population, especially those in low-income areas. A quantitative or mixed methods study could begin to operationalise the conceptual and theoretical work of this study. This is consistent with the views of those calling for multi-dimensional measures of ill/well-being (Stewart & Roberts, 2019:533).

8.3 My professional learning

As a result of undertaking this EdD I now have a broader knowledge base from which I can draw to underpin and inform my professional practice. My professional and experiential knowledge gained over several decades are now supplemented by academic knowledge. I have never been so

better equipped to potentially find spaces in the structures we inhabit, and that inhabit us, to contribute not only to knowledge but, more importantly, to its practical implementation. To this end, I have presented findings from this study to delegates at several conferences (Street, 2018; Street, 2019) and will do so at forthcoming conferences (The International Society of Child Indicators annual conference in August, and at the British Educational Research Association annual conference in September 2019).

And as I finish this thesis and return to (paid) work following a year's career break to complete it, I am conscious of how my evolving agency influences and is influenced by the evolving structural and institutional constraints and opportunities of my employing organisation in particular and [inter] national socio-economic policies in general. I return to the precarious environment I described in Chapter 3 with my role within Sure Start children's centres now 'disestablished'. How I am able to continue to use my agency to find the spaces within my own particular social and material contexts to proceed with this work is still unknown.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Fieldwork information

1.1 Information for ECEC gatekeepers

Information for Early Childhood Education & Care Settings

Thesis title

How can parents, carers and early years educators support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas?

Overview of the study

This study aims to explore how parents, carers and early years educators in disadvantaged areas can support pre-school children to thrive. Since the late 1990s policy makers have focussed their attention on the Early Years particularly in disadvantaged areas. This has been based in part on an increasingly robust evidence base that the very earliest years of children's lives are crucial in influencing their later outcomes and life chances. In addition, the rationale informing this policy focus has also been articulated in terms of the narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged children and their peers. However, the desired outcomes of this investment may well be differently conceived by parents, educators and children themselves in ways which may inhibit working optimally together in the interests of children in disadvantaged circumstances. This study therefore sets out to explore first the understandings of pre-school children, carers and early years educators about what it means for the former to thrive and second, the implications of these understandings for the policies and practices of working together.

Implications for my proposed study

Whilst there are extensive literatures on well-being and the importance of the Early Years in influencing children's educational outcomes and life chances, the views of pre-school children and those who spend most of their time educating and caring for them are generally underdeveloped in these literatures. According to Mathers et al (2014:5) one of the hallmarks of quality Early Childhood Education & Care is "engaged and involved families". Yet, how we engage them, what we are trying to engage them in, for what purpose(s), how this supports pre-school children's ability to 'thrive' are key questions I will attempt to explore in my proposed study. In sum, there may well be different perspectives and pressures on the various stakeholders which may prevent working together well in the interests of disadvantaged pre-school children.

Research Questions

The study will therefore attempt to address three questions:

1. How do parents/carers, early years educators and pre-school children themselves conceptualise what it means for the latter to thrive?

2. What are their perceptions of the factors that enable pre-school children to thrive (or not)?
3. What are the implications of these conceptualisations for policy and practice specifically for assessment, navigating potential differences and working together to support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged communities in England?

Methodology

The proposed thesis will be a small-scale qualitative study focusing on ECEC settings in a multi-cultural and disadvantaged area of a northern English city. The intention is to work with parents/ carers, pre-school children and early years educators to elicit understandings of 'thriving' and to consider their implications for policy and practice.

Sampling

The proposed sample will be a minimum of six parents/carers, six early years educators and six pre-school children (aged 3 and 4 years). They will have the following characteristics

- Live/work within the locality boundaries
- Care for at least one pre-school child
- Range of ethnicities (but ability to speak some English), ages, carer roles e.g. mothers, fathers, grandparents.

Recruiting early years educators

To recruit this cohort I intend to approach the gatekeepers of all ECEC settings to ask if they would be willing to support the study and to provide them with information about it. If so, I would expect them to let the children's centres' outreach workers act as agents for the recruitment of these respondents. Crucially these outreach workers have no authority over early years educators so are not in a position to influence/coerce participation. The details of those interested would be passed on to me and I would then be able to approach them directly with further details of the study.

Recruiting pre-school children

So too, I intend to approach the ECEC settings' gatekeepers but this time ask the Manager/Foundation Stage Coordinator to act as the study's agents for this particular cohort. ECEC settings would therefore have the option of supporting the participation of their early years educators and/or pre-school children in the study. But, for the three and four year old children, the managers would directly approach the parents of the children in the 'foundation rooms' with information about the study. If interested, they would pass on their details to me and I would approach them with any further information and to gain their consent to include their children in the study.

Methods of data generation

The data generation will take place in seven consecutive stages. These are

- i. Meeting(s) with all adult respondents
- ii. Individual 'guided conversations' with adult respondents.
- iii. "Meeting(s)" with pre-school respondents
- iv. Individual 'guided conversations' with pre-school respondents.
- v.- vii. Meetings with all adult respondents

Stage 1: Meeting with all adult respondents

Once recruited, I intend to work with parents, carers and early years educators to gather their views which will enable me to address the first two research questions. During this meeting I will invite them to explore what they understand by the term 'thrive' and other related terms and their views on what helps pre-school children to thrive (or not) in the local area. After this discussion I will ask respondents their ideas about the kinds of data they could gather to exemplify some of their ideas. In this way I will be attempting to include them in co-constructing the methods but I will also discuss and introduce some methods that I consider to be useful, in recognition that not everyone has the time or wants to be involved in co-construction.

I will ask that all respondents undertake a minimum of one of the following methods (these will also include their own ideas).

- Taking/bringing photos of their pre-school children thriving (or not).
- Keeping a diary over a specified length of time indicating in what circumstances their pre-school children (do not) thrive
- Video recording their pre-school children thriving (or not)
- Writing a poem or play/scene from a play in which their children do/do not thrive
- Drawing (a) cartoon(s) of their pre-school children thriving (or not)
- Marking on a map of the area where (and where not) their children thrive, if they do at all.

Respondents would then generate the materials which we will use as data to scaffold the next stage of the study i.e. the individual guided conversations. So my intention is for all respondents to have the opportunity to begin thinking about the concept of 'thriving' before generating the materials.

Stage 2: Individual 'guided conversations' with all adult respondents

Once the data has been created, I will undertake individual guided conversations to continue the conversation started in the initial meeting. Using empirical materials to scaffold these conversations, I will probe my respondents on their views that will enable me to address the first two research questions.

Stage 3: “Meeting(s)” with three and four year old respondents

Whilst I will have received consent from the parents/carers of participating three and four year olds I will also need to gain the assent of these children. To do so, I intend to spend a day in the ‘foundation room(s)’, get to know and play with them and to introduce elicitation resources (described below) to them - also to those children whose parents have not consented to the research so they too have an opportunity to play with and explore them alongside the others. The participating three and four year olds, having gained some familiarity with the resources and having received verbal information from me about the study, would then decide whether to take the resources home over the weekend and gather the data. Shortly after this, I would then speak with them and listen to their views, if they still want to participate, about the data they have created. The children will have the opportunity to withdraw their assent, should they want to, at various stages of this process. They may not be able, for a range of reasons, to verbalise their wish to withdraw from the study but they may demonstrate it in other ways. Spending time with them, their friends and key carers will support me to get to know them and become attuned to their ways of communicating, important as I will conduct the individual guided conversations without the presence of their key carers or parents to safeguard the participating children’s anonymity and confidentiality – although the children may involve a friend if they wish.

Similar to the adult respondents, the pre-school respondents will have a range of ways in which they could gather the data, according to their interests. They will be invited to choose one resource to take home for the weekend and to gather data on what they (or their teddy) like and/or dislike.

These are

- Drawing what they (or their teddy) likes/dislikes using a clipboard which has an integral tape recorder for them to record their thoughts as they are drawing, if they wish.
- Video recording what they (or their teddy) likes/dislikes using a ‘Tuffcam’ designed specifically for pre-school children.
- Photographing what they (or their teddy) likes/dislikes using digital cameras, again designed for pre-school children

Pre-school respondents would then generate the materials which we will use as data to scaffold the next stage of the study i.e. the individual guided conversations.

Stage 4: Individual guided conversations with pre-school respondents

I intend to conduct these conversations with my research assistant (Zig – a sock pupp.et) and with each of the pre-school children in much the same way and with the same rationale as the guided conversations with adults.

Stages 5 - 7: Meetings with the study’s adult respondents

Following my analysis and synthesis of the data generated in the first four stages of the study I propose to hold meetings with the adult respondents. During these I intend to feed back my findings of the first stages of the study. Respondents will then be invited to respond to my synthesis of the data from the three participant cohorts. Respondents will then be invited to begin to consider their responses to questions which will support me to address the third research question.

Contribution

The study will make a number of contributions. Firstly, it will develop a more holistic conceptualisation of thriving specifically for disadvantaged pre-school children, drawing on empirical work with children, parents/carers and early years educators and bringing together diverse strands of the early childhood and well-being literatures. This will be, in itself, an original contribution to this field. Secondly, it should also have the potential to inform early years policy and practice, particularly because the thesis will begin to develop policy and practice implications from the data relating to the ways in which different actors see themselves as working better together in the interests of disadvantaged pre-school children. I also hope that the conduct of the study in itself will have been beneficial, in enabling the study's participants to have the opportunity to voice their views on thriving.

Project timetable.

The data gathering process is expected to run from July 2016 to July 2017.

References

Mathers, S., Eisenstadt, N., Sylva, K. Soukakou, E. & Ereky-Stevens, K. (2014) *Sound Foundations: A Review of the Research Evidence on Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care for Children Under Three – Implications for Policy and Practice* (University of Oxford: Sutton Trust)

1.2: Participant Information Sheets for parents, early years educators and parents of participating children

MANCHESTER
1824

The University
of Manchester

Early Years Educator Participant Information

Title of the Research

How can parents, carers and early years educators support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas?

Who will conduct the study?

The study will be conducted by Martina Street, a student of Manchester University and Early Years Locality Lead for Grenley children's centres.

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the study is to explore the understandings of pre-school children, parents/carers and educators about what it means for pre-school children to thrive and then later, what the implications of these understandings are for working together in children's interests.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in the project as you work with at least one pre-school child living in the local area. Around six parents/carers, six early years educators and six pre-school children will be involved in the research study.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

The study is divided into three parts: first, you will be invited to an introductory meeting with other participating parents/carers and early years educators. At this meeting we will explore together our understandings of what it means for children to thrive and our different ways of describing it. You will then be invited to think of ways you might best capture the pre-school children for whom you are responsible, thriving (or not) but Martina will also suggest ways and provide resources for you to do this. You will be invited to complete one of the following. These will also include your own suggestions.

- Taking/bringing photos of pre-school children in your care thriving (or not).
- Keeping a diary over a specified length of time indicating in what circumstances pre-school children in your care (do not) thrive
- Video recording the pre-school children for whom you care thriving (or not)
- Writing a poem or play/scene from a play in which the children for whom you are responsible do/do not thrive

- Drawing (a) cartoon(s) of the pre-school children in your care thriving (or not)
- Marking on a map of the area where (and where not) your children thrive, if they do at all.

The second part of the study involves a private conversation with Martina (you may also bring a friend to this if you wish) during which you will look at the information you have gathered and she will ask you some questions which will help to further explore what it means for the children in your care to thrive.

The final part of the study, once Martina has gathered information from all the research study participants, will involve two further meetings with all adult participants during which we will explore the implications of different people's views on how best we could work together to support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas.

What happens to the data collected?

Martina will be audio recording the group meetings and the private conversations with you to make sure she accurately remembers what you say! She will transcribe this recording so she can analyse it carefully at a later date. She will not keep any of the information you bring to your private conversation with her and you will be invited to show her as much or as little of it as you want. This is your property for you to keep.

How is confidentiality maintained?

No-one within Martina's report will be identified by name. In her report she will use pseudonyms and you will not be identified by the way you speak or the things you say. In fact the local area and all the settings here will also be anonymous to support confidentiality. Any information you tell Martina will be treated in the strictest confidence unless of course, it relates to a child protection issue or a criminal act. Your information including Martina's report, will be stored on a password protected computer file and destroyed after five years. Ground rules including confidentiality will be negotiated between participants at the start of the group meetings.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without sanction.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Creche support, lunch and refreshments and any other out of pocket expenses will be provided to support your participation in the research project.

How long will the meetings last?

Both the group meetings and private conversation will last no more than 1½ hours as that is the length of time of the crèche

Where will the group take place?

The group meetings and private conversation will take place at either of Grenley's Children's Centres or a participating Early Years setting depending on the preferences of the participants and room availability.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Martina will be writing up her analysis of the study as part of her doctoral thesis which may be published. She will also provide participants with a summary report of her findings if requested.

Criminal Records Check

Martina has enhanced DBS clearance.

Contact for further information

If you would like any more information about the project please telephone or email Martina Street on:

Email:

Tele:

Alternatively, please contact one of the Children's Centres Outreach Workers on

What if something goes wrong?

If anything at all goes wrong, please contact Martina Street in the first instance. Alternatively, you may wish to speak with Martina's supervisor, Ruth Lupton: ruth.lupton@manchester.ac.uk

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with Martina or her supervisor, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093

Parent/Carer Participant Information

Title of the Research

How can parents, carers and early years educators support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas?

Who will conduct the study?

The study will be conducted by Martina Street, a student of Manchester University and Early Years Locality Lead for Grenley children's centres.

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the study is to explore the understandings of pre-school children, parents/carers and educators about what it means for pre-school children to thrive and then later, what the implications of these understandings are for working together in children's interests.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in the project as you are a parent or carer of at least one pre-school child living in the local area. Around six parents/carers, six early years educators and six pre-school children will be involved in the research study.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?

The study is divided into three parts: first, you will be invited to an introductory meeting with other participating parents/carers and early years educators. At this meeting we will explore together our understandings of what it means for children to thrive and our different ways of describing it. You will then be invited to think of ways you might best capture your child thriving (or not) but Martina will also suggest ways and provide resources for you to do this. You will be invited to complete one of the following. These will also include your own suggestions.

- Taking/bringing photos of your pre-school child thriving (or not).
- Keeping a diary over a specified length of time indicating in what circumstances your pre-school child (does not) thrive
- Video recording your pre-school child thriving (or not)
- Writing a poem or play/scene from a play in which your child does/does not thrive
- Drawing (a) cartoon(s) of your pre-school child thriving (or not)
- Marking on a map of the area where (and where not) your child thrives, if they do at all.

The second part of the study involves a private conversation with Martina (you may also bring a friend to this if you wish) during which you will look at the information you have gathered and she will ask you some questions which will help to further explore what it means for your children to thrive.

The final part of the study, once Martina has gathered information from all the research study participants, will involve two further meetings with all adult participants during which we will explore the implications of different people's views on how best we could work together to support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas.

What happens to the data collected?

Martina will be audio recording the group meetings and the private conversations with you to make sure she accurately remembers what you say! She will transcribe this recording so she can analyse it carefully at a later date. She will not keep any of the information you bring to your private conversation with her and you will be invited to show her as much or as little of it as you want. This is your property for you to keep.

How is confidentiality maintained?

No-one within Martina's report will be identified by name. In her report she will use pseudonyms and you will not be identified by the way you speak or the things you say. In fact the local area and all the settings here will also be anonymous to support confidentiality. Any information you tell Martina will be treated in the strictest confidence unless of course, it relates to a child protection issue or a criminal act. Your information including Martina's report, will be stored on a password protected computer file and destroyed after five years. Ground rules including confidentiality will be negotiated between participants at the start of the group meetings.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without sanction.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

Creche support, lunch and refreshments and any other out of pocket expenses will be provided to support your participation in the research project.

How long will the meetings last?

Both the group meetings and private conversation will last no more than 1½ hours as that is the length of time of the crèche

Where will the group take place?

The group meetings and private conversation will take place at either Grenley Children's Centre or a participating Early Years setting depending on the preferences of the participants and room availability.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Martina will be writing up her analysis of the study as part of her thesis which may be published. She will also provide participants with a summary report of her findings if requested.

Criminal Records Check

Martina has enhanced DBS clearance.

Contact for further information

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Tele:

Alternatively, please contact one of the Children's Centres Outreach Workers on

What if something goes wrong?

If anything at all goes wrong, please contact Martina Street in the first instance. Alternatively, you may wish to speak with Martina's supervisor, Ruth Lupton: ruth.lupton@manchester.ac.uk

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with Martina or her supervisor, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093

Parent/Carer of Participating Child Participant Information

Title of the Research

How can parents, carers and early years educators support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas?

Who will conduct the study?

The study will be conducted by Martina Street, a student of Manchester University and Early Years Locality Lead for Grenley children's centres.

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of the study is to explore the understandings of pre-school children, parents/carers and educators about what it means for pre-school children to thrive and then later, what the implications of these understandings are for working together in children's interests.

Why has my child been chosen?

Your child has been chosen to participate in the project as s/he is 3 or 4 years old and lives in the area in which the study is taking place. Around six parents/carers, six early years educators and six pre-school children will be involved in the research study.

What would my child be asked to do if s/he took part?

Your child will be invited by Martina (who will spend at least one whole day) in your child's setting to verbally explain the study to them and to play with the resources, one of which your child may take away over a weekend to capture what their favourite teddy likes/dislikes. These are:

- Drawing what they (or their teddy) likes/dislikes using a clipboard which has an integral tape recorder for them to record their thoughts as they are drawing, if they wish.
- Video recording what they (or their teddy) likes/dislikes using a 'Tuffcam' designed specifically for pre-school children.
- Photographing what they (or their teddy) likes/dislikes using digital cameras, again designed for pre-school children

Shortly following this your child will be invited to show and tell Martina in a private area of their choice in their setting all about what their teddy likes or dislikes. They may also invite a friend to listen too if they wish.

What happens to the data collected?

Martina will audio record the private conversation she has with your child to make sure she accurately remembers what they say! She will transcribe this recording so she can analyse it carefully at a later date. She will not keep any of the information your child brings to their private conversation with her and they

will be invited to show her as much or as little of it as they want. This is their property for them to keep.

How is confidentiality maintained?

No-one within Martina's report will be identified by name. In her report she will use pseudonyms and your child will not be identified by the way they speak or the things they say. In fact the local area and all the settings here will also be anonymous to support confidentiality. Any information your child tells Martina will be treated in the strictest confidence unless of course, it relates to a child protection issue or a criminal act. Your child's information including Martina's report, will be stored on a password protected computer file and destroyed after five years.

What happens if I do not want my child to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not you want your child to take part. If you do decide for your child to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw your child at any time without giving a reason and without sanction. Your child will also receive verbal information from Martina about the study and will also be free to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Will I be paid for my child participating in the research?

No payment will be offered to you or your child for participating in the project.

How long will the conversation last?

It is difficult to say but the private conversation between your child and Martina should last between 10-60 minutes depending on what your child wishes to say.

Where will the group take place?

The private conversation between Martina and your child will take place at your child's early years setting in a room which is familiar and comfortable to your child.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?

Martina will be writing up her analysis of the study as part of her thesis which may be published. She will also provide a summary report of her findings if requested.

Criminal Records Check

Martina has enhanced DBS clearance.

Contact for further information

If you would like any more information about the project please telephone or email Martina Street on:

Email:

Tele: xxxxxxxx

Alternatively, please contact one of the Children's Centres Outreach Workers on xxxxx.

What if something goes wrong?

If anything at all goes wrong, please contact Martina Street in the first instance. Alternatively, you may wish to speak with Martina's supervisor, Ruth Lupton: ruth.lupton@manchester.ac.uk

If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with Martina or her supervisor, please contact the Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator by either writing to 'The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL', by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning 0161 275 7583 or 275 8093

1.3 Consent forms for adults and parents of participating children

How can parents, carers and early years educators support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas?

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

- | | Please
Initial
Box |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily. | <input type="text"/> |
| 2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. | <input type="text"/> |
| 3. I understand that the meetings will be audio/video-recorded | <input type="text"/> |
| 4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes | <input type="text"/> |
| 5. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals. | <input type="text"/> |

I agree to take part in the above project

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____

How can parents, carers and early years educators support pre-school children to thrive in disadvantaged areas?

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily. | Please
Initial
Box
<input style="width: 80px; height: 40px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> |
| 6. I understand that my child's participation in the study is voluntary and that we are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 40px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> |
| 7. I understand that the conversation will be audio-recorded | <input style="width: 80px; height: 25px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> |
| 8. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes | <input style="width: 80px; height: 25px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> |
| 5. I agree that any data collected may be published in anonymous form in academic books or journals or may be used in a further research study. | <input style="width: 80px; height: 25px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/> |

I agree for my child to take part in the above project

Name of person giving consent & name of participating child	Date	Signature
Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

1.4 Observation schedule

Location?

Who is being observed?

Age of child/ren?

Date?

Time	Who is present?	What is happening?	What is child doing? How are other children reacting to this?	What is being said? Who is saying it?	Any thing else?

1.5 Letters to parents seeking retrospective consent for child's participation

The University
of Manchester

MANCHESTER
1824

23/02/17

Dear xxxxxx,

Supporting children under 5 to thrive in Grenley

I am conducting some research with 3 and 4 year olds about what they like and dislike. I am doing this with the permission of the school and some parents of children in Blue Group.

While I was researching on Thursday 16th February, one of the children I was speaking with invited your daughter to join our conversation. Your daughter was happy to participate so I felt that I should let her do so.

As a matter of routine I audio record these conversations so I have an accurate record of what is said. Therefore, I'd like to ask your permission to use the conversation that includes your child for this research project. Please complete the form attached if you are happy for this to happen. If you do not wish for your child to be involved, please let me or one of the class teachers know and I will delete the recording.

If you would like to ask me any questions about the project please let the class teachers know and I can arrange to meet you before or after school or alternatively, you can call me on XXXXXX

Best wishes,

23/02/17

Dear xxxxxxx,

Supporting children under 5 to thrive in Grenley

Last summer I conducted some research into the likes and dislikes of pre-school children. Your daughter was involved in the study but because she could not speak any English at the time, she was not able to tell me what she likes or dislikes. However, I was able to observe this through her play and her interactions with other children.

Since then I have gained ethical approval to include observations of children who are not yet able to speak English so I would like to ask your permission to use this observation of your daughter for this research project. Please could you complete the enclosed form if you are happy for this to happen, although of course it is completely fine if you don't and I won't include it.

If you would like to ask me any further questions about the project please come and have a chat or alternatively, you can call me on XXXXXXXX.

Best wishes,

Appendix 2: Introductory group meeting: (Stage 1) activities

1. Introductions
2. Negotiate/remind ground rules including confidentiality and right to withdraw.
3. Reminder to participants of my role as researcher not as professional and therefore asking a genuine research question.
4. Participants will then be invited to describe what they understand by the term 'thrive' and other terms they use to describe this concept and their views on what helps pre-school children to thrive (or not) in the local area.
5. Participants will be invited to contribute their ideas about the kinds of data they could gather to exemplify some of their ideas. In this way I will be attempting to include respondents in co-constructing the methods.
6. I will also introduce some methods that I consider to be useful to exemplify thriving in recognition that not everyone has the time or wants to be involved in co-construction.

These are

- By taking/bringing photos of their pre-school children thriving (or not).
 - By keeping a diary over a specified length of time indicating in what circumstances their pre-school children (do not) thrive
 - By video recording their pre-school children thriving (or not)
 - By writing a poem or play/scene from a play about a week/fortnight in their family's life in which their children do/do not thrive
 - By drawing (a) cartoon(s) of their pre-school children thriving (or not)
 - By indicating on a map of the area where (and where not) their children thrive, if they do at all. Respondents may want to create their own maps but maps of the area will be made available as a resource if required.
7. Resources for capturing data shared and timeframes for next stage discussed

Appendix 3: Examples of participant data: transcripts and observations

Children: Marissa & Cristal (part of transcript)

(squeaking noise from Zig)

Martina: Hang on, he just wants to have a little chat. He's saying, right, 'Please will you ask the girls what do they like doing?'

Marissa: I like....

Martina: Cos Zig is from another planet and he doesn't know what children do round here. What do you like doing Cristal?

Cristal; [inaudible]

Martina: Say it in a big loud voice Cristal

Cristal: I like painting

Martina: You like painting? Right ok. What do you like painting Cristal?

Cristal: Paint on my fingers

Martina: You like painting on your fingers?

Cristal: No, on paper

Martina: Oh you like painting on paper?

Cristal: Yeah

(squeaking noise from Zig)

Martina: Zig is saying 'what is this building that we are in?' What is this place called?

[silence]

Martina: He's never been to a place like this before and he's wondering where we are

Marissa: He's not been to this place before?

Martina: He's never been to this place before

Marissa: Does he not...I not

Martina: Do you come to this place every day?

Marissa & Cristal: Yeah

Martina: And what do you call this place?

Marissa: A brick house

Martina: A brick house?

Marissa & Cristal : Yeah

Marissa: I can see the bricks outside

Martina: Yeah you can see some bricks

Marissa: And if you huff and puff it won't go down.

Martina: You can huff and puff and it won't blow down because it's made of bricks isn't it?

Cristal: One of the bricks is broken [pointing to the ceiling]

Martina: Oh yeah, one of the tiles is broken.

(squeaking noise from Zig)

Martina: Zig is saying 'if you had lots of money what would you buy if you had lots of money?

Marissa: I would buy a toy....I would buy a toy Zig

Martina: You would buy a toy Zig?

Marissa: Yeah

Cristal: I'd buy...I'd buy...

Marissa: I'd buy [inaudible]

R: What would you buy Cristal?

Cristal: [inaudible]

R: Say that again

Cristal: [inaudible chatter partly because Marissa is speaking too]

Observation record sheet

Location: Nursery room
 Who is being observed: Cristal
 Age: 3 (Summer birth)
 Date: 280217

Time	Who is present?	What is happening? What is child doing? How are other children reacting to this? What is being said? Who is saying it?	Any thing else?
11.30am	Blue group children and teacher	Phonics session. Usual procedure of children sitting in a circle with hands in baskets, orderly distribution of whiteboards and pens. This time the children were learning the letter 'd'. Cristal just wanted to scribble on her whiteboard but the expectation was to write single letters. She couldn't do this task. She kept looking at me and came over to show me what she had done. I interpreted this as a need for her to gain some reassurance as she could also see that most other children were able, to differing extents, to write the single letter they were instructed and encouraged to write. I put my arm round her to give her a hug and to tell her how well she had done. She was really pleased that I was pleased with her work. I could feel her physically relax when I put my arm round her.	

Early Years Educator (part of transcript)

Katie: Well the children in my class who I would say are the children who are thriving are the children who are making the progress, no matter where their starting point was. So it doesn't matter if they're reaching attainment levels that are appropriate for their age as long as they are making progress from their starting points when they start with us. They would be the children who are...they're attentive. When I'm delivering a session or even sat as a one to one they're the children who will give me eye contact, that will engage in a conversation or follow an instruction or respond appropriately to a question. They're eager and when I look at sort of where have they come from, where have these eager children come from, where have these children come from that have got the positive mental attitudes to not worry about getting things wrong; it's from the parents. So I think the family, the immediate family has got a massive part to play in this. Our children who are making good progress are the ones where we do a lot of work with home and school. We have a strong link with parents and it's the parents who take those suggestions and run with it so suggestions for next steps so the involvement that we have with the parents is through an online learning journal so as soon as something happens with a child at school, if we make an observation, a photograph, we write an observation about that it gets sent immediately to the parents with a next step of how you can help your children make progress.

Martina: Oh really right ok. So do all parents have access to that?

Katie: All parents have been invited. If they haven't joined up, we've invited them in to school to come and join up with us. We've got about 15% that haven't joined in EYFS that haven't joined. We found that those are the parents who are the hard to reach parents. The parents who will say, 'we haven't got internet access' but we know full well they're on face book. And they're choosing not to be engaged. They almost feel that that's something to do at school and we'll do our own thing at home. They don't tend to want to get involved in the education of their child.

Martina: Why do you think that is K? What's your experience of that?

Katie: Well I've been on...I think you can tell a lot from your initial home visit and the families who don't engage are the families where...I'll go on the home visit and there's hardly any toys, there's no books...they're very, there's nothing prepared you know...if I think about myself when my son's home visit from his school I made sure that everything was very well presented. I had his nursery reports, I had everything...his 2 year check and everything like that. These parents are almost that unorganised. They're like 'oh, I forgot you were coming'

Both laugh

Katie: But you know...very chaotic backgrounds, very chaotic houses, very unorganised life styles if you like.

Martina: What do you put that down to?

Martina: Probably various things. I mean some of the families who I'm talking about do have alcohol, drugs issues. They're child protection families, families that are involved with social services and I find those are the ones that are more reluctant to engage at school

Mother: Lisa (Part of transcript)

Lisa: Yeah...I think most of this is just random. I've put Levi doesn't play out much because he's got no one to play with and he easily gets bored.

[Pause]

Martina: I feel quite sad when I hear that actually that he has got no one to play with at home. How do you think he feels?

Lisa: Lonely

[Silence]

Lisa: There's a little girl downstairs in the flat below me and I will let him run around and he will play with her but we don't often see her.

M: How old is she?

Lisa: I think she is 1, nearly 2. I think she will be 2 next year.

M: Does he like her?

Lisa: Yeah, they like each other. C [mum] was going out with L [daughter] and we were just coming back...

M: Who's C?

Lisa: CP. She lives below me. It's her daughter, L in there [referring to adjacent room with grant funded 2 year olds]

M: Oh do they come here? [meaning the children's centre]. So you live in the flat above her? Is that right?

Lisa: Yeah

M: So you live so close but you very rarely see her?

Lisa: We don't get on

M: Oh really

Lisa: She's the kind that plays her music 'Thump. Thump. Thump' It does my head in.

M: Oh really? But Levi likes L?

Lisa: That's why if she's out I'll let him play with her. I'm not going to stop him playing with her if she's out but I'm not exactly going to make an effort to go down.[laughs] But anyway she was going out somewhere and

L started crying because she wanted to stay and play with Levi and I was like 'no, she's going out' but he does like playing with her.

M: Oh I feel really sorry for Levi, he just wants to play.

Lisa: I know

M: And that's... quite a powerful thing to say that Lisa, that he's lonely.

Lisa: Mmmmm... That's what I think anyway. He would be wouldn't he if he's got no one to play with? In the summer when I took him out... like this summer I actually had a paddling pool in the living room cos when I put it outside in the sun he wouldn't go in it, he wouldn't play in it because there was no-one to play with. It's like he will play 10 minutes in the sand pit and then he'll get bored and want to come in again.

M: Have you got a sand pit outside your house?

Lisa: It's in the bin cupboard...

[Pause]

M: So is it just because he has got no one to play with? Is there anything else about being outside that...

Lisa: I don't really like going out. The only time I go out is if I have to go out. I don't know what it is but I sit there for about half an hour and talk myself out of it. It's still carried on from when I had depression years ago cos when you have depression you get anxiety don't you... and I think that anxiety might have carried on a little bit cos if I don't have to go out I won't go out. I'll just sit there until I get completely bored... if I get too bored then I will just go out... but I think it's mainly to do with me not wanting to go out.

M: So do you mind if I ask why you had depression? What you put it down to?

Lisa: It started off as post natal depression after I had my first child, Oscar, and then 3 months after he was born my dad died and that built up and it got built on and it just got worse and worse and worse and then obviously when Oscar [name of first child] was a year and a half he got took off me and then eventually adopted.

M: Right, you've mentioned that before... do you mind if I ask, I'm asking a very personal question here Lisa but do you mind if I ask.... Tell me to back off if I'm being too nosey.

Lisa: It's all right; I should be able to talk about it now.

M: When was it? When did it happen?

Lisa: Last time I seen him was 25th September 2005.

M: Right, so he's 11?

Lisa: He's 13. He was born in 2003

M: Oh right, oh, the last time you saw him was 2005

Lisa: He got adopted just before Christmas that year.

M: What happened Lisa?

Lisa: They put it down to neglect. In a way I probably did neglect him. I was 17 I was in my teens I just wanted to do what I wanted to do, go out, have a laugh. I was one of them, dump him on anybody, you know, just to go out. I did stupid things. At least I know that now, I didn't know it at the time but yeah.

M: Right, ok, so where is his dad?

Lisa: Oh his dad walked away when he was 6 months old, denying him, saying he wasn't his baby, so he didn't have anything to do with him after 6 months. He wasn't really there anyway to begin with. He came to the 20 weeks scan with me and when he found out I was having a boy he was just miserable, absolutely miserable, he just wasn't interested.

M: So you were left literally holding the baby?

Lisa: And in a women's hostel for domestic violence, yeah. Cos my mum died when I was a baby. I didn't really have a mum, just my dad had loads of women in his life.

M: So did your dad bring you up?

Lisa: Yeah

M: So it was lots of different women coming to the house?

Lisa: Yeah, so we've had social services involved since I was... since we were children, me and my brothers. Every time they were close to taking us off my dad, he'd move so we've also moved around a lot just so my dad could keep us and then when he couldn't cope with us he'd dump us on my auntie who I call mum now cos she's always been there. I didn't even know that till she told me that a few months ago, that my dad kept dumping me and my brothers on them cos he couldn't cope with us all.

M: So do you have contact now with your brothers?

Lisa: Yeah like my younger brother he is like the fiddle to his girlfriend. You have to go through her to see how my brother is [laughs]. You can never contact my brother.

M: Why? Is he very elusive? Is he like the Scarlet Pimpernel? You never know where he is?

Lisa: Yeah and my other brother, we've just started talking because of stuff that's happened in the past, and he's just had a baby so we've got a new nephew now

M: So are they close by?

Lisa: None of my family is close by

M: So they are all spread out?

Lisa: Yeah

M: So you don't really see them?

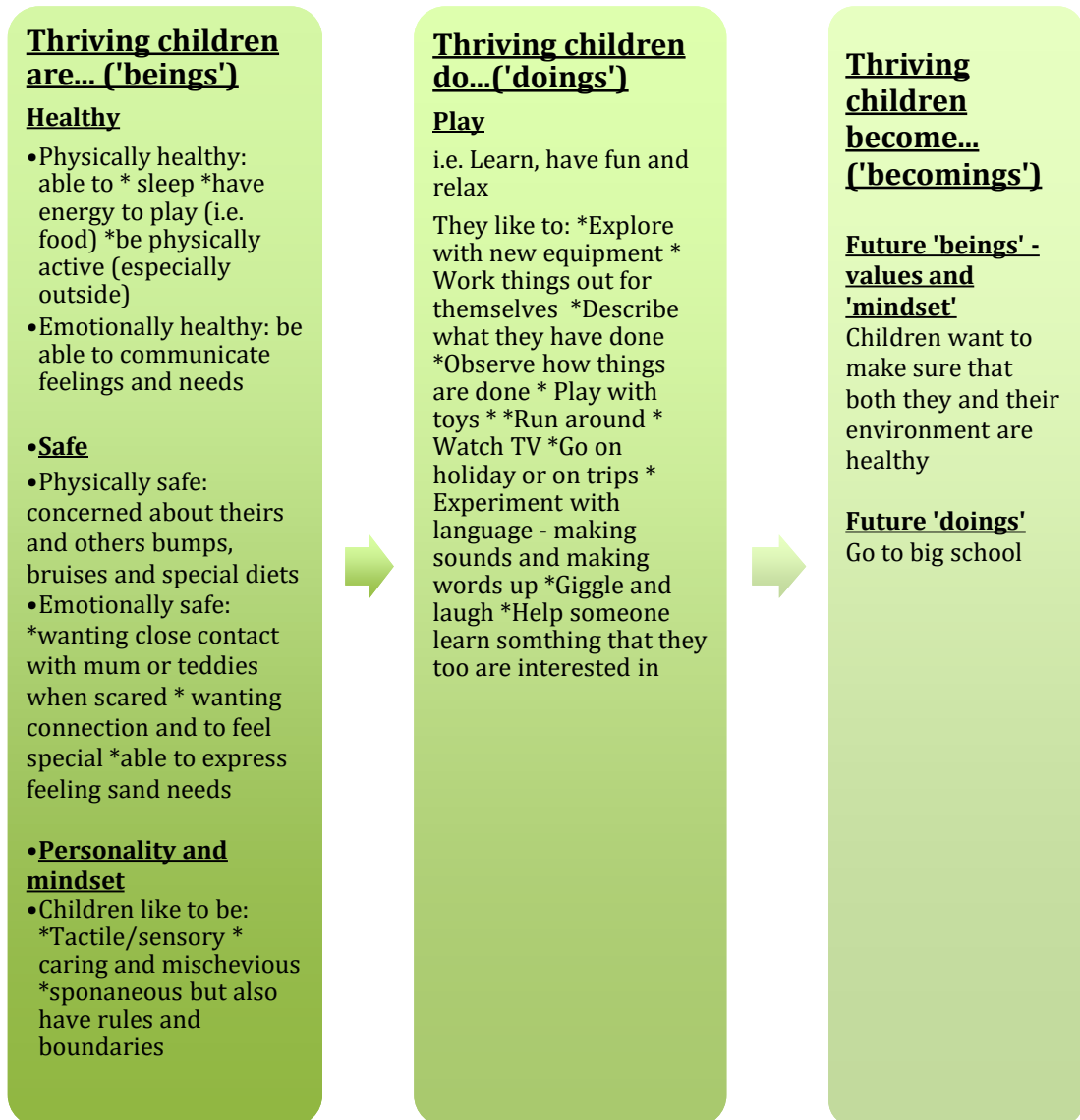
Lisa: That's one of my things on my list, I've put having no family living close by and don't get to see them that often and it's a long journey on public transport and Levi gets easily bored and starts playing up. On the bus he does anyway, that's what I call public transport cos my mum, my auntie, she lives in A. and it's like 2 bus journeys just to get there. Last time I went which was the day before bonfire night, cos that's Oscar's birthday just after bonfire night, and it took 2 hours. I went straight from nursery it took 2 hours just to get to A. cos of all the traffic.

M: My God Lisa, you've not had it easy have you?

Lisa: No, but I don't really dwell on it. I think there's people out there that are worse than me so it is what it is.

Appendix 4: Summaries of first phase of analysis – provided to adults for final groups meeting

Children's views on thriving



Helping

Money

Eg to pay for * food *for equipment that enables them to be active eg scooter *access to TV * holidays and trips * to be treated on birthdays to feel special *toys *for books and "manazines"

Emotional resources

Eg Loved, cuddled, kissed, listened to

Network

Being with loving others enables children to *learn how to be and do things together These include their parents, grand parents, siblings, pets, cousins and friends

Buildings & Services

eg. Homes: *that are "repaired" *where they can sleep *School * Library *Church *Museums - These offer children different experiences and opportunities to *role play *play with construction resources *make and be with friends *to be imaginative *achieve and have fun *use their developing language

Skills & Knowledge

Children feel they need to: *be active *use their senses *be able to play and have fun *have opportunities to observe and copy others (adults and children) *have choices *use their imaginations *be listened to *get reassurance *have a sense of achievement *have access to a range of experiences and resources *be accepted for what they can do *be well rested

Skills important to children are: *drawing *painting * reading *writing *counting * speaking *listening *observing

Green space

Interested in the natural world especially bugs, snails, spiders and flowers and playing outside especially in parks and outside the school/nursery building

Community learning

Children like to be able to develop and articulate their values: *to learn how to share resources (even though they sometimes find this difficult)

Hindering

Money

Lack of toys/equipment
Few resources/having to struggle for resources

Emotional resources

Parents splitting up (eg not seeing dad)

Network

*Being hit by other children at school or by siblings *Not having friends, siblings at home

Buildings and services

Having a long day i.e. - going to too many services/activities and not being able to rest/sleep *Not liking school or wanting to go to school *Seeing other children do something that they can't do (and be praised for it)

Skills & Knowledge

Children's ability to develop skills and knowledge is compromised when *adults agenda is prioritised * children's play is interrupted *Too much adult stimulation *Not giving children space and privacy *Asking too many questions *Not knowing how to attend to their needs

Green space

Lack of as much access to parks/green space as they would like

Community learning

Having their values ignored

Early Years Educators views on thriving

Thriving children are... ('beings')

•**Safe:** *have routine and stability *know what to expect * are able to stand their own ground *are cared for and settled *have familiar people and objects around them *aware of danger

•**Healthy:**

•**Physically healthy:** * well-fed * active *get a good night's sleep * physically growing

•**Emotionally healthy:** *can access and communicate full range of emotions *have strong bonds *able to adapt *social * cuddled * able to sense people's feelings and emotions *feel special and valued *aware of others' needs

•**Personality and mind set** *Eager * curious *motivated *happy *have that get up and go & confident *able to concentrate *persistent *chatty *bubbly *attentive *have self belief

Thriving children do... ('doings')

Learn skills (through play)

Communication:

*Listening, speaking & understanding

Personal & social:

*Learning how to behave *wanting to participate *able to make friends *Work independently *Work as a team

Physical: *Dancing

*running *climbing

*hand/eye coordination

Numeracy: *counting and measuring

Literacy: *can write

Knowledge and understanding: meeting people from other cultures

Creativity: *exploring with their senses

*pushing boundaries

*building dens *role play

*problem solving

Achieve

*Meet and exceed expected outcomes

*making progress against starting points

*reaching GLD

Help

*follow early years setting values and tell each other off if they don't do so (at home too)

Have fun

*Laugh and giggle

Thriving children become... ('becomings')

Future 'beings' – values and 'mindset'

Develop life skills eg ability to follow rules and fend for yourself. Develop growth mindset eg have self belief, aspirations and ambition as well as respect for each other

***Future 'doings'**

Ready for school at 3 years old

*toilet trained *feel comfortable in a new environment

*can separate from parent(s) *follow instructions *able to dress themselves *have organized minds

*are well behaved

Helping

Money

Eg *warm house *food *clothing *toys
*TV/internet (for access to children's online learning journals) *books *parent(s) working

Emotional resources

Children have: *secure attachment to parent(s) *attention, love and care *a growth mind set

Network

*real life human connection *teachers and parents who work well together

Buildings & Services

Nurseries/schools: *free childcare *extend learning to the home through homework and sending books home *settings making up for things that parents can't do

Other agencies: *to support children and families who need additional support

*Museums and libraries and other activities that are free *Good affordable public transport

Skills & Knowledge

Children have * positive dispositions for learning *early start to learning so developmental delay can be identified

Children have adults: parents and especially EY educators who know: *about the EYFS and characteristics of learning *about child development * how to separate parents from children *how to keep children stimulated and not bored *how to screen and track progress and plan next steps in children's development

Green space

*Go to the park and have picnics there *access to fresh air

Community learning

Encouraging shared values at EY settings

Hindering

Money

Eg. Earning money illegally *parents who don't work *Poverty – nothing in the home

Emotional resources

Children who are *not resilient *bored *are neglected *over protected by parents *anxious because they pick up on their parent's separation anxiety and loneliness

Network

lack of family support *troubled/chaotic families – lots of conflict, DV, dad in prison

Buildings and services

ECEC settings: *putting support in too late when things have reached breaking point or when children have failed *Creativity not being valued in EYFS 'good level of development' *pressure for EY pracs to ensure that children meet developmental milestones *childcare which is not affordable

Skills & knowledge

Children who *can't concentrate *can't communicate * are isolated

Parents who: *do too much for their children *are in a rush *don't know about child development *don't prepare children to be ready for school *don't establish routines and boundaries *expect too much of their children *compare their children with others and find them lacking *don't encourage their children and give up easily *think that learning happens at school and not home

Green space

*not being taken to the park or get fresh air *not having a garden or playing outside

Community learning

Affected by *Influence of negative media and blame culture *some religions don't allow mothers to go out into the community

Parents views on thriving

Thriving children are... ('beings')

•**Safe** Eg. Children are watched over by caring adults who have their interests at heart
*know where they can get love and reassurance when they are scared *are physically and emotionally safe

•**Healthy**

•Children are physically healthy eg. they are
*Able to get a good night's sleep *Well nourished *Physically active *Clean, dry and warm

•Children are emotionally healthy eg. they are
*Relaxed and feel comfortable
*Loved, kissed and hugged *Praised and valued

•**Personality and mindset** Eg. Confident
*Happy *Relaxed
*Open minded
*Enthusiastic
*Motivated
*Imaginative
*Observant

Thriving children do... ('doings')

•**Learn**

•*Develop skills: eg. communication, social, and emotional, fine and gross motor skills *Achieve goals: by meeting developmental milestones *Develop learning dispositions: eg. being willing to try, problem solving

•**Have fun** Eg by
*Playing out *Making and being with friends as well as family

•**Relax** Eg by *Messing about *Watching TV
*Going on holiday
*Doing nothing

•**Help** Eg by *Caring for others (siblings and carers) *Helping around the house

Thriving children become... ('becomings')

Future 'beings' - values and 'mindset'

*Be a decent person *Be emotionally strong so if faced with difficulties, they know they will be fine *Able to make choices to be with the right people
*Be independent
*Be able to fit into society *Realise aspirations

Future 'doings'

Have a good job for stability and security *Live a long and healthy life

Helping

Money

Eg *to furnish, decorate and heat homes *To pay for nutritious food and balanced diet * To pay for childcare *To pay for trips and activities *To pay for toys and equipment *The means by which family can acquire money i.e. good job with good pay

Emotional resources Eg. Love and trust

Network

Positive relationships between child and parent/carers (s), child and siblings/friends, parents/carers and parents/carers, parents/carers and EY pracs, child and people in wider community

Buildings & Services

eg. *Affordable, quality housing *Having a garden for children to play * Quality educational settings: nursery, school * sure start children's centres, activity clubs, library, museums, health centres, GP *Police patrol in neighbourhoods; Access to legal services especially regarding domestic violence

Skills & Knowledge

To support children, parents are able to eg establish boundaries and routines to ensure physical safety and emotional security *Know about child development and have opportunities to support their children's learning. Parents need to be eg calm, relaxed, confident, loving, kind, consistent, able to problem solve

Green space

eg. Access to good parks and green space, Being in fresh air

Community learning

Eg. Coming together in community to celebrate birth and support mother/child, Working out what kind of people children want to be; what values are important to them/us.

Hindering

Money

Only having enough money for food and bills and for nothing extra * High cost of public transport to get to costly activities *Inflation

Emotional resources

Parents who can't be bothered and are not interested in their children and want their former life back

Network

Eg children experiencing abuse and violence in the family home *being a single parent with no family network especially first time parent; not being geographically close to family network *neighbour nuisance

Buildings and services

Poor quality services: *Infrequency of services *Some professionals offering unhelpful advice, bureaucracy *police: not visible

Skills & Knowledge

Eg. parents *Not knowing how to ask for help *First time parent not knowing what to expect re children's development *parents/carers who are stressed, anxious, depressed, having (experienced) PND, selfish, short tempered.

*Children not having choices *Disruptive transitions for children (children moving around a lot) *Having debilitating illness *Watching TV all day and not playing out *Experiencing bereavement and/or emotional trauma *Having a limited diet *Parents having had a difficult childhood

Green space

Debris, needles, glass, cans in local parks
Dangerous area: violence in local parks
Too many cars making the area dangerous so children are restricted playing out

Community learning

Lack of trust in people in the area

Appendix 5: Example of second phase analysis using fuller conceptual framework

EYEs' data: etic i.e. open codes categorised as per theories/social constructions

EYE name	Children as vulnerable and dependent i.e. requiring basic needs provision	Children as holders of rights (PGT)	Children as becomings	Children as 'beings and doings' (CA)	Children as intersubjective and relational (RWB)	Children who fall in with school agenda (with parents who are on board with school agenda)	Children as successful (and have the 'right' dispositions for learning)
Katie		Making progress (?)	Making progress from their starting points	Making progress from their starting points			
						Doesn't matter if they are reaching attainment levels Appropriate for their age	
					Attentive, give EY prac eye contact	Attentive, give EY prac eye contact	
				Will engage in a conversation	Will engage in a conversation		
				Follow an instruction or respond Appropriately to a question	Follow an instruction or respond Appropriately to a question	Follow an instruction or respond Appropriately to a question	
				Eager, positive mental attitudes			Eager, positive mental attitudes
		Don't worry about getting things					

EYE name	Children as vulnerable and dependent i.e. requiring basic needs provision	Children as holders of rights (PGT)	Children as becomings	Children as 'beings and doings' (CA)	Children as intersubjective and relational (RWB)	Children who fall in with school agenda (with parents who are on board with school agenda)	Children as successful (and have the 'right' dispositions for learning)
		wrong. Are nurtured to be ok making mistakes					
			Take next steps			Observation/photograph gets sent immediately to the parents with a next step of how you can help your children make progress.	
	Children with parents who do not want to get involved with the education of their child. Those who think education is something that happens at school. Parents who say they do not have access to the internet so can't help their child but who school know full well are on fb.						
	Children with no toys or books at home						

EYE name	Children as vulnerable and dependent i.e. requiring basic needs provision	Children as holders of rights (PGT)	Children as becomings	Children as 'beings and doings' (CA)	Children as intersubjective and relational (RWB)	Children who fall in with school agenda (with parents who are on board with school agenda)	Children as successful (and have the 'right' dispositions for learning)
	Children with chaotic home lives whose parents are unorganised, may have alcohol and drugs issues. Families involved with social services and who do not want to get involved with school. – a “child protection family”						
				Developing the whole child through the EYFS, not just academically but also PSED		Developing the whole child through the EYFS, not just academically but also PSED	
			The school is measured on the good level of development in the EYFS	Bringing on their [children's] characteristics		Bringing on their [children's] characteristics	
	Needy children who have to be prompted						
				Children who can “lead [their] learning”		Children who are in a good routine, take initiative and lead their learning	
						I want them to be organised. I think organisation of your mind has got a massive part to play in the way the children are behaving in class, the way	

EYE name	Children as vulnerable and dependent i.e. requiring basic needs provision	Children as holders of rights (PGT)	Children as becomings	Children as 'beings and doings' (CA)	Children as intersubjective and relational (RWB)	Children who fall in with school agenda (with parents who are on board with school agenda)	Children as successful (and have the 'right' dispositions for learning)
						that they are accessing provision, the way that they are putting themselves to tasks and applying themselves to tasks	
			Getting them to think ahead because it's going to be more productive when they actually go and do something			Getting them to think ahead because it's going to be more productive when they actually go and do something	
						Children in ability phonics groups where pracs "teach them something through play". "They're always active learning so it's not that they are sitting down getting bored you know, 'can we go and play now?' type of thing. They're playing within it." "Right today we would like you to take part in such....at some point today we would like you to write a sentence about your favourite lifecycle because over the last few weeks we have been doing different life cycles and in the maths area we would like you to go and explore the clock."	
				"I want to go in the creative area and make my mum a birthday card or 'I want to go and go on the climbing frame to build up my muscles' or they'll choose but I always make sure that		... but I always make sure that they tell me what they are doing and why they are doing it so there is a reason behind the activity that they are going to choose	

EYE name	Children as vulnerable and dependent i.e. requiring basic needs provision	Children as holders of rights (PGT)	Children as becomings	Children as 'beings and doings' (CA)	Children as intersubjective and relational (RWB)	Children who fall in with school agenda (with parents who are on board with school agenda)	Children as successful (and have the 'right' dispositions for learning)
				they tell me what they are doing and why they are doing it so there is a reason behind the activity that they are going to choose			
						Thriving children are organised and disciplined	