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'Turning to notice' a colourful perspective: (Re)presenting two-year-old children's lived experiences of School Readiness.

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Abstract

Government expansion of free early education and care to include two-year-old children in England has significantly altered the school readiness debate, posing rhetorical questions such as 'Where is the child's voice' as research to date fails to attune to their lived experiences (Goody, 2012; Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle 2010). By specifically targeting this age group in educational policy, without consultation, a perspective emerges which devalues their social capacity, autonomy, and power, positioning them as by-products within a neoliberalist agenda to maintain an ideal citizen rhetoric (van Houdt, Suvarierol, and Schinkel, 2011). As a result, this thesis provides an original contribution to knowledge by breaking from dominant discourses of dualism and universalism, disrupting the status quo by creating a space for a field of enquiry which extends beyond the child, policy and ascribing voices to rethink school readiness as an issue which implicates children (Spyrou, 2017). Using a unique colourful perspective, I reposition the status of the child as equal to the adult with an energetic and vibrant agency (Bennett, 2010) extending educational research. As I decentre the child I blur the subject object divide by drawing on Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy (1994; 1987; 1983) and articulating how all bodies and things are interrelational, integral to understanding who we are in the world and how we intra-act in the world (Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015). This thesis is a qualitative project focusing on classroom events, intra-actions, reactions, agential cuts, and cutting together-apart as children draw on more-than-human matter to present their identity, subjectivity (Barad, 2007; 2003; Frigerio *et al.,* 2018).

Beginning with an autoethnographic approach my daughter's voice acts as a guiding conscience, thereafter I make a *'material turn'* (Reddington and Price, 2018, p.2) to problematize the status and perspective of the two-year-old child in early education. This illuminates the affects and sensations of school readiness, the child and the early years practitioner entangled within a *'material-discursive knot'* (Carpentier, 2017, p.4). Employing a rhizomatic approach to conducting and analysing research I 'turn to notice' the colourful sensations emanating from the child's body in communication with a productive capacity that glows (MacLure, 2013a). Drawing on multiple methods of data collection I (re)present the voices of children in raw, original and inimitable ways as I *'produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently'* (St. Pierre, 1997, p.175) to reconceptualize the concept of school readiness. I argue the productive colours emanating from children during intra-actions (Barad, 2007) can influence our thinking and pedagogical approach, something which I call an intra-action-reaction. Our reaction to the intra-action has the potential to liberate early years practice for the child and practitioner from the political agenda which drives an outcome over process approach. It does this by positioning early education as a reciprocal development, challenging politicised education, and classroom environments.

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Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis to my daughter, Eleanor. You have shown me so much, taught me a great deal and do it all in your own unique way. You are my conscience, my inspiration and my unrelenting motivation. I love you!

To my boys, Kevin and Kieran, you are young men now and we have had an incredible journey so far! Thank you for the gift of love, cuddles, frustration and adversaries. You will never comprehend how much you mean to me; you have championed me every step of the way and *we* did it!

David, my husband and friend, we have a unique relationship and one I would not change. I see the pride in your eyes when I ramble or rant. You are consistently by my side providing stability I so frequently lack. Thank you for being you and believing in me. Thank you especially for Eleanor, she rocks our world!

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Finally, and not lastly, thank you to all the children I have been entangled with during this journey. You taught me not everything is what it seems, I just need to look differently. You showed me it really is okay to be unique and just how powerful we all really are. Each one of you changed me, one way or another, and I have (re)presented your experiences to the best of my ability. I hope I did you justice!

I am indebted to you all,

with love and gratitude Julie

xxx

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee / University Ethics Committee on 02/03/2016.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 87,645 words.

Name: Julie Ann Ovington

Signature_____

Glossary of Key Terms

Affect

An affect replaces the notion of human agency and is the change that happens when two things come in to contact with each other, a moment of intensity inside or outside of the human body also known as a 'becoming'. Affects are pre-personal intensities which pass from one body to another with the capacity to act or influence or the 'capacity to affect or to be affected' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.xvii). It is important to note bodies are not always human ones. An affect occurs when the bodies collide or come in to contact with each other producing affective capacities within an assemblage to produce modifications or changes.

Agential realism

An epistemological, ontological and ethical framework with a Posthumanism performative account of naturalcultural practices and technoscience. This is the recognition that both human and non-humans have an important role in everyday practices. It accounts for forces at place in how bodies that are materialized are not all human. It is the entanglement of meaning and matter, how the world is brought to meaning through material and discursive practices producing material realities, here there is not privileged position of knowledge construction. To move beyond defining agency as only a human concern when researching phenomena, we enact an agential cut as concepts flow between and within one another. This is a momentary stabilization as a doing rather than a being, this is an agential cutting thing together and apart. Here phenomena is understood as entangled material agencies that intra-act, non-representational realism.

Assemblage

An assemblage is the arrangement or process of arranging, organising and gathering a complex grouping of objects, people, matter and spaces in a single context. The multiplicity of the grouping comes together at various moments in time to develop a new function or create a new way of being in the world. The relations within the grouping can be taken from culture, politics, material and social existences which are independent of human bodies. As a result, the assemblage is shaped by a wide range of flows which operate through desire that has a function and is productive. Desire is the flowing energies which produces connections.

Becoming

Becoming is a new way of being in this world, which acts as a function of influences that produce a difference. A becoming involves a process of change within an assemblage, which serves to account for the relationships within the assemblage. Becoming is the continuous flow of change and time versus 'being' as a static state. All things such as concepts are said to be in a state of change, being deterritorialized and reterritorialized producing the productive difference.

Deterritorialization and reterritorialization

Deterritorialization is the severance or division of political, social and cultural practices from territories that provide meaning and a reality to everyday lives and practices. In this sense education can be seen as a territory which governs, guides and codes educational practice through policy, school buildings and in particular routines. This shapes identities within the territory and any shift away from signification or a separation of purpose, defined by the territory toward the unknown, described as a loss of the self, is a deterritorialization. This is called a nomadic movement taking the territory in to a nomadic space. Deterritorialization is usually followed by reterritorialization. This is a reconnection of the political, social and cultural practices, only it is a repurposing of the territory somewhere new.

Entanglement

An entanglement refers to connections of all the elements which exist in an event to explore the dynamics of how they interact. Entanglements are a way of probing time, space, matter, social factors, humans and much more which exist in relation to each other. Entanglements are not just how people intertwine or become joined together as separate entities. An entanglement is a self-contained existence which lacks independence, repositioning human existence as relational. It is the entanglement of matter and meaning. The individual emerges through and within the intra-relating entanglement in space and time.

Ethico-onto-episte-mology

Ethico-onto-episte-mology is an entanglement of ethics which does not separate out ethics, ontology or epistemology when engaging in the knowledge production. Here things emerge as phenomena in the world, via human perception, shaping what we come to know and how they exist with a material conditionality simultaneously. Within this we all have an ethical responsibility in spatio-temporal situations about the choices we make about our being and becoming in the world. Here our knowing is a result of our material engagement in the world. As we take responsibility for how we might produce knowledge in the world and how it might affect the world, we must turn to how we interact with research such as our methods and our practices to move beyond reflection and representation. Instead we replace these with diffraction and reproduction. This can highlight the entanglement of material-discursive phenomena, an ongoing process where meaning and matter are co-constituted, within this it is recognised our practices make material difference.

Event

An event signifies the dynamic interactions with settings, social formations, bodies, things or an assemblage of these. Events work like machines, to do something and to produce something. An event is rhizomatic, an assemblage, part of ongoing and an ever-changing process that can promote change, like new knowledge by redesigning connections, relationships and so on. These changes are reshaped by affect which are virtualised in space to reconfigure our material reality, not the happening but what is made in the state of happening, such as the process of painting a picture.

Intra-action

Intra-action is a neologism coined by Barad (2007) which is a reworking of interaction, defined as *'the mutual constitution of entangled agencies'* (Barad, 2007, p.33). This is a mutual constitution of the ability to act. Going further Barad (2007) explains our existence is not an individual concern, humans emerge within the intra-actions and as part of an entangled intra-activity of bodies and matter, leading to what she calls a lively ontology that de-privileges the human status. In this sense agency is not seen as pre-existing.

Rhizome

A rhizome does not have a beginning, an end or an exact centre. It is a network of relations and multiplicitous connections which do not follow a specific pattern. A rhizome is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, and intermezzo. The continuous connections are formed in a non-linear way through non-hierarchical entry and exit points, known as a circulation of states. The rhizome provides a map of the connections situated in the virtual and dynamic, fluid and unfixed boundaries it constitutes.

Smooth and striated spaces

Smooth and striated spaces do not exist in opposition to each other they coexist as a mixture of spaces that are a complex combination of forces. They are relational pair denoting a continual process of creation, engagement and exchange. Smooth and striated space is related to how social and political lives are spatially organised and used to defined territories. A smooth space is flexible and fluid and striated spaces are rigid and fixed, linked to stratification and segmentation operated by the state. The state apparatus shapes identity through purpose, seeking to code and homogenise and exert control. Smoothing of spaces is amorphous, linked to deterritorialization and the nomad that serve to disrupt convention, however 'smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.474).

The use of brackets

The use of brackets throughout this thesis are used to articulate there are always more ways to read data which draw on new perspectives or ideas. Formally used to establish a difference between human and non-human the use of brackets has now been expanded to address questions on the distribution of agency to include more-than-human matter and material forces. In this thesis this specifically related to moving representation to (re)presentation and retelling to (re)telling to demonstrate there are always more ways to read data and information which draw on new perspectives or ideas.

The use of the hyphen

The use of a hyphen in re-presentation and any other world is a conscious move to destabilize representation, which is extended from cartography to highlight no knowledge is universal or objective. Therefore, all re-presentations are a record of an altered or (re)configured reality based on representation.

Chapter Overview

Chapter one   In this chapter I draw on my daughter's voice to nuance the catalytic affects and sensation which culminated in an event of becoming thesis. Eleanor's narrative begins to identify my perspective of children, which I build upon to introduce the significance of this study for Eleanor and me. I outline my own becoming. A preliminary literature review identifies an entry point of school readiness in education and the entry point in my life uncovering gaps in current literature to highlight the contribution to knowledge this thesis provides as it breaks from dominate discourses. An entry point is a non-hierarchical entry point for data representation within the rhizome. The purpose of the research is to introduce open ended questions which allow for a truly rhizomatic journey of tracing school readiness within smooth spaces, resisting sedimentation and stratification.

Chapter two   In Chapter Two I provide a conceptual narrative to make visible the tensions I encountered to reach an absolute ontological and epistemological position which resulted in a material turn toward New materialism and Posthumanism. Drawing on the turn I decentre the two-year-old child within an entanglement with human and non-human matter to digress from hierarchical structures, to present a relational and flat ontology which presents an *'ethico-onto-episte-mology'* creating an ethical responsibility to (re)tell and (re)present the voices within this study, human and non-human (Barad, 2007, p.90). Taking inspiration from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari I outline a theoretical framework within a framework, to unpack the rhizome of school readiness to explain how it proliferates within society using affective capacities which can territorialise our thinking within a striated space. I present an original perspective of children as a method of locating the affective capacities of school readiness and voices.

Chapter three   Historical and current literature is drawn on to discuss the emergence of school readiness since the Plowden Report from implicit to explicit, simultaneously highlighting key perceptions of the concept at various times, as it gained intensity. The nebulosity associated with school readiness will be discussed linked to the lack of definition in policy and other early years documentation or reports. The emergence of the two-year-old offer highlights links to health and welfare as a means to ratify the introduction of the policy amidst opposition from the early years sector. A spacetimemattering of developmental theory results in an enmeshed discussion culminating in the introduction of the posthuman child. Matter that matters to children is also discussed by drawing on materiality and intra-actions.

Chapter four   Chapter Four explains the rhizomatic approach underpinning the journey of becoming-thesis which entangles with children to uncover their lived experiences. Drawing on an illuminative strategy to transgress from fixed notions of school readiness I tell of plugging in to school readiness to attend to colourful sensations in a sensory autoethnographic way which is influenced by heuristics. I identify a community of practice to zoom in on the classroom entanglement employing diffraction to develop validity and reliability within this thesis. Triangulation is outlined by discussing the multiple methods of data collection and data analysis to present a case study of events. The chapter closes with a discussion of whether this thesis could be considered just a story by outlining limitations.

Chapter five   Using a 'walk with me' narrative I metaphorically invite the reader to walk with me through my lived experiences of school readiness to (re)tell my own tracing of school readiness as outlined in the theoretical framework. The purpose of this chapter is a reconstruction of sensations felt at events during my journey of becoming-thesis. This chapter is considered an entry and exit point of its own outline several moments in time where I plugged in to school readiness.

Chapter six   In this chapter I detail a progressive refocusing on school readiness as I zoomed in on the entanglements within three early years settings. Beginning with a focus group I uncover the lived experiences of early years professional in the wider sense, soliciting the voices of local authority members and practitioners within one geographical location. The emergent voices uncover colourful sensations. I disclose my encountering with the settings intra-acting within this thesis highlighting sensations I was affected by as I familiarised myself with the space and matter. I (re)present the voices of practitioners as they disclose their voices during semi-structured interviews, applying thematic and rhizoanalysis. Finally, I (re)present the lived experience of school readiness from the perspective of two-year-old children.

Chapter seven   Drawing on the various methods of data analysis I present a discussion of the two-year-olds lived experience to uncover what matter matters to them and how we can affect early years practice by listening to colourful voices in more than linguistic ways. I identify how school readiness has the potential to be deterritorialized and reterritorialized to flip the current narrative and circumnavigate the current negative associations linked to the concept. It is important to stress this chapter does not interpret the lived experiences in respect of the ontological positioning and reifying the child's voice aside from adult morphic ways.

The earnestness of Eleanor

My Conscience.
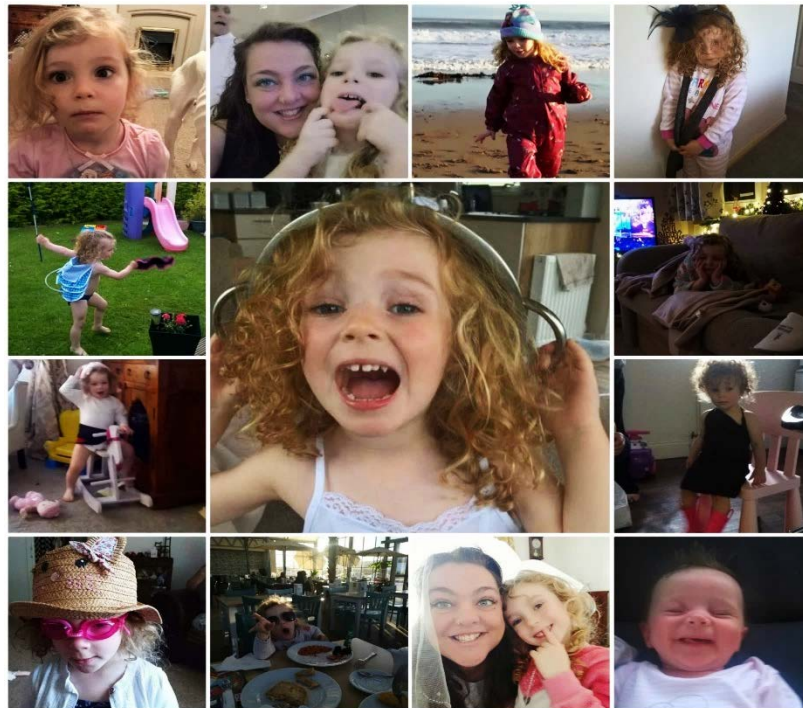
Figure one.

A family collage of Eleanor.

As this thesis was a result of my concerns for children's autonomy, and initially their interaction with early education, I felt it fitting to talk to Eleanor about our lives together. Eleanor has become a catalytic influence on this research and me personally, which is documented in this chapter. Therefore, with Eleanor's consent, her voice is used as a starting point for this research journey which has influenced my perspective of children and the world. In Eleanor's narrative she explains how, as a family, we endeavour for her to emerge with agency and autonomy wherever possible as part of a pre-personal, ongoing, re-configuring and fluid assemblage. My reference to assemblage here, and moving forward, is defined as a pre-personal gathering of things such as policy, the human body, objects and materials into a unity all working together. Each one operates with a function, like the human body and its organs, only in this sense each one operates like a machine defined by external relations of aggregation, composition and mixture, as a multiplicity. Assemblages therefore can be recombined, subtracted and added with one and another *ad infinitum* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Therefore, Eleanor frames my journey and rationalises the (re)iterative process I have undertaken, which began with an ethnographic approach (Denzin, 2006).

Hi…

Figure 2.

Eleanor aged five communicating her emotions with vibrancy.

…my name is Eleanor and I am five years old (*Figure 2*). I am going to be six next year and I started school this year in a reception class. I live with my mam and dad, my big brothers and the Durdle dog. My mam says I am colourful. I think she means I have a mind of my own and I am my own person – I say I am the number one boss. My mam has started this thing called a thesis, not that I really know what a thesis is yet, but it has been a big part of her life and mine; she is going to be a Doctor but not that type of Doctor a Doctor of words and stuff. My mam says her outlook on life and especially how she sees me as a person has changed. I would like to tell you a little bit about us, how she has changed because of this journey and how this has impacted on her thesis thing. I will start with how my mam talks to me, about my brothers when they were young like me, the job she used to do to get money and how I am a part of this thesis somehow. My mam says I am her conscience which helps her to think about stuff, like when she meets other children and goes to classrooms and stuff.

My brothers are bigger than I am, and they lived with my mam before I was born. It was a long time before I was made so I can only really tell you about the stories my mam tells me about them; she says things like she wanted them to grow up in a different way to how my mommar mammy brought her up. My mam told me she thought she understood what learning was and why it was important for my brothers when they were growing up. My mam still thinks learning is important but, she says she thinks about it differently now. Apparently, that's because of me! I'm not sure how but we didn't have to have a chat about it, so I know it isn't a bad thing! Anyway, she also says she wishes she could have done things differently with my brothers and wishes she hadn't been so striated (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) whatever that means. The boys went to a nursery school and my mam never really thought about the activities they did while they were there or whether they were being seen as people rather than just kids – I *actually* contribute to my own learning all the time! Like how when I wanted to learn about dinosaurs, and I thought about ways of doing it with sounds and shapes and suggesting visits to the museum in Newcastle and explaining why it was interesting to me.

I came along in 2014 when my brothers were sixteen and seventeen. My mam was working in a nursery school as a business manager, finishing her Master's on something about listening and attention and children being ready for school. My mam's job was getting hard for her, and everyone around us kept saying it was because of me! I don't know why though because I didn't do anything! Thankfully my mam told everyone it was about this provision for children she was working on and how it was really affecting her. Especially what the people at her work were saying about it and how they were mentioning it to other people and the mams at school. By this point, I was over one year old and was growing up. My mam does not like me saying that and keeps saying to me *'grow up to what Eleanor?'* I haven't decided yet! My dad says my mam hasn't grown up either so there obviously isn't any rush. You know what? My family tell me how they love me and care about me all the time they say they value me and discuss things with me too.

My mam didn't work at the school for much longer after the provision thing. Well, not in the way we used to have to get up at a certain time, eat at a certain time and go to bed at a certain time. My mam started her thesis thing. My mam told me she was lucky to leave work, but I think I was lucky too! We used to go to all sorts of things and places and my mam started to notice how the parents of other children my age did not speak to their children like we spoke together. Apparently, the children were never given options either, like what to eat or what to wear! That's odd because my mam even asks me which way to turn the car when we come to the end of the road on the way to Grandma's house; you would think she would know the way by now! I am always involved in making my packed lunch too and I'm sure my mam doesn't know how to pack it properly because she always asks for my help with that too! I always get a choice about my clothes, socks and stuff like that. I do things very differently from some of my friends.

If I don't want to do something or I am being rascally as my dad puts it, my mam and I generally have a very good talk about it. My mam and Dad always listen to me and so do my brothers now! Apparently, my Grandma has changed the most though, but I don't know how yet. No one calls me little in our house either. Even though I clearly am littler than everyone even the Durdle dog, she is a Great Dane in case you were wondering. I am always involved in family talks and my ideas are taken seriously; like how we went to see the Queen for my birthday, but she was out shopping when we got there. That's how I started to go to a nursery two days a week. A woman came to our house about this *free thing* and talked to my mam about her not working, how I should go there because they would teach me how to play and teach me how to have fun! My mam wasn't very happy and said the woman had clearly never seen the cave I created or heard about the stick adventures we went on and how I imagined an entire pirate treasure hunt; let alone how I showed the dog how to draw on the wall – it was a fantastic snake! But, meeting other children is one of my favourite things to do. So, after we all talked as a family, we agreed I would go to Nursery.

By the time I started Nursery my mam had started her thesis and was reading a lot and it wasn't the kind of stories I liked that's for sure! Visiting nurseries seemed to be one of her favourite things because she visited one almost every day. Every night she would talk to me or my dad about how children were amazing and colourful but had seen them drained of their colour at times but could never quite explain what she meant. One day I could see she was frustrated with herself, so I decided to give my mam a real treat and asked her to watch a movie with me. It wasn't *Frozen* (2013) this time, it was *The Trolls* (2016). I thought the film was good, but you should have seen my mams reaction! When it finished, she talked and talked for ages to herself, me and then my dad about how it was a moment and a sensation. She was scribbling frantically in her books; I often leave her little pictures when she isn't looking (*Figure 3*). I know watching the movie has become part of this thesis which she will explain to you later on.
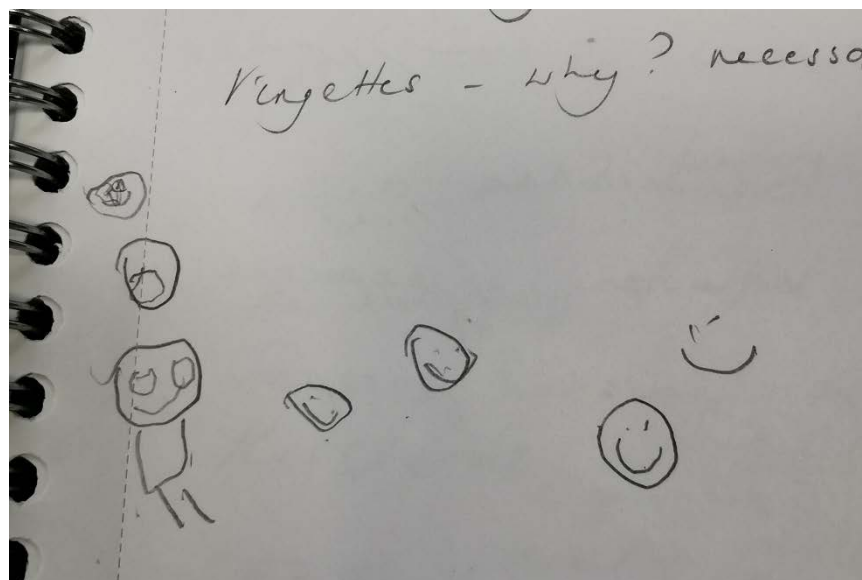
Figure 3.

A drawing by Eleanor left in my research journal, communicating without presence.

So, if you're wondering how I am part of her thesis and why it was important for me to tell you about our relationship let me explain. Whenever my mam reads something about education, relationships, emotions or anything connected to children she asks herself *'is this what I would want for Eleanor?'* but more importantly she asks, *'is this what Eleanor would want?'* The decisions and changes my mam considers for our family life involve me as much as anyone else in the family. As far as I can tell all changes stem from me as an influence in her life. So, you see I *am* important, and I *am* what my mam calls her conscience. My mam will explain how she uses me as a guide to her thinking, within her work and throughout this thesis thing!

Chapter One

Becoming.

Figure 4.

Me and my Great Dane when I started school in 1981.

This chapter starts with an autoethnographic narrative to personally introduce my research, drawing on distinct periods in my life, either as a learner, as a parent and then parent again to Eleanor. I position Eleanor as my guiding conscience and inspiration by seeing school readiness through her narrative. The glimmers of my personality are enmeshed within my writing style to provoke reflexivity on my relation to the research process and the knowledge I am producing. This serves to map my personal metamorphosis; demonstrating how my thesis and my theoretical understanding of children has evolved concomitantly. Within this chapter I begin to articulate my becoming, a new way of being in this world, which acts as a function of influences that produce a difference in my thinking, as I detail my relationship with children, practitioners and the concept of school readiness throughout my research journey (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 1987). I expand on Eleanor's narrative to incorporate the personal and professional impetuses underpinning this study to highlight the significance of school readiness to Eleanor and me.

The purpose of this research

Expanding free early education and care for two-year-old children significantly alters the current school readiness debate, by posing rhetorical questions such as 'Where is the child's voice?' as recent literature has focused on links between school readiness and attainment (McInnes, 2019; Neaum, 2016; Khader, 2012; Giroux, 2011). The lack of children's inclusion in this debate has been identified as an issue, creating a gap in the literature (Goody, 2012; Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle, 2010). In response to this gap, this research provides an original contribution to knowledge by re-presenting the lived experiences of two-year-old children in the North East of England as they intersect with the concept of school readiness in a preschool environment.

School readiness has become a central concept within Early Years Education in England, most recently by explicit reference (Early Years Statutory Framework, 2017; The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), 2014; Tickell, 2011; Allen, 2011; Field, 2010) and has been influenced by numerous factors (see Clark, 2016). The fluidity in definitions and interpretations have resulted in the concept of school readiness becoming nebulous (Neaum, 2016; Vinson, 1999). This variability has legitimised the discourse of school readiness to dovetail interventionist strategies which have been argued as creating finite standards and eroding play within the environments and spaces of learning (PACEY, 2013). How the policy and funding for two-year-old-children is communicated within society, enacted in practice, interpreted by professionals and then experienced by children at local levels has not been examined beyond the scopes of the Government policy pilot study, with much of the school readiness literature focusing on children aged 4 and older (Winter and Kelly, 2012; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). This research examines how current Free Early Education and Care policy, in particular how school readiness, operates within Local Authorities to understand the impact this has for children to gain agency.

Observing and documenting the lived experiences of two-year-old children requires careful consideration and observation of their routines, activities within their setting, and paying close attention to their pre-school environment, their bodies in communication and the importance of more-than-human matter. Simultaneously, addressing the gap in literature provides me with an exclusive opportunity to re-tell and re-present the lived experiences of two-year-old children in relation to a concept which has become central to early years policy. By reflecting on how my own knowledge of school readiness has been produced and the knowledge I might produce I seek to disrupt my thinking, challenge the status quo and decentre the child as I become-researcher (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), detailed in the next section.

Becoming-researcher

In summarising this thesis, I would describe it as a mingling of people, materiality, school readiness, relations, connections and affect (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) within the discourse of early education. Here materiality is not *'either given or a mere effect of human agency'* it is *'an active factor in processes of materialization'* (Bard, 2007, p.183) and the materialization of bodies human and non-human. In this way this research seeks to explore a myriad of infusions and entanglements of what school readiness is, what the concept does and how this is experienced specifically by bodies, but not exclusively those we call children. Although journeys rarely go as meticulous as we have planned, I feel I have uncovered more about myself and my view of the world than I could ever have imagined, and I am confident this will continue to affect me and disrupt my thinking in the years that will follow.

At the beginning of my research I overlooked a wealth of questions percolating in my subconscious. I was too busy focusing on how to complete my thesis in a timely manner and answering preconceived questions. This resulted in a clinical and striated approach, a linear and homogenising process going from point A to B (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). I had lost sight of what I had set out to do, becoming caught up in the nuts and bolts of academia. This feeling was given gravitas after returning from a conference when Eleanor questioned my perspective of children (*Figure 5*). Eleanor asked me whether I thought she had her own mind and opinions, creating a sensation (MacLure, 2013). This sensation was distinctive, it not only was felt in the body it went beyond that and has continued to linger. Eleanor's provocation implied, for me, a binary logic that she was in some way considered to be inferior to the adult which led me to revisit the concept of agency. After much reading, and observing Eleanor's interactions, in the world I drew the conclusion agency is not uniquely a human will.

Figure 5.

Eleanor and I attending EECERA International Conference Budapest 2018 where I was a presenter and she attend the activities as a guest.

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway* Barad (2007) questioned how agency could transcend the Cartesian subject-object distinction, drawing attention to causality. In doing so, Barad queered interaction and reframed it as intra-action, which she defined as *'the mutual constitution of entangled agencies'* (2007, p.33). Going further Barad (2007) explains our existence is not an individual concern, humans emerge within the intra-actions and as part of an entangled intra-activity of bodies and matter, leading to what she calls a lively ontology de-privileging the human status. Moreover, it is within the intra-activity that matter and meaning not only come into existence, time and space are also iteratively reconfigured. This is what Barad (2007, p.234) calls a *'spacetimemattering'.* The implication of this is that agency is no longer seen as an attribute or something which is afforded. It has a non-human aspect, an enactment of cause and effect in *'the ongoing reconfigurations of the world'* (Barad, 2007, p.141). Therefore, school readiness and the child can both gain agency between and within human and non-human entanglements of matter and meaning which *'lack an independent, self-contained existence'* (Barad, 2007, p.ix). Throughout *Meeting the Universe Halfway* Barad (2007) cites her work as an agential realist account with Posthuman performativity. Within the discussion on intra-activity distinct parallels can be drawn on the writings of Deleuze and Guattari's (1994; 1987; 1983) affect, multiplicity, assemblages and machines.

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I therefore argue the works of Deleuze and Guattari, New Materialism and Posthuman scholars (including Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 1987; 1983; Barad, 2014; 2007; 2003; Bennett, 2016; 2010; Braidotti, 2011; 2006; 2006a; 2002; Coole and Frost, 2010; DeLanda, 2002; St. Pierre, 2013, 2010; 2004; 1997) reflect an entangled intra-activity. Supporting my assertions Coole and Frost (2010, p.9) explain the works of Deleuze has been *'influential in much of the new ontology'*. Similarly in *Every 'One' – a Crowd, Making Room for the Excluded Middle* Olkowski (2009) details similarities between Barad's (2007, p.379) argument that the *'"mind" is a specific material configuration of the world'* and Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) discussion regarding sensations, colour and art that every subject or object are events independent of and exceeding the living individual. Fox and Allred (2019, p.4) also argue *'new materialists such as Deleuze address a complex, dynamic, and open world founded on difference, heterogeneity, and emergence'* which also encompasses Posthumanism. Together the entangled intra-acting philosophies *'have no ontological status or integrity other than that produced through their relationship to other similarly contingent and ephemeral bodies, things and ideas'* (Fox and Allred, 2019, p.4). Emerging from my readings of Deleuze and Guattari, New Materialism and Posthuman scholars, previously cited, is that being is becoming, which is described as a new way of being which brings about new functions (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Becoming is the lived experience in itself, and in this sense, I am becoming-researcher and this research is becoming-thesis.

My introduction to being and becoming, and what is cited as a *'material turn'* (Reddington and Price, 2018, p.2), re-focusing elements of this study on processes and interactions within classrooms, specifically between human and non-human matter. This enabled me to move beyond binary opposites of subject/object, child/adult, big/little and ready/unready. Fox and Alldred (2017, p.402) state this shift requires researchers and *'Social inquiry …to reflect this shift from agency to affect and adapt its methods to attend to affective flows and the capacities they produce'*. However, the traditional approach to ethnographic research focuses on human interactions, actions and reactions, an interpretivist approach (Mazzei, and Jackson, 2013). Here the human occupies a privileged status which caused a tension between my original ethnographic research design and how I could 'turn to notice' connections, wherein material and human bodies are relational. To

simultaneously acknowledge the origins and changes of my study I have built on Jackson and Mazzei's (2013, p.261) challenge *'to use theory to think with their data (or use data to think with theory) in order to accomplish a reading of data that is both within and against interpretivism'*.   Therefore, the research design began as ethnographic employing traditional qualitative methods toward generating data by interviewing practitioners within their settings using interpretivist analysis techniques. Thereafter, I aimed to resist the interpretivist approach by turning to notice relations and connections, paying due regard to humans and non-human matter within classroom happenings, by working with New Materialist and Posthuman thinking. This enabled me to decentre the child with the aim of avoiding representation. The introduction of the brackets, from hereon, is used to demonstrate there are always more ways to read data and information which draw on new perspectives or ideas (Sellers, 2015). This is the *'and… and… and…'* of relations and connections (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.25), cited as a coalescing of togetherness as a research-assemblage *'that link elements together affectively to do something, to produce something'* (Fox and Alldred, 2017, p.403).

Therefore, this becoming-thesis recognises agency is more than a human will and aims to understand how this might be distributed within classroom entanglements which include school readiness and the two-year-old child. I employ the philosophies of Deleuze and Guattari, New Materialism and Posthumanism to develop a framework to research the entanglements. Barad (2007, p.88) states this is *'a way of understanding the world from within and as part of'*. In doing so I will reconceptualize key concepts such as bodies and voices away from the human condition within the theoretical framework and literature review that provide the mainstay for this study. Whilst the tension remains between the shift from qualitative research interviews and the inherent human centred approach of traditional qualitative research, and the decentred approach of the classroom observations employing New Materialist and Posthuman thinking, I take comfort from Reddington and Price (2018) who argue the material turn welcomes frameworks that place material bodies at the centre of pedagogical practices. This means the two-year-old child in my study is seen as emergent with school readiness and vice versa, becomings as *'Human and non-human bodies…thought upon as forces that overlap and relate to each other'* (Hultman and Lenz-Taguchi, 2010, p.529), the momentary transitions

between two points wherein becoming is the final reality (Kinchin and Gravett, 2020). Lenz-Taguchi (2010) also explains children are affectively drawn to non-human matter and an importance lies in tracking their interests as they are influential in a child's becoming.

In a further attempt to resist hierarchal thinking and representation, as part of my becoming-researcher, I set to employ rhizomatic ways of thinking with my research. Ivanova and Buda (2020) explain rhizomatic thinking offers up the potential to feel and think beyond the world around us which is deeply rooted in binary and hierarchal modes of representation. The authors explain further, the rhizome invites us to *'examine what is diverse, interlinked, overlapping and fluid'* (Ivanova and Buda, 2020, p.9) as a method or opportunity to destabilize dominant discourse to *'disrupt it and re-create it in alternative, creative and fluid ways'* (Ivanova and Buda, 2020, p.9). In *A Thousand Plateaus* the rhizome is described as made up of diverse forms and *'an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.21). Made up of plateaus, that are always in the middle and intermezzo, the rhizome details relations and connectivity with multiple entryways and exits, like a map. This is not a reading of the world in the traditional sense of the binary either/or but seeking out the *'and… and… and…'* of relations and connections (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.25).

The rhizome forms pre-personal assemblages which are a grouping and gathering of things that are both non-human and human, such as places and emotions. The only unity of the assemblage is that of co-functioning. In this way the assemblage is not static, such as being in this world but rather a becoming in this world, a transformation-in-action (Kinchin and Garvett, 2020). In view of this, I argue thesis could be argued as a rhizome. Putting this to work in the next section I will detail an entry point of school readiness, as a way of initiating a mapping (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), this will be explored in more depth in Chapter Two. As a result of my becoming-research and becoming-thesis I have moved away from fixed research questions and aims, developed a more fluid approach via open ended questions which can act as provocations when exploring and research classroom events. These will follow after the entry point.

School Readiness. Entry point.

The mapping of school readiness in literature begins with the comprehensive review of primary education in 1967 and the publication of the Plowden Report (Alexander, 2010), but I acknowledge the terminology has a prior existence. Plowden (1967) was chosen as a non-hierarchical entry point for data representation within a rhizome, because of the catalytic influence, I would argue that the report had on mobilising the concept of readiness from rhetoric to reality at a distinctive point, something I elaborate on in Chapter Two. In summary, the report strongly advocated increased access to early education for disadvantaged children and maintaining pre-school services, cited as a conducive method of preparing children for school and bridging the divide between home and formal education. On reflection school readiness was not explicitly written or referred to within the report, although, descriptive phrases alluded to the notion of readiness. These included 'until a child is ready', 'less ready', 'get ready', 'not yet ready' and 'probably be ready'. These expressions underpinned Plowden's argument for pre-schooling prior to formal schooling, informed by Piaget's writings (Young Ihm, 2002; Plowden, 1967). The report called for a shift in educational perspectives toward a human centred approach, individualisation and for teaching approaches to be underpinned by holistic child development (Shuayb and O'Donnell, 2008).

Educational research on school readiness since The Plowden Report has evolved into a global debate (Davies *et al.*, 2016; Whitehurst, 2016; Neaum, 2016; Xia, 2016), developing observable momentum according to Winter and Kelly (2012). Nonetheless, literature continues to infer the definition and the meaning of school readiness is inadequately discussed, dividing educationalists, parents/carers and policymakers regarding the terminology's intended purpose (Ofsted, 2014; Winter and Kelly, 2012; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012, Ladd, 2005; Dockett and Perry, 2002). Subsequently, school readiness is shrouded in ambiguity, hosting a variety of interpretations (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012), this is complicated further when the term is used interchangeably with learning readiness. In view of this, I argue the continued and longstanding debate and unrelenting use of the terminology remains more relevant now than it did in 1967.

International influences have integrally shaped the discourse of school readiness in England according to Fomby (2011). Throughout English educational reforms, each Government has drawn on international articulations and dovetailed care and education with welfare with greater emphasis (Penn, 2011). This suggests the intended purpose of school readiness is to reconceptualize the purpose of education, evidenced by policies including Every Child Matters (2003) and the various iterations of the Foundation Stage of Education frameworks, by providing support to families and their children to create equality (Hutchinson and Robinson, 2018; Watkins, 2018). However, this perspective is nuanced negatively by alluding some parents lack capabilities to develop their children to the standards required by the state to be successful, which is exasperated by labels of disadvantage (Goodall, 2019). This sustained integration frames school readiness as a social responsibility (Ladd, Herald and Kochel, 2006) and highlights an ideological shift towards preparing children for school which culminated in the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2008. The overarching statutory framework aimed to achieve Every Child Matters (2003), learning and development standards, equal opportunities by driving quality, and creating a learning foundation for all children (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; Great Britain. Chief Secretary to the Treasury. 2003).

The Early Years Foundation Stage was reviewed by Dame Clare Tickell in 2011, and despite the aims 44% of children were not reaching a good level of development by the end of the academic year in which they turned five (Speight, Smith and Coshall, 2012). This led to a continuous cycle of revisions. Current Government policy, encompassed within the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework 2017, aims to bridge education and tackling social disadvantage by providing *Free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year olds* (Department for Education, 2015). The policy aims to enrol disadvantaged children into education earlier to negate issues of achieving school readiness, without explicitly defining the concept. This suggests school readiness is underpinned by universal standards and homogenises children within an ableist and disablist rhetoric of binary opposites (Slater, Jones and Proctor, 2019). Therein, school readiness fails to attune to the uniqueness of children and account for their cultural communities, which affects their development and agency (Marti *et al.,* 2018). This highlights a tension of power and renders the rationale for the policy vague.

This is supported by research reports *Rolling out free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds: an implementation study for local authorities and providers* (Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle, 2010) and *Entitlement for Free Education for Disadvantaged Two-Year-Olds* (Goody, 2012). Both reports argue the impact of the policy is unclear and research in this area is imperative.

Both reports found early years professionals interpreted the offer of free early education as a tool to develop school readiness, rather than an attempt to tackle disadvantage which can impact life outcomes (Field, 2011). In their research Goody (2012) and Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle (2010) recognised the concept of school readiness encompasses much more than educational attainment and achieving baseline assessments. They suggest school readiness should be as much about the social and emotional development of the unique child, and how the capacities of self-regulation, emotions, behaviours and own cognition are engendered, by whom and in what capacity (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012; Blair, 2002). This calls to question if the current approaches within the Early Years Foundation Stage are failing to notice the individual child (reflecting Potter, 2007). This highlights further tensions around how children can use early educational environments to develop their identity and gain agency or whether early years education conceptualizes the child by influencing their identity within settings in response to school readiness. This can be linked to the writings of Goffman (1959) and social actoring.

In support of this, Bingham and Whitebread (2012) argued the interpretation of school readiness in England has created a split spectrum, resulting in the Early Years Foundation Stage becoming a preparational stage focused on meeting minimum standards. This is contrasted to developing child orientated and adult-guided learning within meaningful environments, diminishing the individual child approach and also contradicting the purported ethos of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2006, p.65) argued the Early Years Foundation Stage framework has led to a *'lack of coherence for children and families, with a confusing variation in objectives'* resulting in an intense focus on skill acquisition and meeting prescribed standards, referred to as 'schoolification'. Furthermore, Bingham

and Whitebread (2012, p.104) avow this has resulted in a trend toward *'laissez-faire'*, and that the Early Years Foundation Stage lacks attentive design. The authors argue this has resulted in teaching methods failing to adequately support child development, suggesting further some practitioners lack the skills, professional development and tools to provide developmentally appropriate, high quality planned activities, to engender unique child development (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). Although literature focuses on links between school readiness and attainment little is known about how this shapes professional practice and what impact this has for children within a setting (Khader, 2012; Giroux, 2011; Alexander 2010).

Despite Governmental efforts to assimilate care and education with interventionist and welfare policies, within the trajectory of bridging the parental role and education, there is a distinct lack of the child's voice in relation to school readiness. Equally mute is the child's perspective of experiencing *Free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year olds* as an enacted policy (Department for Education, 2015). The rationale and historical roots of readiness are entrenched in evidence that supports the notion family backgrounds and home learning are factors highly influential to cognitive and social development. Likewise, how living in circumstances unconducive to development can be counteracted by sending the child to a pre-school or nursery at an early age (Isaacs, 2012). This contentiously assumes all parents entitled to the provision are deficient in their abilities as parents, potentially live in communities which fail to adequately support child development and learning, depicting a nanny state ideology (Cullen, 2011). Moreover, the notable absence of the child's voice and their perspectives of early education could be used to argue the school readiness agenda is firmly political. This raises more questions on whether different perspectives regarding the aims, value and purpose of early education, and of school readiness, exist between the macro and the micro levels of society.

The literature on school readiness thus far documents interrelated themes including chronological cognitive development, 'schoolification' of the foundation stages culminating in measuring qualities, capabilities and early age assessments and a continued use of the terminology within several trajectories (Bayram, 2013). This is despite the absence of a precise definition, creating confusion in practice (Bingham and Whitebread,

2012). Gaps have appeared in the literature regarding the purpose and impact of expanding early education and care for two-year-old children in practice, and in relation to the role school readiness, as a concept, is assuming. Gaps also appear regarding how local authorities and their schools mobilise the concept of school readiness within communities. Yet more significantly a key perspective is missing from current debates, namely the children's lived experiences that could detail how sending two-year-old children into an environment that was never meant for them might create an impact. I am aware this could be argued as a re-centring of the child in this research but as Reddington and Price (2018) explain the material turn welcomes ways in which we can place the material body and the emergent child at the centre of practice simultaneously. In the next section I introduce the fluid questions guiding this research.

Research questions

Within the repertoire of structuring this research, and the research questions, my thinking was disrupted (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This is what Braidotti (1997) would consider a crack. This created a change in my research design, which impacted upon parts of my methodology and my analysis of classroom observations which I will detail in depth in Chapter Two. Therefore, the research questions reflect the earnestness of Eleanor, my autobiographical rationale, the background literature and also work with New Materialist and Posthuman thinking. By decentring the child, the research questions the affect of school readiness within an entanglement, from the perspective of the child (Bexell, 2018; Barad, 2007). Here affect is understood as not producing knowledge, as it is extra-textual and also occurring outside of discourse that is irreducible to structure, cited as extra-discursive.

I employ affect as a difference in an intensity, *'a reaction in/on the body at the level of matter…immanent to matter…immanent to experience'* (O'Sullivan, 2001, p.127). In *What is Philosophy* affect is described as *'a zone of indetermination, of indiscernibility, as if things, beasts, and persons (Ahab and Moby Dick, Penthesilea and the bitch) endlessly reach that point that immediately precedes their natural differentiation'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.173). Affects are pre-personal intensities which pass from one body to another with the capacity to act or influence or the *'capacity to affect or to be affected'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.xvii). It is important to note bodies are not always human ones.

Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophical terminology the research questions are rhizomatic. Purposely fluid in nature, each question is connected to the others, yet can be perceived as singular questions in their own right. The research questions aim to work in the middle acting as a guide to provoke continuous questioning throughout my research, enabling to go where the research takes me seeking out the *'and…and…and…'*, rather than segmenting and striating this thesis (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977, p.10). Segmentation and striation control the identity of agency, including human agency, in a binary, linear and hierarchal way in a straight line (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Segmentation and striation would also organise

this research to pose the questions in a proceeding hierarchal way. Taking a more fluid approach enables this becoming-thesis to develop rhizomatically as a '*spacetimemattering'*, an enmeshment of all three things to disrupt thinking (Barad, 2007, p.41). This is considered the most appropriate way to build an all-encompassing picture of school readiness within classroom entanglements and wider connections.

What is the two-year-old *child?*

This question seeks to unpack what it is to be a child within the remit of early education and how or if this differs to a school ready child. Therefore, it is important to identify how school readiness is mobilised by local authorities, received by practitioners and parents and enacted in classrooms. This means identifying how children and the two-year-old offer are perceived by the practitioners they engage with during their play, what factors influence these perspectives and why.

What is becoming-school ready?

This question aims to understand how school readiness might gain agency in classroom entanglements. I aim to understand how school readiness uses this agency to affect other bodies within the entanglement. Also, how does school readiness create a reality of what it is to be or do school readiness in the classroom and in wider circulations.

Can bodies resist becoming-school ready?

I consider the final question the most important as it aims to critically understand what we can learn from distributed agency to include more-than-human matter, and the potential to affect and be affected, in the school readiness debate. I aim to seek out how human and non-human bodies can affect school readiness, to reveal new ways of being or doing school readiness as a result of observing classroom entanglements. Thereafter, how might we harness this to influence practice in early education to respect the unique child, and significantly alter perspectives of the child and more-than-human matter.

Drawing on an autoethnographic lens this chapter was introduced by Eleanor to explain how my thinking has changed, affecting my way of being and becoming in this world, acting as an entry point for this becoming-thesis (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). I outlined how my daughter and observing her intra-actions with the world serve to act as a guiding conscience throughout this thesis. I have briefly detailed the emergence of school readiness from implicit to explicit, highlighting a human centred gap in literature. I aim to harness this to alter and (re)tell the school readiness debate through a different lens providing a unique contribution to knowledge. In the next chapter I will provide a conceptual narrative to present an enmeshed and intra-acting framework, providing the mainstay for this research. Within my ontological positioning I have developed an *'ethico-onto-episte-mology'* (Barad, 2007, p.90) responsibility to be accountable for my role in re(telling) and (re)presenting the voices in this study. This is an inseparability of ethics, epistemology and ontology in the process of knowledge production, or scientific practices with the world, humans and non-human beings inhabit. Together they interactively make-up the world (Barad, 2007). This is a shift from reflection to diffraction, to account for differences. Diffraction serves to illuminate or map the appearances of effects that create a difference (Barad, 2007), practicing *'ethico-onto-episte-mology'* (Barad, 2007, p.90) also serves to shift representation to reproduction.

Chapter Two

An entangled framework.

Figure 6.

A still from *The Trolls* (2016) which diffracts the picture using a different lens to uncover a colourful version of the same picture.

This chapter details the entanglement of theories put forward by Deleuze and Guattari, New Materialism and Posthumanism, which fuse and enmesh in a nonlinear way. Entangling my frameworks was influenced by the animated films *The Trolls* (2016), *Alike* (2015) and children's books *Elmer the Elephant* (McKee, 1989), *Umar* (Cahn and Pukes, 2019), *A Squash and a Squeeze* (Donaldson and Scheffler, 2016), *What is a Child* (Alemagna, 2008), *The Red Tree* (2001) along with graphic novel *The Arrival* (Tan, 2006). Together they acted as flashpoints disrupting my thinking of binary opposites such as subject/object, matter/meaning, and child/adult and what these meant for my study. The materiality of the animation and literature distributed agency as an enactment rather than *'something that someone or something has'* (Barad, 2007, p.178), emerging as participants in this study as they *'played together in ways that engage the emotions'* (Proctor and Hackett, 2017, p.218). This resulted in my emotions *'resonating in the body as well as the brain'* (MacLure, 2010, p.282) as an intensity, ultimately affecting the privileged status of humans within this study, leading me to rethink agency and identity as a more-than-human concern. This troubles the traditional ideology of social constructionism and post-structuralism which focuses on linguistics and the social construction of concepts, such as school readiness, toward a focus on the production and relations of human and more-than-human matter, and what is happening in between (Fox and Alldred, 2017). Here I position all matter as agentic, with the capacity to affect and be affected by *'accepting a flattened, non-hierarchical, human–non-human form of knowledge production'* (Taylor and Ivinson, 2013, p.666).

In the next section a conceptual narrative details how my ontological positioning emerged during this study, introducing a 'flat' ontology which resists hierarchal systems of control and being in the world, asserting all things human and non-human have an agential capacity to produce an affect (Bennett, 2010; DeLanda, 2002). By decentring the human this study aims to notice the overlaps in relations between human and more-than-human matter, offering up a unique way of researching school readiness, acting as a provocation for future research and pedagogical practice. A (re)telling of the same picture told differently, as described at the beginning of this chapter in *Figure 6* on page 25.

A conceptual narrative

As I reflected on my journey of being-parent – becoming-researcher, a state of 'being-in-between' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), in juxtaposition to Eleanor's journey in life I concluded our reality and knowledge is constantly being produced in relation to other people and material objects. This illuminated a fluid process *'whereby being becomes in a number of different ways simultaneously'* (Rae, 2014, p.89). Relationality emerged strongly as Eleanor and I were entangled together, with others and objects (Barad, 2003), all continuously forming our identities and producing knowledge as we flux and flow and the boundaries of us as subject and object blurred. As '*This is not a world … of subjects and of objects, but of various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations'* (Bennett, 2004, p.354). Here identity is fluid, created with events of difference within relations and determined by repetition - external to the self. In this sense, there is no intrinsic ontology and with each repetition, as an event of difference, there is an internal self-differing, a difference-in-itself, happening eternally (Deleuze, 1994). Here I propose difference is free from representational thought and presupposed concepts of identity. This enables me to problematize the identities of being-child and becoming-school ready to attend to more-than-human entanglements, offering up the possibility to theorize how agency might be distributed.

My entanglement with the animated films and books I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter affected my understanding of stable identities to conclude Eleanor and I are always changing as stable and fixed subjects to an assemblage of '*various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations'* (Bennett, 2004, p.354). Although it could be argued that Eleanor and I as individuals, and also as subjects and objects, could be perceived as socially constructed and co-constructed; I assert our realities are broader than this. Together we incorporate conditions, material, and non-material bodies within spaces whereby primacy is given to none. They are all interconnected, affecting each other producing more-than-human subjectivity (Bennett, 2010). The dissolution of boundaries between Eleanor and me, and our material connection to the world, influences my ontology and epistemology by moving this study from traditional auto-ethnography to a

reading of classroom events through a New Materialist and Posthumanist lens. This is not a reading of the world in the traditional sense of either/or but seeking out the *'and... and... and...'* of relations (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.25). As a result, I recognise matter also matters (Smith, 2010) during classroom events. This means the teacher, the two-year-old-child, the classroom, the parents, the classroom resources and all matter has equal agency, with the ability to affect and be affected by school readiness within classroom events.

It is the premise of to affect and being affected that can be used to explain agency in more detail. I take up Barad's (2007) theorizations of agency as *'doing/being in its intra-activity'* (Barad, 2007, p.235). Barad (2007, p.139) coined the neologism *'intra-action'* as a replacement for interaction, stating the latter supposes a prior existence of self-determining entities. Whereas specific intra-actions can determinate boundaries of phenomena and their components can become meaningful. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway* Barad (2007) proposed a posthuman performativity to acknowledge, and take account of, the dynamism of matter in relation to agency. In this approach, Posthumanism *'eschews both humanist and structuralist accounts of the subject that position the human as either pure cause or pure effect'* (Barad, 2007, p.136). It is this dynamism that is conceptualised as agency, which is not seen as an attribute or something which is afforded. It is what and/or who acts as an ongoing performance in the world. Agency is seen as a mattering of intra-actions, which means I am able to conceptualise agency in different forms such as feelings, structures, resources, and spaces.

My theoretical positioning supports this, and as a result, I have adopted an *'ethico-onto-episte-mology'* approach (Barad, 2007, p.90). As previously mentioned, this does not separate out ethics, ontology or epistemology. This means we are not bystanders of the world view with a natural viewpoint. Things emerge through human perceptions as phenomena or singularities, shaped by what we know and material conditionality at the same time (Barad, 2007). Within this I have an ethical responsibility in

spatio-temporal situations about the choices we make about our being and becoming in the world. Here, my knowing is a result of my material engagement in the world, and as I take responsibility for how I might produce knowledge I am mindful of how it might affect the world. Therefore, I am conscious of how I turn to interact with research such as my methods and practices, to move beyond representation.

I also argue school readiness and the school ready child are more-than-socially constructed concepts as they yield links with other things, such as classroom posters, influencing classroom events. As a result, school readiness forms part of a fragmentary whole and gains agency between human and non-human entanglements that can compel people to think. This is an affective knowledge which links to the creation of concepts, through experiences and events as Semetsky (2009, p.450) states *'Concepts are forever fuzzy and never completely determined: they are born from intuitions and impulses'.* It is important to note experience is pre-personal and a-subjective, a *'quasi-objective milieu'* Semetsky (2009, p.443), with the capability to affect and be affected. Although the experience is considered real, the reality surpasses sensations during the experience, it lingers on. In the next section I expand on this ontological discussion to diagrammatically demonstrate how philosophies and theories intra-act in this research, to explore what moving beyond a human centred approach means for this study, and how Posthuman data might be revealed in relation to the classroom events. I will theorize how voice and affective intensities might be seen/felt within this research as part of a '*material-discursive knot*' (Carpentier, 2017, p.4), which is knotted intra-actions of the material and the discursive which is fluid, restless and always in a state of change. The discursive-material knot is a non-hierarchal ontology with knotted intra-actions of discursive and material social practice which shapes reality. With a non-hierarchal ontology, the knot reflects the inseparability and intensity of an entanglement which can never fully be unravelled, as a result we can only ever *'follow the rope'* in the middle (Carpentier, 2017, p.4). By following the rope, I create a tracing.

The framework

In my frameworks I will draw on the works of Deleuze and Guattari (1994; 1987; 1983), Barad (2014; 2007; 2003), Bennett (2016; 2010), Braidotti (2011; 2006; 2006a; 2002; 1997) and St. Pierre (2013, 2004; 1997) to present a 'flat' ontology, resisting hierarchal systems of control and being in the world, to assert all things human and non-human have an agential capacity to produce an affect (Bennett, 2010; DeLanda, 2002). How these are enmeshed and intra-act in a nonlinear way can be seen in *Figure 7.*
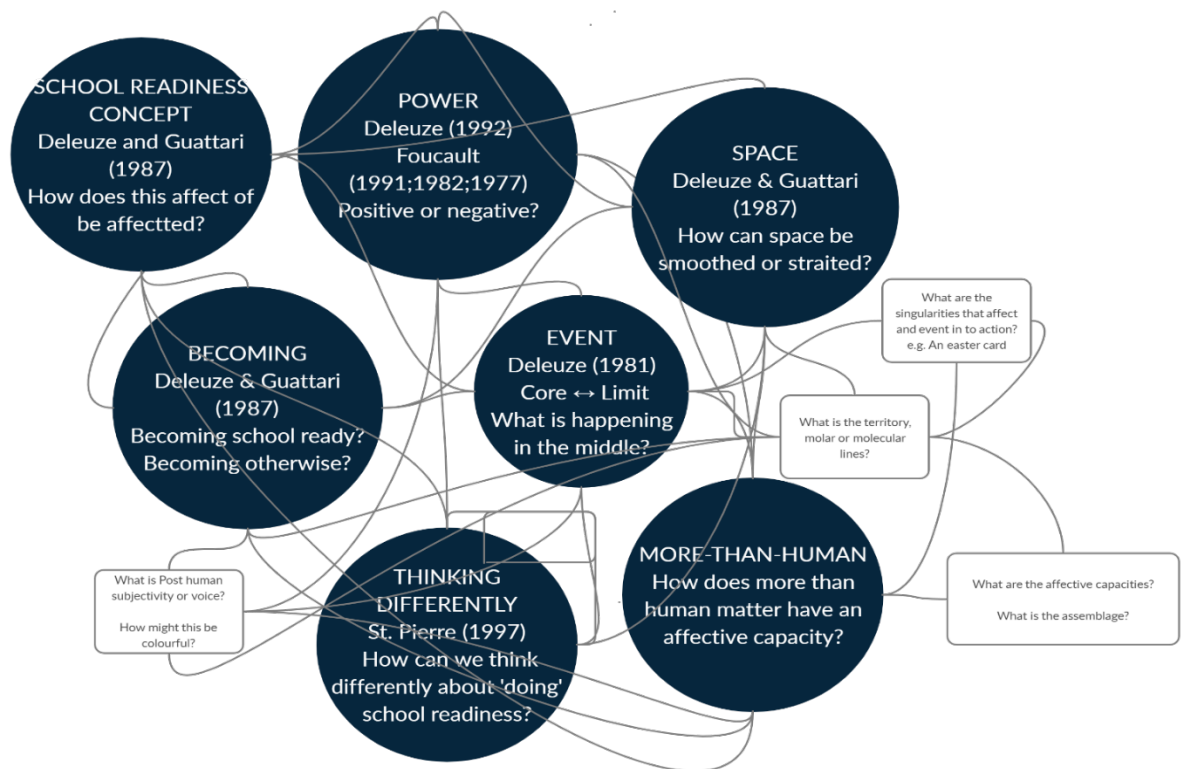
Figure. 7

A diagrammatical representation of how the theories and philosophies intra-act in this thesis.

As previously alluded, New Materialism and Post Humanism has influenced a specific brand of epistemology which breaks from dominant perspectives of universalism and dualism (van der Tuin and Dolphijn, 2010). This has created an opportunity to trouble binary opposites such as structure and agency and culture and nature amongst others to reconceptualize the notion of knowledge (Coole and Frost, 2010), pushing the

boundaries of early educational research. This regenerated my enquiry to move beyond the child, childhood, politics and dominant understandings of voice to theorize the relational impact of school readiness within classroom entanglements. As Spyrou (2017) states, adopting a relational orientation is a shift towards rethinking issues as part of a wider concern, they do not start or end with the child but rather children's participation in social phenomena is seen as a more open and fluid encounter. This yields implications for children's ontologies (Spyrou, 2019) as *'bodies and things are not separate as we were once taught, and their interrelationship is vital to how we come to know ourselves as human and interact with our environments'* (Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015, p.2). Therefore, the opportunity to appreciate non-human matter with equal and active agency in shaping everyday classroom events becomes possible (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010).

Making the shift away from child-centeredness permits me to engage with real life emerging concerns, such as voices/agency/politics in relation to school readiness (Spyrou, 2017; 2019). In traditional qualitative research methodologies, there has been a preoccupation on the spoken voice, what it is and what it does (Mazzei and Jackson, 2016). Spyrou (2015, p.7) states this has led to an *'uncritical assumption that voice does, indeed, reflect truth'.* This assumption reifies authenticity, therefore what constitutes as a voice is problematic for this research. Furthermore, Mazzei and Jackson (2016) explains when conducting research, we tend to seek out data and meaning through text or place privilege in spoken words. However, Spyrou (2015) provides insight on how I might be able to see the voices of children and more-than-human matter as part of the '*discursive-material knot'* (Carpentier, 2017, p.4), by moving beyond what is voiced linguistically. Mazzei and Jackson (2012, p.747) call this seeing speech *'in ways that are meaningful as noiseless'.* This builds on the works of Deleuze (1986; 1989) and the notion of speech acts. Drawing on silent movies Deleuze (1989; 1986) troubles the imagery of intertitles in parallel to the image that talks, to complicate voice.

This led me to re-imagine voice by taking heed from Mazzei and Jackson (2012, p.748) when they stated it is possible to read voices from a *'multidimensional perspective …a reimaging of voice … as enhanced and multidimensional, much like 3D technology enhances the visual elements of film'*. Here, I proposition that voice differs from the dominant discourse, which has reduced voice to speech and symbolic language, to rethink voice as an *'emergent and unpredictable process involving fleshy bodies, more-than-human elements and the vitalized intertwining of discursive, ideological and soci-omaterial relations'* (Chadwick, 2020, p.1). I have re-imagined voice away from a human centred activity with stable and coherent properties towards an ontological voice, where it is seen as *'an enactment of forces and not all necessarily human'* (Mazzei and Jackson, 2016, p.153). I have therefore reconceptualized voice through a New Materialist lens towards a Posthuman one which is an open-ended process and is open to change at any given time. In doing so there is a materiality incorporated within the voice which can be located to a body, yet the body can mean human or more-than-human matter that has a vibrancy which is bound within an agentic assemblage (Mazzei and Jackson, 2016). I emphasise voice is not something that is possessed or is a possession, it is *'entangled with other things'* (Mazzei and Jackson, 2016, p.2).

Therefore, voice can include signs, objects, and utterances such as an eye roll, glitter, glue and a human body all becoming participants within this study. Together these voices intermingle which can produce an affect, and it is within their pre-personal assemblage agency is produced and distributed (Mazzei and Jackson, 2016). In my research I am seeking out what is voiced in conjunction with school readiness in classroom events, such as when the child, a book, the teacher, the classroom carpet and their peers are entangled. In my approach to voice I also detract the focus of school readiness away from the human, to propose reality is composed via *''things'-in-phenomena'* (Barad, 2003, p.817). This is a mattering, a practice of inquiry that attains meaning as an open and ongoing process of intra-actions and more-than-human assemblages, wherein all matter matters (Smith, 2010). Here, being and knowing are reciprocally productive and meaning is short-lived and spontaneous (Barad, 2007). Working in this way affords me the space to think differently and more creatively about researching school readiness, aiming to *'produce different knowledge*

and produce knowledge differently' (St. Pierre, 1997, p.175). It focuses this research toward the embodiment of school readiness experiences, as an overlap between the sociological, physical and symbolic as an inseparable and intense entanglement, an assemblage situating people and matter simultaneously (Carpentier, 2017; van der Tuin and Dolphijn, 2010). This means the two-year-old child and the classroom carpet are equally capable of creating an affect, moving this study beyond how school readiness is traditionally understood. I proposition school readiness is part of the *'discursive-material knot'* (Carpentier, 2017, p.4). This enables me to understand how agency is distributed within assemblages affecting classroom events.

Employing New Materialism also facilitates a productive space for me to focus on the connection's children make, to and with matter to understand the reality of school readiness from their perspective. Although this could be argued this is a re-centring of the human, affording a privileged position, this is merely a shift in focus, a state of in-between where my aim is to *'capture the translation of the discursive-material knot'* (Carpentier, 2017, p.4). This approach enables childhood scholars and researchers to draw attention to issues that may have previously been overlooked (Diaz Diaz and Semenec, 2020). Furthermore, perspectives are articulated do not reflect individual statements they are considered to be a *'collective assemblages of enunciation'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.7) which reveal a relational process (Mazzei, 2016). Therefore, my *'material turn'* (Reddington and Price, 2018, p.2) increasingly considers how bodies in this research are connected to all kinds of matter including spaces and objects within assemblages to articulate a more-than-human subjectivity. As Leander and Bolt (2012) state, bodies are both material and incorporeal which move within time and space, this movement in time and intra-action with matter is saturated with emotion and affects which continuously feed a proliferation of affective intensities. Affective intensities differ from a balanced control of meaning, they will help me to distinguish description and prescription of preferred outcomes supporting me to think differently and *'imagine what else might be going on'* (Leander and Bolt, 2012, p.22). Therefore, by making new connections during the research process and working with New materialism and Posthumanism opens the possibility of a new way of seeing and doing school

readiness. For example, challenging traditional qualitative research to move beyond linguistic voice to consider previously unconnected features that affect and are affected, such as glitter and glue.

I am mindful affective intensities potentially territorialise the bodies' capacity, thoughts, feelings or their social formations with others concerning specifics (Alldred and Fox, 2017), such as school readiness wherein meaning is defined within the territory of education, specifying what it means to be school ready. Comparatively, affective intensities can also de-territorialise the body, a separation from the meanings constituted within a territory, to enable new thinking, spur new desires and capacities (Alldred and Fox, 2017). Affective intensities and territories have a central axis within assemblages. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987) a territory is the delimitation of stable borders within a space working as a conceptual device to produce order, organising elements that share common features. However, the functions in the territory are not primary, they are presupposed, and they serve *'a territory-producing expressiveness'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.315). These performing functions within the space are products of territorialisation which stabilise an assemblage, which in turn act to reinforce its identity. However, as the components intra-act the potential for new ones to appear emerges which destabilize the assemblage and '*Selective pressure proceeds by way of interassemblages. It is as though forces of deterritorialization affected the territory itself*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.325) by decoding identity. This opens up the possibility for me to rethink space, territories and affective capacities occurring within classroom assemblages to understand the territory of school readiness and how this might territorialize or deterritorialize human, and more-than-human matter and what identity is being constructed.

Rautio and Jokinen (2015) found the meanings ascribed to children's actions derive from the dominant developmental discourse which limits the potential to understand a more-than-human subjectivity. Snaza *et al.,* (2016) also highlighted curriculums are humanised, engendered toward the notion of learning, and these ideals are constructed around pre-formed conceptions creating an agenda, aimed at achieving an outcome.

I propose this can be directly linked to school readiness, affecting practice to develop school ready children. Both these highlighted issues link directly to '*territory-producing expressiveness*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.315). As a result, educational curriculums and how they are delivered fail to account for how more-than-human objects are not merely background things, but that they equally contribute to educational encounters and experiences. By reconceptualising things such as classroom routines, carpets and spaces as resources with affective capacities enables this thesis to carve a space in time to rethink teaching practice and move it towards a reciprocal process. Therefore, this research challenges the politics of education and classroom environments by moving away from ascribing adult morphic meaning to children's actions. Therefore, taking the material turn imposes ethical and political nuances toward understanding the role of school readiness in affecting the production of agency/identity in education. More specifically, how is the two-year-old child part of a more-than-human concern.

In the next section, the framework within the framework, I aim to disrupt traditional ways of seeing/doing research and structuring my theoretical framework which guides this research. Building on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies (1994; 1987) I will draw on key elements, namely 'concepts', 'events', 'space' and becoming', presented as subsections, and explain their relevance concerning school readiness. The theoretical framework is itself an entanglement of philosophical propositions which overlap, fuse and enmesh themselves in a nonlinear way as plateaus. *Figure 8* shows how these have been organised by drawing on Adkins (2015) who stated this is a way of organising an intensive process into a temporarily stable state.

Concept
- Understand school readiness, as a concept, from the perspective of Deleuze and Guarttari

Events
- Consider how and if school readiness might affect classroom events
- What is an event?
- What creates an affect?

Space
- Consider how more-than-human matter and bodies support smoothing or straiting space.
- Territoriatlisation
- Deterritorialisation

Becoming
- Identify, agency, subjectivity
- Is the child becoming-school ready, becoming-colourful or becoming-otherwise?

Figure 8.

A diagrammatic representation of how the different theoretical concepts intra-act

The framework within the framework provides me with the tools to trace school readiness and the entanglements within early education; reflecting a conversation between Deleuze and Foucault (1977) wherein Deleuze discussed theory as significantly pragmatic:

> a theory is exactly like a box of tools…it must be helpful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself (who ceases to be theoretician), then the theory is worthless, or the moment is inappropriate. We don't revise theory but construct new ones; we have no choice but to make others. (Deleuze and Foucault, 1977, p.208).

The tools this offers is to facilitate diffracted thinking, an alternative to reflexivity and representational analysis (Barad, 2007), to position school readiness as a concept with affective capacities and agential. This will enable me to move beyond child centeredness by turning to notice more-than-human matter with equal agency that can effectuate an event in to form. This affords the potential to smooth space to observe how space might be striated, or how it might be smoothed during human and non-human entanglements as part of the *'material-discursive knot'* (Carpentier, 2017, p.4). As concepts, events, and space intra-act and enmesh they culminate in becoming, a new way of being which brings about new functions (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). It is to these theorizations I now turn.

The framework within the framework

In the previous section I explored my own assemblage with Eleanor, animated films and literature, affecting my ontological position. I expanded on this discussion to explore how I could research school readiness in ways which would enable me to move beyond a child centred approach. In this framework, and the subsections, I aim to detail how this will be achieved to build on the proposition of researching in a nonlinear way. It could be argued this section contains a proliferation of concepts, but determining which ones are necessary, or which aspects should take primacy, or how they should be structured would be a return to more traditional ways of doing research. Therefore, I accept Snaza and Weaver's (2015) argument to challenge academic disciplinary structures and embrace the messiness, as *'a way of seeing toward deeper knowing'* (Lather, 2010, p.10), paying recognition to this thesis as a knotted entanglement (Carpentier, 2017). Therefore I assert this framework within the framework is a further assemblage of reading, writing, exploring, and thinking with and through theoretical articulations *'that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning'* (Livesey, 2005, p.18).

Drawing on the diagrammatic flattening of the intra-acting theoretical concepts (*Figure 8*) the next sections provide a discussion of concepts and how this has be applied to school readiness, events and why they are integral to my research, space and how this can be smoothed or striated and finally how together these all intra-act with the premise of becoming. My discussion will continue to be informed by Deleuzo-Guattarian theory, New Materialist and Posthuman scholars all intra-acting (*Figure 7*, p.30) as a new and creative way to research school readiness as part of the *'material-discursive knot'* (Carpentier, 2017, p.4). I will begin by conceptualising school readiness as a concept.

School readiness – A concept

In this section I will draw on Deleuze and Guattari's (1994) philosophy of concepts to theorize school readiness is a concept with the potential to affect educational practice in the early years, by shaping realities within wider intra-actions. Their philosophy is drawn upon to identify how school readiness makes links to other concepts as a relational process (Mazzei, 2016), such as with pencils, counting, and routines which actualise the characteristics of school readiness. Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy (1994) also guides me to identify any emergent competing agendas of school readiness concerning 'issues' or 'problems', as they coalesce within the metaphorical space between two concepts such as school readiness and child/practitioner/classroom/resources. The aim of the discussion here is to understand how concepts operate. This is a seeking out of the *'and… and… and…'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.25) to understand the reality of school readiness within the specific locations of this study. I recognise this reality may be conceptualized differently in different places and spaces.

The concept of school readiness can be seen to '*zigzag…through other problems or on to different planes'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.79), emphasising a movement and an interplay between concepts in entanglements, previously highlighted in Chapter One with the assimilation of education and care. The metaphorical movement is experienced differently from person to person and constructs new meaning via material-discursive intra-actions, the lived experience within a social reality morphing into a new existence. This is not a movement between two fixed points, the movement encompasses positionality or its *'packets of sensations and relations'* to create an affect within the entanglement (Deleuze, 1995, p.137). The current sensations of school readiness which continue to linger can be seen and felt within the wider intra-actions as early years educationalists condemn the ever earlier approach of formalising education within the *Saving Childhood Movement* (2014). Deleuze (2003) states there is also an aesthetic experience ascribed to sensations which becomes a movement, a body in action and an intensity. This opens up new theoretical

issues and new paths as the movement continuum is not measurable, it is an order of reality, a relational transformation which moves through the human. An affect (Massumi, 2002).

A starling murmuration illustrates my perspective further as seen in *Figure 9.* As the starlings flux and flow, like school readiness zigs and zags, the shape of the murmuration shifts demonstrating a metamorphosis to uncover something new. I call this an intra-action-reaction. The intra-action creates a reaction which causes a new intra-action. Like paint saturating paper it spurs change, a new movement.   Each singular starling, like children or classroom resources, forms part of the bigger picture, the multiplicity, and entanglement within an aesthetic movement creating a sensation.

Figure 9.

A starling murmuration demonstrates movements and configurations of multiplicities (*The Atlantic,* 2018). During the murmuration, thousands of starlings flock swooping and diving or zigging and zagging in unison. Each starling forms part of the multiplicity and exercises their own agency to affect and be affected by others fluxing and flowing.

The creation and mobilisation of school readiness as a concept constructs realities, characters and personas that can wield a *'performative capacity'* (Ribeiro, Smith and Millar, 2017, p.81). I argue school readiness is continuously invented and reinvented, becoming entangled with other concepts which continue to produce knowledge of being/doing school readiness. This reflects a reality that is real without being actual (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). It legitimises a truth, aiding the production of knowledge, as the truth always falls back to functionality and the conditions of its creation (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). I argue this can already be

seen in the performative characters of school readiness in conjunction with the two-year-old offer which include disadvantage, deficit and not ready. The ascription of these characters to children and families engender a reality that earlier education is necessary, it also shapes and guides practitioner knowledge and influences practice. In *What is Philosophy* Deleuze and Guattari (1987) stated all concepts and their conditions emanate from or are connected to problems, forming another aspect of the concepts structure. The 'problem' in this thesis is linked to disadvantage which engenders meaning and provides a rationale for the concept's existence, in the context of the two-year-old offer.

Consequently, school readiness cannot be viewed as a singular concept in isolation, it forges links to other concepts such as development, language, and communication. This is regarded as a *'fragmentary whole'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.19), and can be linked to the arguments that school readiness is a highly contested term currently yielding a variety of definitions and meanings, depending upon how it is constructed and the reality it influences within a spatio-temporal space (Neaum, 2016; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). However, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy states the definition of a concept is not as important as the components that constitute the concept and create the structure. Therefore, this study does not seek to define school readiness but positions school readiness as a mobilised concept within an entanglement, with the aim of understanding how school readiness might gain agency during the mingling of bodies as a spatio-temporal configuration. Deleuze and Guattari (2004; 1987) expand on this stating the reality of a concept is further influenced by a continuous interplay with other concepts, coined as the *'concept of concept'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.19).

I will use Eleanor as an example to further articulate the *'concept of concept'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.19). Eleanor is a child wherein the child as a concept could be understood in isolation. However, Eleanor as a concept makes links to other concepts which shape and define the reality of what constitutes Eleanor. For example, in relation to myself and my husband, Eleanor could be daughter and a child. To my sons, she

is a child, daughter and sister. In terms of early education, Eleanor might be a child, learner, privileged, daughter and sister, amongst others. However, Eleanor is also linked to more-than-human matter, such as our dog, all yielding agential capacity.   The point is, each character and persona of the individual concept named Eleanor defines her to someone or something, and whilst she could represent these concepts in isolation, she integrates them all depicting fluidity (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). Furthermore, if the concept of privileged was changed to disadvantaged this could alter the concept of Eleanor in early education, affecting the reality of what Eleanor is capable of.

I therefore theorize school readiness as a multi-structured concept with the potential to influence practice, parents and things to get children ready for formal schooling. I propose school readiness, and the binaries of ready and not ready, affects conditions of thought surrounding the children these labels are ascribed to, spreading to wider circulations. An example of this can be seen in the newspaper headline '*Too many new children not ready for school say head teachers'* as reported by BBC News (2017). The personas of un-readiness accompanying school readiness affects our conditions of thought as a habit of thinking, guiding how we exercise them in everyday life by influencing perceptions, interpretations and responses to shape reality (Voss, 2013; Williams, 2014), as seen in the newspaper headline. My aim here is to understand how the character and agentic capacity of school readiness might affect or be affected within entanglements, to understand the truth/reality emanating from the concept that becomes mobilised and spreads to wider circulations. This might include having an affect on the reality of school readiness for parents or local authorities, these are cited as '*thought-events'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.70). In the next section I explore events in further detail.

Events

Reconceptualising school readiness with agential capacity in entanglements has an impact on how I might be able to *'follow the rope'* (Carpentier, 2017, p.4), to capture the translation of school readiness, at the in-between, as part of the material-discursive knot. Spindler (2010, p.151) states it is possible to illuminate an *'internal condition of thinking'* to reveal truth, knowledge and temporal realities. Building on this, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe affect as experiential and a source of power, through and within encounters and entanglements. In *Dialogues* Deleuze and Parnet, (1977) state it is this power to affect or be affected which can make us stronger or diminish us, which I have linked to agency as a more-than-human concern. Coleman (2010) builds on this, stating the reactive and active nature of affective capacities can engender control or enable creativity. More importantly Deleuze (1981) states affect can be a thought or thing, which that occurs pre-personal to change happening. It is in this moment of change, a collision of dynamic intra-actions and a middling, events rupture (Masny, 2013). Therefore, focusing on events between two bodies provides me with a way of illuminating the reality of school readiness as a state of in-between.

Events are part of Deleuze's larger philosophical concern that individual thought should be free from language, and anything else that stifle's creativity which is directly linked to concepts, multiplicities and productive spaces (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). It has been argued events can change institutions and sites of resistance (Beck and Gleyzon, 2017). Deleuze and Guattari (1994) explain concepts continuously reshape events therefore they do not reflect a singular moment, they are part of wider connections both potential and real. Masny (2013) explains an event gives rise to new life that serves to produce deterritorialization, which creates a change in the subject. Here the subject is decentred and becomes a subject of life events and part of an assemblage. However, Deleuze (1992, p.76) asks us to move beyond what the event is to consider *'What are the conditions that make an event possible?'* to examine the relations, material and the movement of bodies. In *Logic of Sense* the event *'expresses what is happening, without destroying the nature of the thing'* (Deleuze, 1994, p.277). This is the actualisation of a state of affairs *'in a body, in a lived, but it has a shadowy and secret part that is continually subtracted from or added to its*

actualization' (Deleuze and Guattari, p.156). The state of affairs is discussed as a function and a complex variable that is dependent upon a relationship between two independent variables. Drawing on the previous discussion of what constitutes a body I conceptualise variables in the same way. Therefore, they could include a book, a toy, paint, a teacher, research, senses or a child. It is the intermingling of these bodies that contribute to the state of affairs.

As a result of this I can therefore theorize school readiness as an event too, this means school readiness as a body can liven a space or give that space materiality (Rodriguez, 2016). It is important to note there are numerous events, occurring simultaneously, and the event can be different for everyone as they meet at the boundary or convergence of concepts, and with other events (Parr, 2010). This research is an example of an event, which has a core and a limit, and what I aiming to seek out classroom events which are expressed between two bodies. It is important to note the core and the limit are not in opposition to each other, they are mutually reciprocal creating tensions coined as singularities. Singularities are a multiplicity of relations, affects and forces (Deleuze, 1981) that *'comprises the effectuation of the event into form'* (Borum, 2017, p.95). Therefore, a singularity is the intangible forces between two concepts which can be actualised in many ways, leading to an event that incorporates notions of time, movement and intensities (Deleuze, 1981). It is important to note events are not fixed or replicated from person to person as this is a process of individuation, underpinned by the desire to improve outcomes (Borum, 2017).

My events of school readiness, conducting research and being parent disrupted my thinking of sensations as singularities, enabling me to consider how school readiness might collide with bodies in classroom events and how these bodies might affect or be affected. This links back to *'effectuation of the event into form'* (Borum, 2017, p.95) to understand how and where agency might be distributed. Deleuze (1990) states this is the process of individuation as previously mentioned, the process that produces the individual such as the school ready child. Singularities are central actors to this process and Deleuze (1990, p.55) describes these as *'sensitive crisis points, turning points, boiling points, knots'* that create tensions, such as what more-than-

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human movements converge to create events and influence an outcome. This is linked to thought as pre-personal difference-in-itself and the eternal return, discussed earlier in his chapter pertaining to fluid identities.

A singularity emerges as a tension between the core and the limit, as the individual moves through time and entangles with others. Singularities are conveyed as a sensation, drawing on materiality, which occurs between the two points bounded by the event (*Figure 10*). This might be the way a page of a book is turned, the consumption of food, or the tone and pace of a sound. This sensation has the potential to disrupt thinking and reconstruct our realities to inform our knowledge, where truth is viewed as a mobile concept which is co-produced (Lovari, 2014).

Figure 10.

My (re)presentation of the rupturing of singularities between the core and the limit in this research.

My aim is to focus on the middle, between the core and the limit, to seek out events as a means of 'following the rope' whilst working intermezzo. This will enable me to illuminate singularities that effectuate an event in to form, for example the construction of classroom displays or making gifts for family on special occasions. These will be used to document sensations and events for the purpose of analysis to understand how agential forces coalesce, and how agency is distributed within the entanglement. This creates a tangible link to affect and how the semiotic chains we move within create sensations and tensions within legitimized truths. Seeking out events, intensities and sensations whilst working intermezzo has implications of how this research can

move beyond representation. MacLure (2013, p.654) argues research which draws on materiality *'must involve non- or post-representational thought and methods, drawing on contemporary materialist theories that reject the hierarchical logic of representation'*. To move beyond this I link back to the initial mapping of school readiness as an entry point, discussed in Chapter One, and will continue to employ Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizome metaphor to develop a rhizomatic mapping of events and sensations as a way of disrupting thinking.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) used tree root growth to detail how representational thought develops in a vertical, hierarchal and linear manner as signified and signifier, a binary logic. In contrast Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p.8) state *'a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles'*. These semiotic chains are cited as *'tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.8). The connecting points within any rhizome produce a map revealing how concepts interrelate and connect. *Figure 11* shows how this can be achieved in the simplest of forms, depicting fixed scales, sedimentary and stabilized connections (Saldanha, 2017), reflecting representational ways of thinking.

Figure 11.

A sedimentary, static mapping of concepts. Concepts fixed together at specific points which go on to recreate the same map. Each sticky note denotes a concept such as socioeconomics, the child, adult, parent, disadvantage, confident, ready, Special Educational Needs or intervention amongst others.

However, this form of mapping (*Figure 11*) does not adequately articulate the intensities Deleuze and Guattari (1987) detail and describe in their work. I experimented with how the intensities might be articulated by using the same map, to better understand how I might be able to do this within my research.   Taking the static mapping (*Figure 11*) I crumpled it and opened it back out (*Figure 12*).

Figure 12.

The depth and flux of concepts within multiplicities are revealed by applying Deleuze's cartographic conception to the original sedimentary mapping by revealing intensities, depths and nuances of difference.

As a result of this, a rationale for a new cartographic approach emerged, which is supported in the statement the '*worlds are at once social, symbolic, and manage material, infused with the "affects" and "intensities" of their own subjectivities and trajectories'* (Beihl and Lock, 2010, p.232). The reference to trajectories reflects a body's journey through milieus, linked to territories, wherein the subjectivity of the milieu and the journey can affect and be affected in more-than-human ways. A milieu is vibratory, and the configuration of forces make them who they are, *'The territory is in fact an act that affects milieus and rhythms, that "territorializes" them'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.314).   Milieus are *'a block of space-time'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.313) with interior and exterior made up of materials, components and elements. The episodic repetition of these components enables the milieu to continue on and pass through other milieus. The milieus can act as an impetus or medium for events (Günzel, 2009). By plotting these events I can form a map, but unlike the

static mapping demonstrated in *Figure 11*, I have drawn on Lenz Taguchi and Palmer (2014), who stated doing cartography is to set up a map of numerous kinds. Working in this way I will be able to *'experiment with the opportunities it offers … find potential movements of deterritorialization'* finding a creative way to map classroom events (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.161)*.*

Therefore my map will reflect the theorizations a *'milieu is made up of quantities, substances, powers and events: the street for example, with its materials (paving stones), it's noises (the cries of merchants), its animals…or its dramas'* (Deleuze, 1997, p.61). I argue the creases, wrinkles and shadows as seen in *Figure 12* can be interpreted as sensations and intensities, something which can be sensed during events, acting as a conduit to thinking in a non-representational way (Deleuze, 1994). By adopting this cartographic approach, I will map school readiness and bodies within entanglements differently to the traditional sense of *'searching for an origin'* (Beihl and Locke, 2010, p.323). Instead I will identify the affects of bodies and more-than-human matter by turning to notice moments or intensities during events, by highlighting the sensations created during the process. This is a mapping of intra-actions during events, as I cut out a specific space and time at preschool provisions. The eruption of sensations created during the events are moments referred to as an *'affective constellation'* or *'a…constellation of affects'* (Deleuze, 1997, p 64) which glow (*Figure 13*).
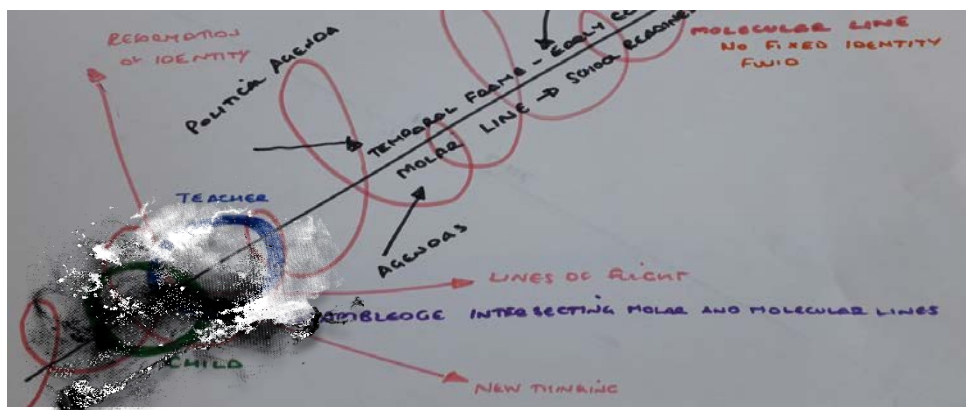
Figure 13.

My interpretation of a cartographic map and the illumination of erupting sensations during entanglement amidst the transversal lines of communication of the molar and molecular lines.

As I map these out in my own way, I will simultaneously map my own sensations during data collection and will foreground this by details mapped out sensations which influenced my material turn and adopting a flat ontology. Building on how concepts come to affect events and territories, I will now turn to space, as a way to explore and understand the happenings of events in more detail. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) discuss space in terms of smooth, striated or holey. The latter is seen as the in-between space which communicates with the smooth and striated spaces, I focus my discussion on smooth and striated space to explain how it will be used within this research.

Spaces – smooth or striated?

A central occupation of the assemblage for Deleuze and Guattari (1987) is the productive combination of affective capacities, bodies, actions and territories. These intensive qualities are extended to incorporate space, with a particular interest on *'how the forces at work within space continually striate it, and how in the course of its striation it develops other forces and emits new smooth spaces'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.500). It is this interest, which is employed within this thesis, and in this section, I will focus on striation as part of a conceptual pair. Striated spaces are discussed as organising matter to produce order and stability, a bordered space and a sedentary state that is *'coded, defined, bounded, and limited'* (St. Pierre, 1997, p.369; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The striated space is created by rigid molar lines, (*Figure 13*, p.47), which serve to reinforce regulated patterns of behaviour. Strom and Martin (2016) explain these normalized behaviours are linked to institutions, such as education, and the molar lines enforce the striated space with the aim to regulate practice. This is territorialization. The other part of the pairing is cited as smooth space, which is amorphous giving rise to continuous variations and development, filled with events. This continuous movement of variation takes on a consistency of its own, made possible by molecular lines resisting representation. Molecular lines are more supple and bring everything in to play, here movement is nomadic and deterritorializing (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Whilst it would be easy to conceive the striated and the smooth as in direct opposition it is important to note they are dissymmetrical. The conceptual pair flux and flow as *'a complex mixture between nomadic forces and sedentary captures'* (Lysen and Pisters, 2012). The nomadic forces aim to disrupt and undermine territories, wherein space is instituted by the state, coined as a sedentary capture. Here the capture relates to the *'striation of walls, enclosures and the roads between enclosures'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.381). Although I previously stated smooth and striated spaces are not in opposition they do act as a conceptual stutter, together they can permeate the structure of concepts to destabilise dominant discourses (Osgood *et al.*, 2013; Lysen and Pisters, 2012; St. Pierre, 2004), such as education. Nomadic movements are adept at

generating new spaces and moving within striated territories, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p.486) state the 'two *are linked and give each other impetus…smooth space allows itself to be striated, and striated space reimparts a smooth space, with potentially very different values, scope, and signs'.*

By exploring Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theorisations of striated space/rigid/molar lines and smooth spaces/supple/molecular lines I am drawn back to the discussion put forward by Strom and Martin (2016). In their research they explained teachers adopt pedagogical practices which conform to the norm and maintain the status quo, through multiple molar lines such as testing and normalized daily routines, dominant ideologies of being teacher and doing education are enacted. Together these become an '*apparatus of capture'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.469) or a '*magic capture'* (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p.471). This is enforced by the drive towards delivering social norms, such as being school ready, to '*become fixed and stabilised within normative notions which in turn steep into familiar, habitual and often rock like ideas concerning not only who the child 'is' but who the child 'might become''* (Jones and Duncan, 2013, p.204). Massumi (2004) expands on this stating concepts are like bricks which have a duality to destroy or the potential to build, which I have linked to the happenings within smooth and striated space. This enables me to reconceptualize school readiness as a brick. Jones and Duncan (2013) explain the bricks are hurled at children creating a ripple effect into facets of their identity, subjectivity, power, gender, social class, learning, curriculum and normativity. The velocity and repetitious nature of the hurling creates a fracture in the trajectory of creating something new, in its original sense it is a tampering process.

I argue the dominant ideology for children to become school ready creates molar lines which territorializes the child and more-than-human matter within a striated space, establishing discursive foundations built on notions of deficiency (Osgood *et al.,* 2013). The notion of deficiency is nuanced within the current policy offering early education for two-year-old children aiming to close the attainment gap; the policy is positioned

as the key to overcoming their disadvantaged start in life to create equilibrium. This can be linked to the stabilising forces within striated space. Osgood *et al.,* (2013) points out the synonyms associated with targeted groups, such as the disadvantaged two-year-old child, span the disciplinary fields of education and beyond. These include fragile, vulnerable, socially excluded, marginalised, families with complex needs, the disengaged and *'hard to reach'* (Osgood *et al.,* 2013, p.210). Entangling disciplinary fields creates an affective power which straits the reterritorialization of knowledge by pushing rhetorical claims that a child's enrolment in early education is salvationary, by enhancing their life outcomes and opportunities (Jones, Holmes and Powell, 2005). This is developed by creating a social responsibility to ensure children are *'up to the task'* (Osgood *et al.,* 2013, p.209).

Building on the discussion of space I aim to work with these theorizations to explore how spaces might be smoothed within early years classrooms, to trouble dominant ways of thinking or as an enactment of distributed agency. Currently, the average classroom in early years environments is pre-conceived, pre-constructed and pre-selected by adults organised and striated toward distinctive outcomes. For example, painting areas, water play areas, reading areas, role play areas, the home-corner, sand areas and outside spaces (Lunn, 2015). Each of these spaces perpetuate an adult morphic gaze over resources, deciphering which are best suited to build on a child's intrinsic interests to meet an outcome (Helmund, 1987). Drawing on Massumi (2004) I argue the resources within these distinctive areas can be likened to the symbolic bricks hurled at children to develop a sociocultural, temporal and normative discourse of becoming school ready. However, the resources within these areas also yield nomadic forces to disrupt the striated space, which potentially could disrupt the trajectory of school readiness. This process requires the practitioner to move beyond the dominant discourse of perceiving the child as incapable, non-conforming or not ready when they use the resources differently to present their voice, identity or subjectivity. This also requires the practitioner's ability to notice voice and bodies in more-than-human ways.

Understanding the affective capacities of school readiness within entanglements, in relation to deterritorializing and reterritorializing knowledge to disrupt thinking, tentatively hints to becoming-otherwise opposed to becoming-school ready. This is becoming–otherwise in the same sense Sitas (2020, p.158) discusses it as *'otherwise as change; otherwising as a processual becoming; otherwise as troubling; and other-wise as building wisdom about others and other ways of knowing'.* This is a moment of creativity, the potential to be something new erupting during the process of an event and the smoothing or striating of space. In the next section I will expand on becoming in more detail.

Becoming

In this section I build on my discussion of events as they are central to understanding becoming. Deleuze (1983) discussed events as the prelude and infinite power that shapes becoming. In *Logic and Sense* (Deleuze, 1969) the event is said to be part of the process of becoming and differentiation, by spurring change as part of an ongoing and ever-changing process (Beck and Gleyzon, 2017). Despite being described previously as an outsider the event must be understood as a series of events, and a chain in connection with the all. In terms of this research that is the concatenation of the child, the practitioner and more-than-human matter. The event represents the history and the future of becoming by acting as a mediator which can affect or be affected. As the mediator, the event has the potential to disrupt current knowledge by creating a space for new thoughts to emerge, to reconstruct concepts and knowledge (Thornton, 2018). This research is an event that creates a space for lines of flight to emerge, a rupture in segmentary lines linked to nomadic movement and deterritorialization within territories, enabling a change in connections and assemblages by disrupting thinking to enable becomings (Krejsler, 2016; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Becoming was best articulated in Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) descriptive work on the orchid and the wasp, they explain at the point of pollination the orchid and the wasp are deterritorialized and reterritorialized forming a rhizome. Roffe and Stark (2015) state this is a trans-species dance and courtship. As the orchid displays characteristics of a female wasp the males are drawn in to copulate and the pollen of the orchid is transferred to the wasp. The orchid is becoming-wasp and the wasp is becoming-orchid creating a new productive connection. At this moment the affective relations and connections between the orchid and the wasp create something new, something other, a 'difference-in-itself', a becoming (Deleuze, 1994). This is a zone of indiscernibility or indistinction that is established between two or more terms. Deleuze (1998, p.78) states this is *'a slippage,… not a natural filiation, but an unnatural alliance'* a milieu for becomings. Within becoming identity is not seen as stable, it is in flux, wherein subjectivity is extended beyond the individual to

connect towards affective assemblages with more-than-human matter and other bodies (Renold and Miller, 2013). The subject becomes entrenched within the process of becoming, the subject becomes unfounded or *'deconsituted'* (Message, 2010, p.34). Braidotti (1997) argues all becomings are molecular as they do not identify with someone or something. Braidotti (1997) also states a becoming is the cracking of reactive forces emerging from a yearning, a desire to be different and to be ever-changing.

It is at this juncture this research turns to notice where and how becoming happens, such as becoming-school ready or becoming-otherwise. By tracing the lines of flight which rupture during classroom events the affect of school readiness '*in itself*', as a singularity will be exposed. Coleman and Ringrose (2013, p.10) argue this could *"'capture' the 'impersonal yet singular' nature of life, that is, the relationship between the actual and the virtual'.* This is a commitment to molecular politics which Colebrook (2002, p.82) states is '*beginning from singular, partial or "molecular" experiences, which are then organised and extended into "molar" formations'.* The philosophical terms molar lines, molecular lines and lines of flight are integral to becoming and affect my previous visual representation (*Figure 10*, p.44). Molar lines are influenced by the state, they are sedentary and sustain political economy within territories whereas molecular lines allow for variations, new relations and creativity to emerge (Message, 2010). The molar lines represent prescriptive ideology such as school readiness and rigid indeterminations during a phase or period in life, such as a child attending early education as a result of the two-year-old offer. The molar line can also represent binary opposites and labels such as ready or not ready affecting identities shaped by the external influence (Windsor, 2015).
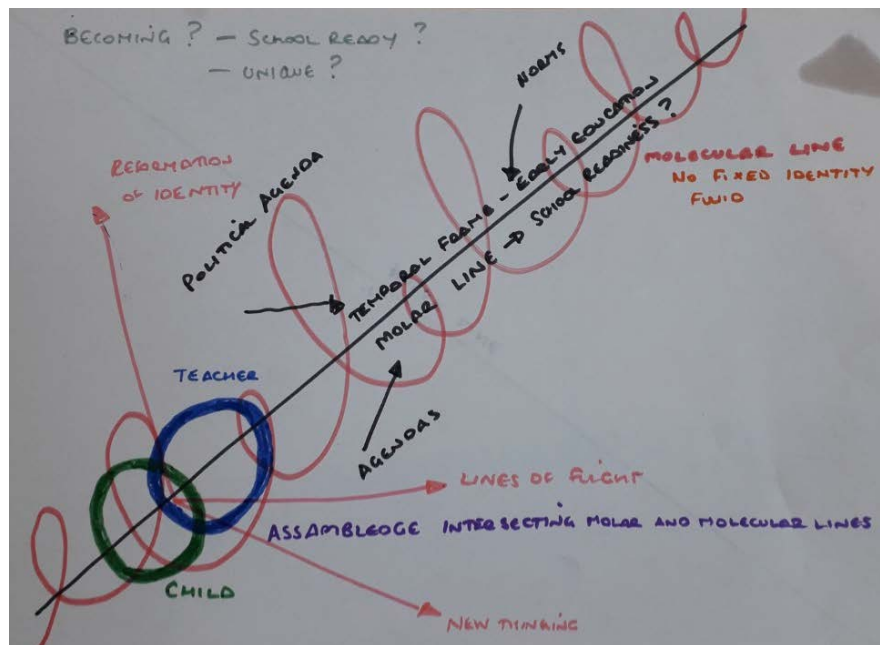
Figure 14.

The molecular and molar lines the assemblage moves within and through creates zones of indiscernibility opening a smooth space for new thinking to emerge; deterritorializing school readiness.

In contrast, the molecular line is fluid and moves with varying speeds in time, which allows the possibility to create a space for thinking (*Figure 14*), and allows me as a researcher time to unpack socio-political nuances as the movement within the event slows down (Merriman, 2018). An example of this would be a child's play stalling or slowing as they begin to think of the "what next?", a new direction erupting from their play. The molecular lines can be affected by the desires that drive them, with productive possibilities for becoming-otherwise. These flows and desires can also seize up on the molar line (de Miranda, 2013). For example, if an early years practitioner continuously asks a child to remain on task during the process of producing something the child will either be affected and participate, or they will affect the event and choose new directions. The ability to affect and be affected has the potential to demonstrate a tension as the child's desire for becoming is expressed by communication and draws on power. This is where the crack or rupture occurs and the line of flight appears (Deleuze, 1997). These are new thoughts to reconstruct the assertions of the molar line and the concepts it employs.

Exploring becoming in relation to school readiness enables me to move this research beyond the ordinary and already known effects of an unhelpful *'totalized system'* of concepts (Stewart, 2007, p.4), bound by binary opposites, such as ready and not ready. This enables me to offer '*up new ways of seeing, feeling, connecting and engaging with complex socialites in ways that can lead to new questions and insights into new and old substantive and political concerns'* (Renold and Miller, 2013, p.27). Therefore, this thesis can acknowledge sensation as a more-than-human concern during events, to map becomings in smooth spaces to (re)present how and why these are formed (Coleman and Ringrose, 2013). This approach fulfils Deleuze and Parnet's (1977) philosophical aim to discover how something is produced and as I mentioned earlier conduct research that can *'produce different knowledge and produce knowledge differently'* (St. Pierre, 1997, p.175). It is important to stress again this framework does not look at school readiness in isolation but begins with school readiness then traces the ways the concept creates an affect, beyond the constraints of policy within a specific time and space. Throughout my discussion on concepts, events, space and becoming power has been mentioned and it is to this I now turn.

Power

Power first emerged in my biographical narrative in Chapter One which positioned my thesis as a catalytic event to becoming-researcher becoming-thesis. Secondly, within my research rationale, the discourse of power erupted in relation to social policy and facilitating the enrolment of two–year–old children in early education. Thirdly, power is embedded within my discussion about my ontological and epistemological positioning. And lastly, my framework within a framework highlighted links between Deleuzo-Guattarian (1987) concepts and power. In this section I will explore theorizations of power put forward by Foucault and Deleuze. In their conversation on *Intellectuals and Power* Foucault and Deleuze's (1977) perspectives differed, and by disentangling them I can apply either perspective to advance my understanding of smooth and striated spaces and becoming. I have entangled the two perspectives they provide an overview of the affective capacities emanating from power which can either liberate thinking to produce autonomy or to striate early years practice toward an ableist discourse within entanglements (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2010; Freire, 1988).

Deleuze (1992a) argued power occurs within assemblages acting as a conduit for the emergence of creative thinking, a line of flight and deterritorialization. This is a means for children and other bodies to produce knowledge and subjectivity, as they seek a sense of liberation within early education by resisting authorised forces of control during events. In this section, I turn to Foucault's notion of power relating to the construction of knowledge, truth and consciousness shaping a discourse of power. Here power is exercised as a form of coercion toward idealistic notions, such as the school ready child within a society influenced by a neo-liberal infrastructure. Foucault (1982; 1994) argued power is everywhere stating it is neither a theory nor a practice because humans become an objectified subject. It can be argued school readiness is an example of this as it places the child in a process of production which creates an idealised learner, engendering a long-term economic return which is legitimised by forms of control and power. Resistance against this subjectification

demonstrates a *'transversal struggle'* (Foucault, 1982, p.780) wherein power becomes a technique, one rooted in the concept of pastoral power with a slight revision, by altering the salvationist aspect.

In the original sense, pastoral power is ecclesiastic and preserves notions of life in preparation for the new world. It is *'coextensive and continuous with life; it is linked with a production of truth – the truth of the individual himself'* (Foucault, 1982, p.783).   In the revisited and revised sense, pastoral power means providing or creating security in relation to well-being, health and standards of living. Officiating this means of power within a society requires different modes of officials distanced from the church, expanded to incorporate public institutions such as schools which are exerted by state apparatus (Sakellaropoulos, 2019). The multiplication of pastoral power focused on two roles to develop knowledge: globalisation and the individual, both linked to neo-liberalism (Martin and Wearing, 2018). Entangling this perspective of power within this research is an acceptance that power is everywhere and thus calls for a move beyond the why and how it exists. Therefore, my aim is to seek out how the concept of school readiness is legitimised in everyday life and to understand how power might be used to smooth or striate spaces, and in the process of becoming.

By focusing on how power is legitimised within an entanglement enables me to position power as a negative or positive affect and opens new possibilities to see things differently. Power produces and circulates meaning according to Foucault (1982), therefore the capacity power holds in relation to school readiness is integral. Regarding the two-year-old child, this means observing how a child employs power to refute agendas of school readiness or how power can be enacted through the use of non-human objects, a movement away from normative discourses. Equally observing how power can be used to disseminate what it means to become school ready within an entanglement. Here materiality disrupts our understanding of power by accepting both the child and non-human matter can cause an affect. Bennett (2010, p.xvi) explains vibrant matter has the power to create *'an effectivity of their own'* by obstructing or stalling the will or design

of humans.   This premise is based upon communicative relationships reciprocally supporting each other. The enactment of power here is non-uniform and diversifies instead to reflect specific concepts, in this research that means school readiness or more-than-human matter.   In education this means adapting regulations governed by the institutions, adapting environments and spaces, altering or moulding activities and soliciting a predefined cohort of children.   This creates a *'block of capacity-communication-power'* (Foucault, 1982, p.787) to develop an apprentice, moulding their behaviour to meet the demands of the concepts at play. The aim is to become successfully qualified, disciplined to affirm the limit (Foucault, 1977). This links back to the notion of the idealised learner who will achieve the desired outcomes of society.

Foucault extended his work on pastoral power, discipline and optical surveillance to introduce governmentality, a portmanteau of government and rationality.   Foucault (1997, p.20) described governmentality as an *'ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics, that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power'.* The portmanteau emerged when sovereign power and the abidance to judicial laws proved inadequate in controlling the reciprocal relationships between people, non-material issues and events due to peripheral forces creating additional pressures (Rose, O'Malley and Valverde, 2009). The notion of creating subjects who would be fulfilled within their lives, act obediently and comply with societal requirements surfaced. This positioned governmentality as a mode of directing and controlling human behaviour as Foucault (1997, p.20) stated it is *'an activity that undertakes to conduct individuals throughout their lives by placing them under the authority of a guide responsible for what they do and for what happens to them'.* The conducting of people links to creating an orchestrated movement within a space and time, as a striation (Done, Murphy and Knowler, 2014).

The provision of choice becomes paramount to the successful enactment of this form of power; acting as *'an invisible hand'* (Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991, p.19), ushering individuals to make a predetermined

choice without realisation. This is explained further by false consciousness and the inability to recognise oppression through the legitimization of truths and hegemonic control (Darrow, 2010). The invisible hand affects the reactional element of the intra-action reaction, adding an element of fluidity which is one of the characteristics of the concept (Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991). The fluidity is linked to the movement of becoming either the insider or outsider of tactics which create an affect, permitting a proliferation of continuous developments and ever-changing definitions to be constructed. This reflects the current becoming of school readiness as a concept (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). To summarise, choice under the rubric of governmentality can linked to becoming-otherwise and self-governing one's own life by making choices linked to desire. Rose (1999) argues our desire controls and governs our choices to meet an intrinsic right to be autonomous; this is the difference of being-school ready, becoming-otherwise and transgressing the binaries of subject and object.

Deleuze (1992) built on governmentality by discussing societies of control, detailing how *'Individuals have become "dividuals," and masses, samples, data, markets, or "bank"'* (Deleuze, 1992, p.5). The dividuals, digitalized individuals, are tracked and monitored in smooth spaces with a causal relationship between power and how subjectivity is produced. Deleuze (1992) states schools, amongst other environments, have become environments of enclosures and the administrators ceaselessly seek reforms, acting as moulds that create a cast, such as a pupil, a student or even a practitioner. The control within the enclosure are modulations *'a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other'* (Deleuze, 1992, p.4), here corporation replaces the school by driving competition and pitting pupils and students against each other and continuous control seeps through markers of examination, such as the Early Learning Goals or measuring school readiness. In this way individuals no longer move from and to confined systems of control, it is continuous and interconnected, which is facilitated by information technologies and communication (Martinez, 2009), strongly linked to capitalism. In this study, this can be linked to the marketization of schools, league tables, an Ofsted grading, the tracking of student progress and how the two-year-old offer targets

specific families as a means to improve educational outcomes. Moreover, it can be used to understand how school readiness regulates behaviours of two-year-old children or practitioners within the enclosure.

This brief discussion on governmentality, an extension of pastoral power, and modulations suggests school readiness could be viewed as an enactment of power, guiding individuals to mould and shape consequences to meet prescribed outcomes in education. The outcome is achieving a desired level of education which satisfies the ideology of a neoliberalist society in the long term. Whereby individuals are capable of economically contributing as a subject and object within the pretence of freedom and desire. However, it remains unclear whether, to what extent and if at all, this form of micro political and discursive power is regulating practice and limits the distribution of agency for children and more-than-human matter in entanglements by striation in seemingly smooth spaces. By exploring how power is used within the entanglements I will be able to understand how policy modulations (Early Years Statutory Framework 2017; The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), 2014), as a form of self-governing control, might drive practice toward producing school-ready children through expectant behaviours used as judgments.

A colourful perspective

My material turn and becoming-researcher has had a significant impact on how I perceive children. Here I draw on Deleuzian analogies of colour and other interpretations to elucidate my colourful perspective of children, linked to becoming. I use my colourful perspective to 'turn to notice' the affective sensations radiating from children which expresses their capacity, autonomy and creativity through the distribution of agency. Deleuze's (2003) theory of colour emerged whilst interpreting art by Francis Bacon, asserting colour is essential in our lives and performs a provocative role by creating sensations which can disrupt knowledge. I argue colourful sensations are a prelude to becoming-otherwise, and less colourful depictions evidence becoming-school ready by drawing on Kane (2011, p.428) who wrote '*The sublime is thus the limit of knowledge and the condition of possibility from which colour sensation and new knowledge can emerge at all. It is a beginning, not an end'.*

My perspective enables a '*catastrophe of colour to emerge'* (Deleuze, 2003, p.41), by moving away from the internalising conditions of school readiness, and the notion of what it is to be or not to be a school ready child. This allows me to observe the assemblages and events becoming anti-oedipalized, meaning to harness a fluid and unstructured way of thinking and living by plugging-in to desires (Deleuze and Guattari, 1993). Plugging in enables desiring flows to move in unanticipated ways, coupling with productive objects. This cannot be controlled or planned as it is mechanic (Olssen, 2009). Deleuze and Guattari (1983) discuss the world as full of machines, driving or being driven, explaining organ machines are plugged into energy-source-machines, one responsible for creating flow and the other interrupting it. This is a dissolution of subject and object, with a depriviledged status. Desire within the couplings produces reality, and desire is seen as productive machine in constant state of flux which seeks to assemble (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). This is linked to smoothing space and deterritorialization of territories, facilitating becoming within wider connections (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

Furthermore, affect functions as a dynamic of desire, which can influence relations and generate intensities. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) conceptualized desire as productive and creative, interacting with the material world as an abstract machine operating through assemblages. In this way desire is not individual, it concerns a unity-in-movement and is defined as a '*process of production without reference to any exterior agency*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p.154). This movement can '*engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983, p.26). Here desire is always already part of becoming, as a continuous process. As the desiring-machine, reflecting a '*collective assemblages of enunciation*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.7) connects to other machines chaotic connections are formed, rotating around singularities of events (Knight, 2009). This enables me to reconceptualize the child as an '*enfleshed desiring-machine*' (Hickey-Moody, 2013, p.274) with the potential to influence their lives and the preschool environment (Olssen, 2009). The child can be seen as a desiring-machine connected to the hand-machine, connected to other machines including a toy, experience and thought as detailed by Knight (2009), a production of flows. Deleuze and Guattari (1983, p.xxvi) explain '*every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society*'. It is this theorization of the child as a desiring-machine that engenders becoming-otherwise, I conceptualize as radiating colour within the assemblage (*Figure 15*). It is important to stress again the child is not assuming a central position as desiring-machines are extended beyond the individual, for example school readiness can also be seen as a desiring-machine manipulating connections, meaning and bodies.

Figure 15.

An explosion of colour within the assemblage, expressive of disruption to the status quo as a desiring-machine plugs in that engenders becoming during an event. The colour can only be seen when we 'turn to notice'.

Deleuze (2003, p.150) explains a *'color-force'* can convey meaning without the use of language by creating a sensation that is expressive, rather than representational (*Figure 15*). Documenting the colour-force can be achieved by using colourful analogies and using creative metaphors (Kane, 2011) as *'the pre-articulate level of sensation in terms of "invisible forces" and chaotic "vibrations"* (Craig, 2010, p.178), which leads to (re)presentation. The fabric of the colour is the embodiment of agency linked to identity, and the colourful sensations can be captured as the child draws on materiality as they converge with bodies, creating an affect. My analogy of colour stems from a sensation created by colours in an animated film, a short-animated film and picture books, spurring new thinking on agency and subjectivity and how they might be distributed or voiced in more than linguistic ways. My analogy will be used as a way of encountering and (re)presenting the voices of children and more-than-human matter. Here I draw on Deleuze's (1989) interpretation and interrogation of cinematography to explain how animated films and picture books can also create affects and sensations.

Film studies is a discipline encompassing a range of genres, theories and approaches and is a complex field. As part of this, it is acknowledged film can impact on our cognitive, sensory-motive schemas. As Elsaesser and Hagener (2015, p.180) argue *'films are not simply exterior objects …once seen, continue to live in us and can haunt and influence us in much the same manner as past memories and actual experiences'.* Building upon the philosophy of the rhizome and our images of thought Deleuze (1986;1989) stated a person's potential to realise new concepts, such as I have with the colourful child, can stem from film. Deleuze (1995, p.165) outlined his philosophical stance as *'three different poles: concepts, or new ways of thinking; percepts, or new ways of seeing and construing; and affects, or new ways of feeling, They're the philosophical trinity, philosophy as opera: you need all three to get things moving',* in doing so he argued cinema and films are building blocks, a mobile assemblage and a conduit for movements in our thoughts. However, in the context of this thesis, I do not attempt to analyse the cinematography or visual texts but will detail how they created a personal, emotional sensation, and an affect which enabled me to think differently and develop a new conceptualisation of distributed agency.

I have traced my movement in thinking, as an iterative process (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972) between observations, reflections, analysis and watching two animated films during the preliminary stages of this thesis. My journals documented several children's personalities appearing to change during intra-action-reactions. I noted sensations as if the child moved between a state of black and white to colourful. I describe this difference like taking an old cartoon and converting it into technicolour (*Figure 16*). As I mapped school readiness I noticed when early years practitioners entangled with children and attuned to bodies in communication, engaging the child using knowledge by distributing agency to include more-than-human matter the child became energised and stimulated. This is a colourful sensation, which is weighted by the use of colour in our everyday language as we make visible our emotions and create sensations in others. For example, we say feeling grey to refer to unmotivated moments or a lacklustre toward events.

Figure 16.

Eleanor enjoying some noodles at her brother's new home. The change from black and white to colour demonstrates a turning to notice colour as a (re)presentation of an event and the affective capacity of more-than-human matter in creating a sensation. The colour in her clothing and her choice of headband is forming part of her voice and (re)presenting her identity and subjectivity as she emerges with agency in an event. A connection ensues between the noodles, the fork and the mouth as they convey the event, (re)telling sensations in her facial expressions and body language.

The radiation or intensity of colour which creates a sensation with the potential to affect is given gravitas when I use it in conjunction with Eleanor. I see Eleanor as a mix of vibrant colours which have fluidity and flux. At various times she will move between colours depending upon her levels of comfort, her connection

to the environment or the people she is with, including the objects she draws on during her play. These form part of her body in communication to identify how she experiences a situation or a request, a colourful reply in more than linguistic ways. My conceptualisation of sensations as colourful, which disclose the distribution of agency or voice emerged from a sensation *The Trolls* (2016) created. The significance of colour resonates throughout. The characters are presented using an array of vibrant colours *(Figure 17),* each with a unique talent or personal interest. Their colour comes from their *'collective assemblages of enunciation'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.7) based on empathy, respect, equality and emotional intelligence and materiality and distributed agency to non-human matter such as glitter.

Figure 17.

A movie still from *The Trolls* (2016). Poppy is the main protagonist. Here, she is running through a tunnel of hair made by the other Trolls. The Trolls connect to and with material objects and others. Poppy's character is the epitome of vibrancy, radiating colour and emotions which is conveyed when she intra-acts with all things.

I argue the colours the animators used to present the characters is comparable to the disposition of children, including Eleanor. Each troll has their own idiosyncrasies, expectations, aspirations, thoughts and therein identities and I argue children are the same. The analogy is evident in the presentation of various characters. For example, a troll called Branch *(Figure 18)* is largely colourless or a muted blue and has become disconnected from his community. Branch's loss of colour has been a result of bereavement within his family. I would argue that Eleanor similarly loses her colour when she is confronted with difficult and unfamiliar situations that challenge her autonomy, sense of agency and the ability to embody her own identity.

66

Figure 18.

Branch, a largely colourless character from *The Trolls* (2016).

My colour analogy is not limited to children and is extended to include adults within the animated films and in this research. For example, another community called The Bergens exists (*Figure 19*), and they are a complete contrast to the Trolls. The Bergens are largely uncolourful and pay little regard to each other. They are presented in the film as being unhappy.

Figure 19.

The Bergens from *The Trolls (2016).* Less colourful in nature and disconnected from each other.

When the Bergens are introduced within the animation they are singing a song which depicts a presentation of their lived experiences. The song suggests a future they are uncomfortable with is coming and their lack of colour reflects a state of oppression. The future they sing of alludes to change and thinking differently. Therefore, the affect of the *future* is a metamorphosis, from largely colourless to radiating colour. Being portrayed as dull can be transposed to the homogenised perspective of children in early education. I contend

the Bergens battle to achieve a state of happiness is an intrinsic need to become colourful and concerning this research, the colourful child is celebrated for their uniqueness within the discourse of early education, and school readiness and is positioned as a linguistic, material, discursive, dynamic and iterative production which is both being and becoming in a Deleuzo-Guattarian sense (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; 1987). This links back to the eternal return (Deleuze, 1994) and a more-than-human subjectivity.

During the animated film, it becomes clear if the Bergens want to reach a state of happiness they must eat the Trolls. I transposed this normative behaviour as maintaining a status quo in the discourse of early education; a deficit approach to children and adult morphic responses to agency and autonomy (Slater, 2015). However, the younger Bergens acknowledge the antagonistic struggle to reach a state of happiness and challenge the status quo to affect others, to think otherwise and reconceptualize happiness. The animated film demonstrates how relationships and environments which subvert power are conducive to becoming colourful, as suggested by Deleuze (1981) in *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation.* Discussing the impact of colour Craig (2010, p.177) states *'the complexity of colour provides an entry point or encountering the complexity of myriad bodies, giving us new ways to think about bodies'*. Moreover, Deleuze (1981) pays attention to the body, perception and action, and a strong correlation with the environment and embodiment. Here embodiment is an active process which spans the virtual and material world, influenced by a multitude of forces such as bodies, brains, identities and environments. The body can be any one thing, which converges with other bodies such as the body of the child and the body of school readiness reflecting an entanglement. Toward the end of his analytical discussion of Bacon's art, Deleuze (2003) argued colour is an intangible sensation, this yields a meaning by creating interactions and affects (Kane, 2011).

The affect of the colour sensation in juxtaposition to school readiness led me to watch the short-animated film Alike *(2015)*. The animation is based on two characters, a father and his son (*Figure 20*), and the narrative conveys a story about routine, education and employment and uses changes in colour to transmit sensations. These are felt by the father and the son during their intra-actions together and with others. The changes in colour animated throughout created a further colourful sensation which affected me. The assemblages of routine, employment, education in conjunction with the loss of colour summarise my thinking and I will provide a brief overview of the animation and colour changes using stills from the short-animated film.
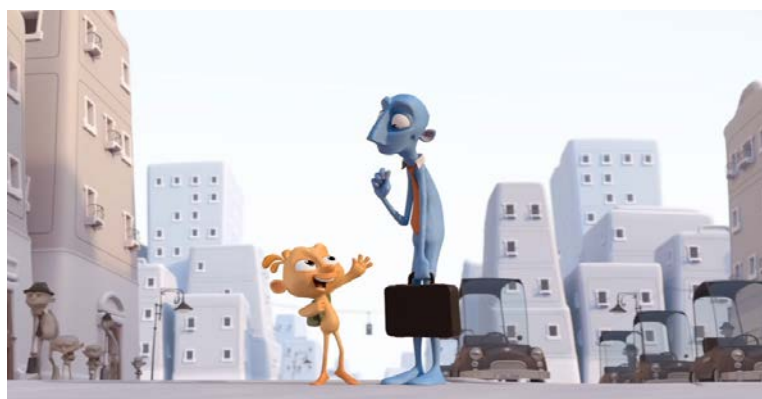
Figure 20.

A still of the father and child from *Alike (2015).* Here they are beginning the child's journey to education and both are colourful. This is a journey of becoming school ready.

As the child is entangled with education, policy and more-than-human matter his agency is overlooked and dismissed when he (re)presents his conceptualization of the alphabet to the teacher. The affective capacity of the child's creativity goes unnoticed and the child is asked to re-do the alphabet worksheet to meet the normative requirements. Prescriptive and homogenising teaching methods emerge, signified by rows of children drained of their colour, all working on the same task sat in a conforming, production line. As they conform, they are striated by the normative discourse of education (*Figure 21*). This links back to Deleuze's (1992) discussion on authoritative forms of control and modulations. The loss of colour in the child character ensues as he submits to routine and also begins to conform.

69
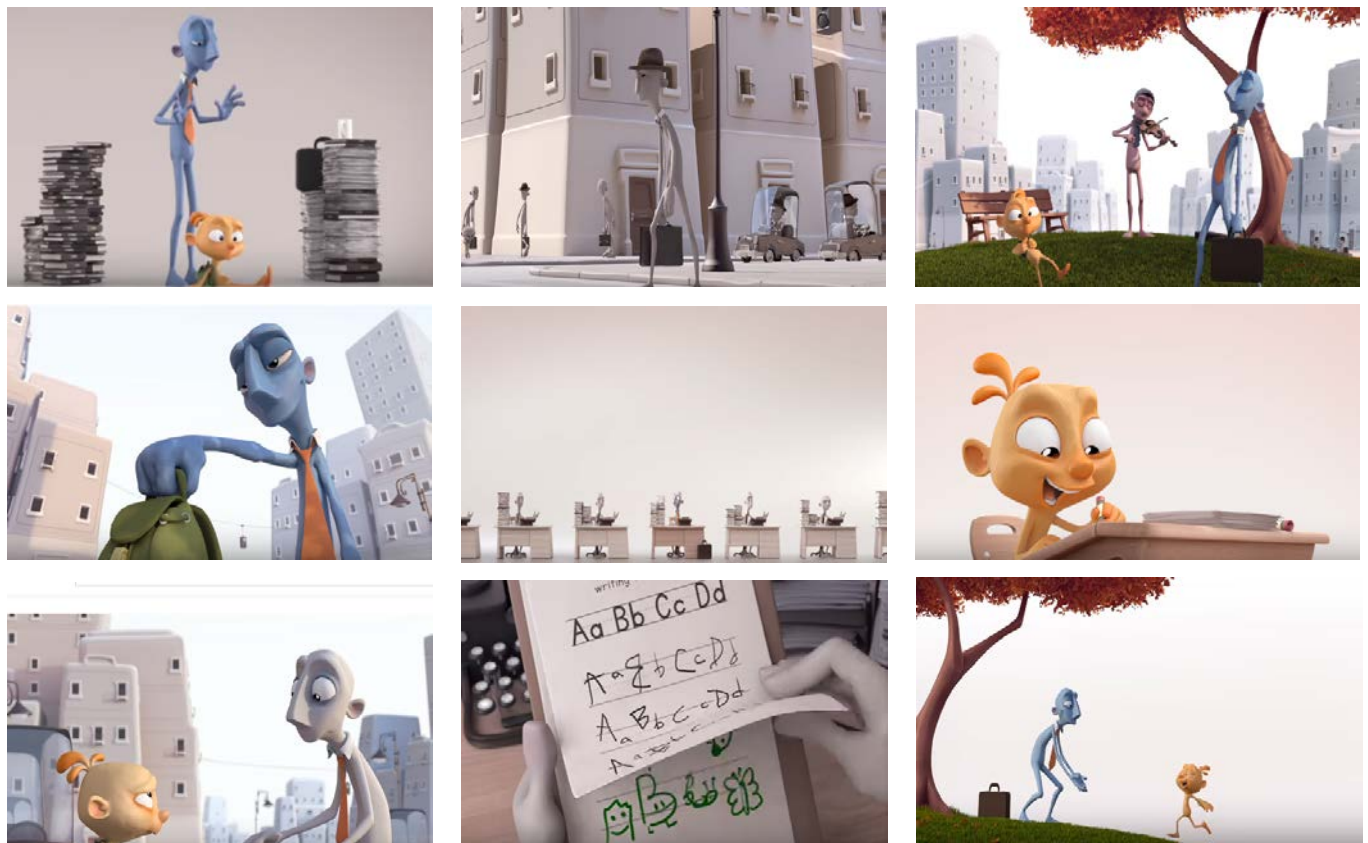
Figure. 21

A series of stills from *Alike (2015)* showing the loss of colour is experienced by both the child and the father.

As the short-animated film progresses it is interesting to see how the child and the father are *alike.* Not only is the child drained of colour through the striation of creativity the father is also drained of colour at work. As the father goes about his job in his place of work his colour begins to ebb away. As he sits at his desk he has little or no contact with anyone else, other than to be given more tasks to be actioned. He sits robotically completing the tasks and watches the clock waiting for his shift to end. It is not until the child and the father reconnect with the embrace of a hug, both holding their school and work bags, are they returned to a more colourful state. However, one day the son does not rush to hug his father he simply hands him his alphabet, succumbing to the expectations of what it is to be educated. They remain in a colourless state. Unhappy with this the father bumps back into memories linked to his son's connection to the material world and sets about re-connecting with the musician who played under a tree which captivated and moved his son. When the musician is not there the father mimics the actions and they are returned to their colourful state.

Colourful analogies are not limited to animation and colourful sensations can also emerge with children's literature, such as *Elmer the Elephant* written by David McKee in 1989. The story depicts a snapshot of one elephant's lived experience within a herd. Elmer is unique a colourful patchwork elephant, very different from all the other homogenous grey elephants. Elmer uses his colour to provoke sensations, feelings and emotions, acting as a stimulus for others as they intra-act. When contemplating his uniqueness Elmer attempts to striate his colourfulness and assumes a more homogenous identity to conform to the herd. When Elmer becomes grey, by masking his colours, he goes largely unnoticed. Realising his colourful uniqueness Elmer reverts to being colourful (*Figure 22*).

Figure 22.

Elmer the Elephant changing back from grey to colourful (McKee, 1989, p.15).

Once the other elephants realise the affective capacity of Elmer's colour, they insist on becoming-otherwise once a year, by creating their own version of colourfulness (*Figure 23*). What transpires from the story is the ability to stop and notice the colourful, without that pause or moment in time the realisation of what colour is and what it can afford would have been overlooked.
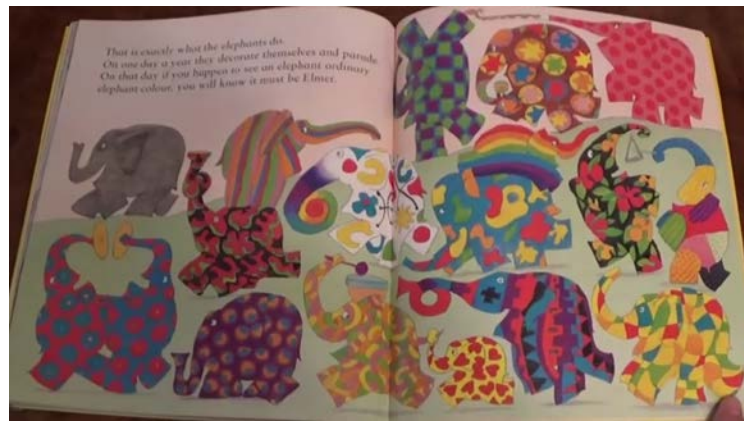
Figure 23.

All the Elephants celebrating the uniqueness of colour and the affective capacity it can create changing back from grey to colourful (McKee, 1989, p.16).

Colour sensations are also found in other children's literature including Beatrice Alemagna's (2008) picture book *What is a Child.* Alemagna (2014) explains as she draws, she uses different techniques as they enable the author to evolve and change. This is the same as thinking differently, and together with my colourful analogy, I will use these approaches when observing children during their everyday experiences of early education. This will be used to map colourful or colourless sensations within events. Any loss or embodiment of colour will be attributed to the distribution of agency.

In this chapter, I have provided a conceptual narrative to make visible my material turn toward New materialism and Posthumanism. Drawing on the turn I decentred the two-year-old child within an entanglement of human and non-human matter, to move beyond hierarchical structures and an ethical responsibility to (re)tell and (re)present voices in this study (Barad, 2007). Taking inspiration from the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1994; 1987) I outlined a theoretical framework as a tool to trace school readiness to document and map events and affective capacities which can territorialise thinking within a striated space. I presented an original, colourful perspective of sensations emanating within events. In the next chapter, I provide a literature review using historical and current literature to discuss

the emergence of school readiness in more detail. A '*spacetimemattering*' (Barad, 2007, p.234) of developmental theory results in an enmeshed discussion which culminates in the introduction of the posthuman child.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Figure 24.

Durdleigh our, not so great, Great Dane proudly sitting with a shredded copy of *What is Philosophy* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Eleanor and Durdleigh have a magnanimous, sensual and intra-active reactive relationship which is immanent and indiscernible.

In Chapter One *The Plowden Report* (Department of Education and Science, 1967) was introduced as an entry point in this rhizome for school readiness, based on the nuances of readiness in conjunction with early education it contained. This chapter demonstrates how the concept of school readiness has metamorphosed from rhetoric to reality and has been endorsed within healthcare publications to create normalising discourses which pathologize children as a homogenous group. This will, in turn, create links to child development theories which have been used to construct overarching frameworks within early education, and the rise in statutory entitlements for children who are labelled as disadvantaged. The literature will be used to discuss perceptions of the child linked to how they might gain agency linked to their identity, and communicate their subjectivity using multimodal methods.

The emergence of school readiness as a concept in England

The *Plowden Report* (Department of Education and Science, 1967) outlined the purpose and nature of early education but did not explicitly reference school readiness. The report drew on binary opposites to argue attending a preschool was a way of developing the holistic child, stating *'A school ... is a community in which children learn to live first and foremost as children and not as future adults'* (Plowden, 1967, p.187). The report emphasised *'exploration, discovery, hands-on experience, child-initiated activity, and the importance of choice, independence and control'* (Aubrey *et al.,* 2003, p.14). The reality of school readiness is somewhat different now, as Bingham and Whitebread (2012) have highlighted. It centres on the political and social desire for children to arrive at school with a readiness to learn. This has developed a strong focus within educational policy and has been endorsed as providing children with the best start in life, provoking a social responsibility for all (Neaum, 2016; Ladd, 2005).

The nuance of social responsibility emerged strongly following the publication of the Education Reform Act in 1988, expressing concern for the poor achievements of British students (Airasian and Gregory, 1997). A new debate on educational accountability developed, related to pupil outcomes and employment, refocusing policymakers (Carnoy and Loeb, 2002). As a result, during the late 1980s and into the 1990s, Government introduced three main market mechanisms: parental choice, representation on governing bodies and links between enrolment and funding. This was argued as embedding a neoliberal turn and reshaping the purpose of education (Machin and Vignoles, 2006). It was a movement towards evidencing educational quality (Powell and Edwards, 2005). *The Rumbold Report* (1990) expanded on the principle of quality by focusing on early years education. The report implemented a curriculum which was justified by highlighting the potential of early education to better position children to start school. This was supported by The Start Right Report which recommended quality provision be made available to three- and four-year-old children (Ball, 1994). Again, without explicit reference, the task was to make children ready for school.

The earlier the better approach was further strengthened by the introduction of a Nursery Voucher Scheme, linked to '*Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education'* (School Curriculum Assessment Authority, 1996, cited in Kwon, 2002). The supporting ideology was a combination of voluntary, private and state sectors collectively offering nursery places, was supported by an ideology focused on enabling children to reach a '*desirable'* level prior to compulsory education (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012, p.23). However, the ideology proved '*ill conceived'* (Anning, 1999, p.1). Most of the nursery places were in state-run facilities, and to receive the funding preschool provisions had to demonstrate children were successfully developing towards specified learning goals, as defined by the Assessment Authority and the School Curricula (Kwon, 2002).

This rhetoric of provision, assessment and funding links, as described above, is reflected in Rist's (1977) discussion on the embedding of normative discourses and any resistance perceived as deviant behaviour. Rist (1977) revisited his earlier works on educational attainment and research from labelling theorists '*Becker, Broadhead, Lemert, Douglas, Kitsuse, Loffland, Matza, Scheffe, Schur and Scott and Douglas'* (Rist, 1977, p.71), to provide a discussion on internal causal relationships of schooling from an interactionalist perspective to identify how labelling theory and self-fulfilling prophecies are combined, nurtured by the infrastructural mechanisms indoctrinated by institutions to create a discursive form of power. Rist (1977) described the definition of deviant behaviour, a commonly used term in Labelling Theory, is linked to the individual or cohort being judged, assessed by a set of rules constructed and interpreted by the social group who apply the assessment to discern infraction. The deviance is not to be viewed as a person's quality, it is the judgement and subsequent labelling of their ability based on physical, biological and cultural determinants. Rist's (1977) classroom analysis also focused on the interactions of children and teachers to examine classroom social organisation and how their structure delineates the development of norms governing behaviours.

Rist (1977) aimed to identify the roles teachers and students assumed. Goffman (1959) cites this as dramaturgy, the performances of both social actors in relation to their temporality. Rist (1970) found preconceived ideas and labels were formed by teachers within the first few days of reception class, with a correlation between child behaviour, teacher expectations and subsequently teacher behaviour patterns. For example, if a teacher knew a child had working parents, they were given longer to answer questions than a child whose parents did not work. Rist (1970) also found a delineation and stratification of relationships between students and teachers based on their preconceived ideas. This raises the question of whether judgements of children's physical, biological and cultural determinants, made within early education for two-year-old children, impacts on the label of school ready or not school ready. It also questions what affect the ascription of labels has within entanglements and experiences of school readiness.

To return to the '*Desirable Outcomes for Children's Learning on Entering Compulsory Education*' (School Curriculum Assessment Authority, 1996, cited in Kwon, 2002) the scheme was abolished, and assessment and curriculum authorities were disbanded and reconfigured, resulting in the *Early Learning Goals* (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). These were underpinned by the same areas for learning (Kwon, 2002). The previous notion of accountability paralleled the changes. Funding would only be given if the preschool setting met required standards, observed and judged during regular inspections (Anning, 1999). Furthermore, the Labour Government (1997 – 2010) invested comprehensively in education. Their political approach linked the impact of disadvantage with educational outcomes and thus rationalised a number of new initiatives, such as Sure Start centres and *Narrowing the Gap* strategies (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2009a) by specifically targeting labelled cohorts between 1997 and 2004 (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012).

In 2008 the Labour Government continued to assimilate early education and care with welfare by introducing the Early Years Foundation Stage, an overarching framework aimed at achieving the outcomes of *Every Child Matter's* (2003). This repealed previous frameworks, replacing them with outcomes of learning and

development standards, equal opportunities, facilitating collaborative partnerships, driving quality and creating a foundation for learning for all children as part of a ten-year childcare strategy (Tickell, 2011; DCSF, 2008). Part of Labour's commitment to addressing educational and social disadvantage was extending pre-school entitlements to all three and four-year-old children to 15 hours per week for up to 38 weeks per year. By January 2010 98% of parents with four-year-old children and 92% of parents with three-year-old children were utilising their entitlement (Speight, Smith and Coshall, 2010). It could be argued that the social norm of enrolling in early education, as a social responsibility, was firmly embedded.

By 2011 free early education was provided by Local Authorities for those considered most economically challenged based on a set of characteristics, such as receiving Income Support, Job Seeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). This entitlement became statutory in 2013 following a pilot scheme in ten areas (Department for Education, 2014). The policy changes demonstrated an ever earlier interventionist approach to education, linking phenomena to other emerging issues to ratify intervention. For example, the impact of poverty on educational attainment and health (The Centre for Social Justice, 2011). Considerable amounts of research detailed the links between poverty and educational outcomes. Additionally, Field (2010) conducted an independent review regarding the links between poverty and educational outcomes. Aside from the ever-growing blame culture, present within the UK, Field (2010) argued increasing household incomes, enhancing social mobility through the erosion of social classes would not automatically affect children's life outcomes positively. These trajectories are only affected positively once barriers such as poverty are broken down. In his review school readiness emerged more tangibly by advocating for an 'earlier is better' approach.

Field (2010, p.5) discussed school readiness using a grassroots approach, suggesting poverty has an ultimate effect on educational outcomes, stating *'a child's home environment affects their chances of being ready to take full advantage of their schooling'* and quantifying further by saying:

the successes individuals achieve during their adult life can be predicted by the level of cognitive and non-cognitive skills they already possess on their first day at school… related to the class, or as it is now more commonly spoken of, the income of their parents. (Field, 2010, p.16).

The report went on to state:

in the early years ... the socio-economic gaps in outcomes appear. .by age three ... large and systematic differences between children from lower and higher income families … persist throughout childhood … parents continue to impact on their children's outcomes and their aspirations for their children start to rub off on the children themselves. (Field, 2010, p.39).

The report placed emphasis on social responsibilities and discussed how ready a child is based on their upbringing and socioeconomics, such as the household's disposable income, home life, access to reading materials and the level of parental education. In essence, the reported compounded the need for interventional services at increasingly earlier stages as a way of easing the pressures on teaching practice. The report's central tenets appear to parallel teaching methods with tackling poverty and creating economic returns.

It was agreed a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage would be conducted following a bedding-in period. In the foreword to the review, Dame Claire Tickell (2011, p.2) stated *'It was unashamedly ambitious in intent, seeking to break new ground as an international exemplar', suggesting* the structure was somewhat unfeasible. Within the review Tickell (2011) argued school readiness was ambiguous, yielding emotive connotations and in response adopted the phrase unreadiness, creating a shift in emphasis to how a child copes with school life in an attempt to rationalise developing their school readiness. Despite the Early Years Foundation Stage aims, to ensure all children would make good progress, Speight, Smith and Coshall (2012) found 44% of all children were still not reaching a good level of development by the end of the academic year in which they turned five. Furthermore, Ofsted (2014) reported that in fifty Local Authorities less than a third of children were still not meeting the progress benchmark.

The review defined school readiness loosely, as a transitional period whereby *'children can be best equipped to begin the National Curriculum in Year 1'* (Tickell, 2011, p.85). The following excerpt contextualises this:

> Most children begin reception class at age 4, and for most parents and carers this is when school life begins. If children are not ready for this transition or the move to Year 1 … their experiences of school could present difficulties which will obstruct their own learning as well as other children's. The evidence is clear that children who are behind in their development at age 5 are much more likely than their peers to be behind still at age 7…lead[ing] to sustained but avoidable underachievement. (Tickell, 2011, p.19).

The descriptive statement alludes to a one size fits all approach, disregarding the unique child approach. Conversely, the review is plagued with negative connotations which Tickell (2011) aimed to avoid, meaning that terms such as *'not ready'* and *'behind'* proliferated from the foreword.   These terms suggest children can be codified, segregated and divided within binary opposites, ignoring factors such as naturally occurring differential development stages. More discernibly, Tickell (2011) recommended all children should be made ready for a transitional period by the age of four in a framework where compulsory schooling does not begin until the age of five, endorsing the earlier the better approach. At the launch of the revised Early Years Foundation Stage in 2012, Sarah Teather Minister of State for Children and Families described school readiness as *'making sure a child is able to start school ready to learn, able to make friends and play, ready to ask for what they need and say what they think… critical foundations for really getting the best out of school'* (2012, p.7). Teather added that The Early Years Foundation Stage '*defines what providers must do, working in partnership with parents and/or carers, to promote the learning and development of all children in their care, and to ensure they are ready for school'* (Teather, 2012, p.7).

A further assimilation of education and care with welfare emerged as a result of an interventionist rationale presented by Allen (2011) in a letter to the Prime Minister. Allen focused on school readiness by stating *'The Government should take further... existing policies … to make sure … all children have the social and emotional capability to be 'school ready' at five'* (Allen, 2011, p.9). Allen called for more interventionist programmes to aid vulnerable first-time mothers via national parenting campaigns, benchmarking pre-school

education, and developing assessments to detect social and emotional difficulties before compulsory education. Allen (2011) stated:

> I recommend … Families in the Foundation Years statement must include regular and purposeful assessments for the 0–5s, focusing on measuring social and emotional development to enable all children to attain school readiness. (Allen, 2011, p.19).

defining school ready as:

> the social and emotional foundation skills to progress in speech, perception, ability to understand numbers and quantities, motor skills, attitude to work, concentration, memory and social conduct; … the ability to engage positively and without aggression with other children and the ability to respond appropriately to requests from teacher. (Allen, 2011, p.35).

The rationale for school readiness appears to be social and economic, stating early interventions help quell persistent intergenerational transmission of poverty and their long-term effects. The wording within the document firmly posits school readiness as an environmental issue which begins at home. To overcome this and ensure children are on a *'path to "school readiness"'* Allen (2011, p.xvi) suggested the Government made available 15 hours of pre-school entitlement for two-year-old children. Since the review was published this has been endorsed and is now the foci policy in this research (Gov. UK. 2014).

The introduction of the two-year-old offer can be dated back to 2006 and spans two administrations. The offer was initially rolled out as a pilot scheme between 2006 and 2008, with the aim of identifying the families who would benefit most from the offer.   The overarching aim was *'to improve children's social and cognitive outcomes by providing free early education to disadvantaged two-year-olds'* (Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle, 2010, p.10). Identifying the 'right' families highlights a tension during the third roll-out phase in 2010 as Local Authorities were free to set their own eligibility criteria and create their own definition of disadvantage. In some instances, Local Authorities attached specific conditions alongside the offer of eligibility, for example *'insisting that parents attend at least one activity offered by a children's centre, or by making engagement with a family support worker mandatory'* (Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle, 2010, p.20). As the roll-out phases

progressed an onus on quality emerged. This was paralleled with a requirement for all settings providing the two-year-old offer to have at least one graduate with early years professional status. The offer became a legal right for all disadvantaged two-year-old children by 2013, placing a statutory duty on authorities to provide the entitlement.

An initial review of the two-year-old offer published by Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle (2010) highlights several issues. Firstly, the continued assimilation with health to upskill children who are considered deficit, lacking and not ready is evident. The offer has been linked to several Government priorities, such as *Every Child a Talker* and *Family Interventions Project and Early Intervention Strategies,* which position the child as failing to meet a predetermined indicator. This suggests parents who experience socioeconomic disadvantages and multiple deprivations are incapable of raising children which meet the ideal citizen rhetoric (Pykett, Saward and Schaefer, 2010) which is reflected in Butler's (1988) theory of performativity. The offer acts as a framework to detail what it means to be a good citizen of the United Kingdom and presents parents with a performative role. The repetitious use of the word disadvantage in conjunction with the child in written text and during speeches functions as a momentum toward social action and change, to consummate the action of interventionist approaches. By accessing the offer parents accept the symbolic and material reproduction of what it is to be a good citizen and conform within an elitist rhetoric sustaining a state-controlled market in early education (West, 2015).

Secondly, in this largely private sector initiative, children with special educational needs and disability are pathologized within the offer; thus, marginalising these children further. This is evidenced by Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle's statement *'participants expressed concerns about the potential impact on other children and staff of accepting a child who required very high levels of one to-to-one support'* (2010, p.59). This perspective reflects the generalised sense that a disabled child is perceived as *'other'* (Goodey and Runswick-Cole, 2010, p.502). Consequently, the child who has an impairment is situated as deficit, deficient and lacking in capabilities. This creates a further space for interventions to be interjected within the child's life. What this

suggests is that the two-year-old child fixated upon is a typically developing child, creating a dichotomous approach by reifying a deficit model, creating exclusionary environments (Campbell and Oliver, 1996). An implication emerging from the analysis of the literature suggests children with Special Educational Needs or Disability will experience school readiness differently (Goodey and Runswick-Cole, 2010).

Lastly, the two-year-old offer review failed to attune to the voices of the parents or children in the creation of the offer. The perspectives which resulted in the published review were from professionals from a variety of settings, such as jobcentres and childcare centres including educational psychologists and health professionals. Failing to include parents and their children in a statutory offer which aims to engage parents from the outset is contradictory. This evidences the rationale for the offer is firmly rooted in a Government agenda which does not cater to the needs or wishes expressed by parents or children. This can be considered as othering and marginalising parents within a deficit model by employing symbolic violence to maintain power (reflected in Sulkunen and Bourdieu, 1982; Foucault, 1977). The two-year-old offer is, consequently, directly targeted at specifically identified families. Eleanor, for example, was the target of the two-year-old offer during my candidature as I was deemed unemployed. This was seen as placing Eleanor at risk of disadvantage, something which could impact upon her school readiness. Actively targeting families based on statistical or government knowledge of income ignores the parent's perspective of education and what they do afford their children.

These policies and reports meant that School readiness became embedded within the early years without definition. This was compounded in 2014 when The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) conducted a survey entitled *'Are you Ready? Good Practice in school readiness'* to identify how the most successful Early Years Foundation Stage providers ensured the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children were best prepared for school. The report acknowledged *'There is no nationally agreed definition'* (Ofsted, 2014, p.6), despite the terminology featuring in many educational reviews and in statutory

guidance many different interpretations between providers existed. This endorses the interpretation of school readiness within the theoretical framework as a concept which will '*zig zag,...through other problems or on to different planes'*, metamorphosing to reveal the affects of the concept to achieve a desired outcome (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p.79). This suggests school readiness will mean different things in different spaces and places, as it will be shaped and altered as it moves through the ecological systems (reflected in Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

In 2016, children's early years development and school readiness were debated in the House of Commons. The earlier briefing clearly outlined the role of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2014, p.5) as '*to promote teaching and learning to develop 'school readiness' and equip children for future progress through school and life'.* However, the take up of the two-year-old offer aiming to ready children for formal education was low, with only 58% of parents accessing their entitlement (National Audit Office, 2016). The notion of school readiness was debated in terms of how children were failing to meet the current requirements and specific developmental milestones arguing '*pre-school provision, especially from age two and upwards, has positive benefits on children's all round attainment and behaviour'* (Abreu and Roberts, 2016, p.31). Yet the National Audit Office (2016) reported the beneficial impact of early years education for two-year-old children was limited. Contradictorily a full review is not due until 2020, some fourteen years after the offer was introduced. The discussion of the holistic child and the family is limited, instead questioning which behaviours and specific milestones are currently deemed beneficial to fulfil the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and from which perspectives these judgements emanate.

Most recently the report '*First 1000 days of life'* (House of Commons, 2019) placed improving school readiness equal to reducing infant mortality stating:

> The Government should lead by developing a long-term, cross-Government strategy for the first 1000 days of life, setting demanding goals to reduce adverse childhood experiences, improve school readiness and reduce infant mortality and child poverty. (House of Commons, Health and Social Care Committee, 2019, p.5).

The report goes on to state that one third of children do not meet the good levels of development set out within the Early Years Statutory Framework (2017), explicitly stating that good levels of development linked to the early learning goals are the measure of school readiness. The report calls for a national strategy to achieve three aims, reducing infant mortality, reducing adverse childhood experiences and increasing school readiness. This suggests school readiness is equal to the gravitas of losing a child or equal to the effects of child trafficking within the world of sexual exploitation. To increase school readiness the report urges for early intervention and addressing social inequalities which remove the emphasis from the child to a societal issue, wherein social structures become the precursor to a child being deemed not ready which are beyond a family or child's control.

A report from the Early Intervention Foundation six months prior to the *First 1000 days of life* presents a different perspective of the offer. It suggests the aims and objectives of the two-year-old offer *'is, on the face of it a sensible approach'* (Molloy, 2018, cited in Teager and McBride, p.7). However, measuring school readiness using the early learning goals *'is an insensitive measure to use in assessing the effectiveness of a policy such as this, making it challenging to detect any impact the offer may be having'* (Teager and McBride, 2018, p.5). This implies that measuring school readiness or using school readiness as a rationale for the offer is contrived. The report goes on to explain that a wealth of reasons exist for low take-up numbers, including parental preference and a provider preference not to offer early education for two-year-old children. More critically the results found other factors, such as cultural characteristics of families, play a significant

role in refusing to accept the offer. The report builds on the evidence to argue we should think differently about the child, early education and school readiness by asserting:

> It should give policymakers some cause for reflection. The 2-year-old offer is frequently presented as a central mechanism through which the current Government is intervening early to support children to overcome some of the effects of economic disadvantage, and as a way to increase social mobility. It is vital that the impact of the 2-year-old offer for disadvantaged children is closely monitored going forward. If, over the next few years we do not see a significant narrowing of early years attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers, then there is an urgent need to examine if this policy needs to be adapted in order to maximise the benefits of this considerable investment. (Molly, 2018 cited in Teager and McBride, p.7).

These findings are significant. A personal preference for not taking up the offer was cited in 50% of cases, this was in conjunction with little or no beneficial evidence of using the offer, and with the early learning goals cited as an inappropriate tool to measure school readiness serves to question the relentless focus on school readiness. Evidence is emerging that the current formalising infrastructure of the two-year-old offer to become school ready yields no positive outcomes (Maisey *et al.,* 2013; Smith *et al.,* 2009). A report from the National Audit Office (2016) also found the expansion of free entitlement to early education for three-year-olds could be detrimental to the two-year-old offer as providers were more likely to focus on that provision due to staffing issues and cost implications. This creates tension regarding the objectives of reaching the 'disadvantaged' child to overcome developmental issues and closing the gap between those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantages in comparison to their more affluent peers. However, Melhuish *et al.,* (2017) and Sylva *et al.,* (2014) have linked attending childcare with impacts on attainment. This discussion of literature about the emergence of school readiness hints, tentatively, at the nebulosity shrouding the use of the term and thereafter the implications of the concept.

The nebulosity of school readiness

Reviewing the emergence of school readiness highlights the complexities attributed to the term. This has led to debates on which characteristics, skills or personal attributes are necessary to be school ready. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2012) asserted school readiness is multi-dimensional, where each dimension unites two main characteristics, achieving competencies and transition. UNICEF (2012) avowed the dimensional floors of school readiness should be perceived as how ready children are to focus on education and their development, how school environments and policies can facilitate a successful transition between non-formal and formal education, and finally how a child's family/caregivers/guardians can advocate transition positively and engender learning and development. Each dimension aims to support interrelating characteristics, and this has been supported by Bingham and Whitebread (2012), Maxwell and Clifford (2004), Graue (2006), Ladd (2005), Blair (2002) and Dockett and Perry (2002). The supporting statements urged researchers and policymakers to understand the milieu of a child's learning and development as a forceful socio-cultural perspective firmly rooted within historical, cultural and social stimuli. Moreover, using cultural perspectives to define school readiness acknowledges the limitations of a *'default definition'* (Ladd, 2005, p.5), which focuses on singular approaches such as the assumption children should be ready for formal schooling at a certain age, conform to set of rules or regulations within a classroom setting or master a pre-set of skills, such as holding a pencil or being toilet trained, as discussed by Neaum (2016).

Historically a critical review of school readiness approaches (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012) argued policy and interpretations of school readiness created an era of schoolification, with paradigms such as developing the whole child being ignored (reflected in Bayram, 2013). For example, Ladd (2005) stated policymakers must acknowledge there is no normative child and any nonconformities to an ideological norm should not be considered deviant, arguing policymakers must acknowledge cultural, intergenerational progressed complexities. Including socioeconomic impact, health and cultural norms without prejudice. Moreover, Ladd

(2005) disputed evidence that suggests interventionist approaches yield positive outcomes. This is a point discussed previously in the literature review (see Melhuish *et al.,* 2017; Sylva *et al.,* 2014; Maisey *et al.,* 2013; Smith *et al.,* 2009). Whilst refuting the universal approach there is still an emphasis on preparation, endorsing a need to prepare children to learn.

Blair (2002) stated academic researchers have long since considered intelligence as a key indicator of successful schooling, arguing a child's ability to self-regulate is far more powerful. This includes their ability to follow a routine, operate as part of a larger group, and follow directions and the capacity to self-regulate to negotiate these processes. The importance and understanding placed upon these qualities, regarding age and social and emotional maturation, has led to school starting ages to differ worldwide (Dockett, Perry and Kearney 2010; Dockett and Perry, 2005; 2003.) Ball (2013) insisted these debates could have been resolved if policymakers devised systems which acknowledged each child as unique, and underpinned early years practice based on this premise. This would mean using developmental theory from Bronfenbrenner (1979), Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1961) more robustly and by developing an educational system which is not performance related. The premise of this argument was outlined by Gould (1981) in his writings on the mismeasure of man.

Age is a factor in most discussions and debates regarding school readiness as Dockett, Perry and Kearney (2010) and Dockett and Perry (2005; 2003) have pointed out. In the United Kingdom, the current age for formal schooling is stipulated as *'between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday in June in the school year they turn 16'* (Gov. UK, 2014). However, Tickell (2011, p.85) said '*Most children begin reception class at age 4… this is when school life begins'.* The maturational perspectives suggest school readiness is individual and cannot be attached to a particular age, and a failure to project or discuss ideological viewpoints which underpin policy could be argued as giving credence to labelling and blame cultures (Dockett, Perry and Kearney, 2010). According to Gesell (1880, cited in State of New South Wales,

Department of Education and Training, 2006) and Graue and Shepard (1988) children need time to grow and develop to naturally become ready for school. However, most countries use age as the criterion to determine school entry rather than skills or attributes. This suggests that once enrolled in the United Kingdom there is a volte-face, and skill becomes the most significant criterion (Maxwell and Clifford, 2004).

If a child is deemed not ready for school according to their parents, prior to the legislative age, they have the choice to delay entry. However, Dockett, Perry and Kearney (2010) found parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are unaware of their educational rights and the choices available to them, leading them to rely more heavily on alternative childcare (Reflected in Teager and McBride (2018). The parents are also less able to access higher quality facilities of childcare if they delay entry, fuelled by funding concerns and knowledge surrounding entitlements, which links to the work of Bourdieu (1977) and embodied cultural capital as a resource with equivalence to economic funds. An example of this was provided by Bredekamp and Shepard (1989, cited in Dockett, Perry and Kearney, 2010) who reported children of middle-class parents are more likely to defer schooling by one year to develop educational advantage. They concluded middle-class families have the disposable income and knowledge to access high quality services to provide an additional and stimulating year.

Literature from The Millennium Cohort Study, linked to enrolment, suggests disparities in educational achievements have historically been affected by the United Kingdom's infrastructure on academic intake, which has been centralised to one month of the year (Smith, 2013). Here the birthdate affect phenomenon suggests some children are required to learn and achieve prescribed criterion up to one whole year earlier than peers, consequently aiding and perpetuating poor academic performance (see Crawford, Dearden and Greaves, 2013; Crawford, Dearden and Meghuir, 2007; Sykes, Bell and Rodeiro, 2009). For example, a child born on August 31st is required to start school in the week following their birthday, whereas a child born less than 24 hours later on September 1st is not required to start school until the following academic year (Campbell, 2013). However, Smith (2013, p.27) stresses the phenomenon should be interpreted as '*students*

ages relative to their year-group, not the month they were born, that is the key determinant of their performance' and not limited to education.

The previously cited literature and supporting evident that has detailed negative effects regarding the school readiness debate implies they have not been consummated by action, as Smith (2013) summarises:

> Much of the discussion is restricted to forums away from schools and remains restricted to high-level matters of Government policy – very little is actually done to inform schools or offer them guidelines to tackle the problem. (Smith, 2013. p.27).

The continuum of tensions surrounding school readiness, and changes regarding school intake as reported by Crawford, Dearden and Meghuir (2007), have laid foundations for another debate regarding schoolification:

> Unfortunately, we appear to be no further on,… Government policies driving the start of formal learning still earlier… policymakers still refuse to listen to what the vast majority of early years teachers,…Formal learning, if children are not ready, is damaging for our children…They become alienated from learning and start to believe it is something that isn't for them. According to the DFE 2012, 20% of children in the UK are now registered as having special educational needs – five times higher than the EU average. (Cook-Hannah, 2013, p.21).

This argument has been backed by the *Too Much Too Soon* campaign (Saving Childhood Movement, 2014), and their *Putting Children First* manifesto (Saving Childhood Movement, 2014a), driven by field experts. They argue that children today have little or no reference point for comparison in correlation to previous generations, due to significant digital advances and massive cultural pressures which expose children at an earlier age to inappropriate tasks: education included. In conclusion, the manifesto stated that a school starting age should not be the main concern for policymakers or educationalist: the environment and the provision of integrated services should. This is supported further supported Teager and McBride (2018) who argued the quality and resourcing of a provision is more likely to impact the outcomes for the child.

In summary, this section has highlighted that educational policy is driven by attainment and economic reproduction through introducing predetermined or expectant levels of behaviour. These appear to be solely based on assessments, informal or formal, on children as young as two influencing opinions subconsciously or consciously. The continuously changing policies fall short of the projected aims to identify, nurture and mobilise those in the greatest need, as a result of class orientation. The holistic aims of the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, 2017), the focus of the next section, are far removed from practice as the policy is unable to cater for intergenerational complexities. Therefore, education is an unequal universal service. Finally, interventionist approaches demand behaviours some children simply cannot achieve, creating labels and stigma (Bradbury and Robert-Holmes, 2017).

The Early Years Foundation Stage

Emerging from the Childcare Act (2006), which set out welfare requirements, The Early Years Statutory Framework (2008) outlined learning and development requirements in early years. The statutory requirements pertained to all settings providing care for all children aged five and under. The framework was developed as a result of *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education* (Sylva *et al.,* 2004) and *Researching Effective Pedagogy in Early Years* (Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva and Muttock, 2002), combining the best parts of existing policies at that time including *Birth to Three Matters.* At the time the framework was considered ground-breaking due to the legal requirements related to a child's learning and development (Early Years Matters, 2018). It was based on the principled approach of perceiving the child as unique and intended to develop positive relationships within enabling environments, to support learning and development (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). Within the wider context the Department for Children, Schools and Families was created in 2007 when a change of Government occurred prior to the framework becoming statutory. The new department was tasked with bringing together any policy relating to children and young people, developing links to youth justice, health and behaviour (Gillard, 1998). These initial associations are the emergence of rhizomatic links to children and development, identifying health and specific behaviours as integral to achieving the Early Years Statutory Framework (2008) outcomes.

However, another change in Government disbanded the Department for Children, Schools and Families and it was reconfigured as the Department for Education. This resulted in several revisions to the statutory framework, based on critical reviews such as *The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning* (Tickell, 2011). The review concluded the current framework was complicated and needed to be more robust. As Tickell noted, *'there is strong support for the EYFS, it is not perfect and there are clear areas where it can be improved'* (2011, p.3). In 2014 a revision simplified the early learning goals down from sixty-nine down to seventeen. This was summarised as:

Areas of learning and development: now consist of three prime areas and four specific areas. The prime areas cover the knowledge and skills which are the foundations for children's school readiness and future progress, and which are applied and reinforced by the specific areas. Where they have close links with National Curriculum subject areas – particularly literacy and maths – they form an appropriate baseline for the National Curriculum. (Early Education, 2014, p.1).

The current statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, which sets the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five, was introduced in 2017 and is still informed by the four principled approaches set out in 2008. Only now readiness is explicitly referenced and can be linked directly to *1000 Critical Days* (House of Commons, 2019). This demonstrates how the Early Years Statutory Framework (Department for Education, 2017) was either covertly changed or has morphed into the measure of school readiness. Practitioners are advised to assess and measure school readiness they should continue to consult *Development Matters, 'This non-statutory guidance material supports practitioners in implementing the statutory requirements of the EYFS'* (Early Education, 2012, p.1). The document lists the early learning goals, outlining developmental milestones and age expectant behaviours children should achieve for each goal. It is interesting to note that at the bottom of each page there is a clear disclaimer that:

Children develop at their own rates, and in their own ways. The development statements and their order should not be taken as necessary steps for individual children. They should not be used as checklists. The age/stage bands overlap because these are not fixed age boundaries but suggest a typical range of development. (Early Education, 2012a, p.46).

More interestingly, the guidance material is now being used to assess a concept it was never created for. This adds further weight to my argument the Early Years Statutory Framework (Department for Education, 2017) was overtly changed. More critically, it could be argued that the document, which is technically for information only, should not be used to assess any child. This is potentially the reason it is not a statutory tool. If the assessment tools surrounding the early learning goals are for information only and cannot be used to holistically assess the whole child, evidenced by the statement *'it might not provide the full picture about that child's learning and development at the end of the EYFS'* (Standards and Testing Agency, 2018, p.7) this raises the question why practitioners should be required to assess school readiness at all.

Practitioners are also requested to read *Development Matters* (Early Education, 2012) in conjunction with *Assessment and Reporting Arrangements (ARA)* (Standards & Testing Agency, 2018) when creating an early years profile for children. The wording within the report alludes to assessing children's abilities in relation to a perspective of education which is underpinned by academic credentials, rather than developing the whole child, such as their emotional intelligence. For example, the report states *'All EYFS providers must give parents a written summary of their child's **attainment** against the ELGs. For each ELG this must state whether the child is: not yet reaching expected levels ('emerging'), meeting 'expected' levels or 'exceeding' expected levels'* (Standards and Testing Agency, 2018, p.12) and *'Year 1 teachers must be given a copy of the EYFS profile report together with a short commentary on each child's skills and abilities in relation to the 3 key characteristics of effective learning, included in the EYFS statutory framework'* (Standards and Testing Agency, 2018, p.14). The three key characteristics of effective learning are playing and exploring, active learning and creating and thinking critically (Mohammed, 2015), suggesting a process over outcome approach. This is contradictory to the purpose of assessing school readiness and highlights a need to understand the purpose of early education in the way it is currently provided.

The early years profile was introduced between 2002 and 2003, following a Qualification and Curriculum consultation, which aimed to streamline ninety existing baseline assessments to one national scheme (Durant, 2003). The profile was directly linked to the early learning goals and replaced the statutory requirement to conduct the baseline assessment during the first seven weeks of school. Despite the baseline being withdrawn the Department for Education re-introduced the assessment in 2015. This was to support the revised profile, amidst vehement opposition (Stewart, 2016). The opposition was underpinned by several arguments such as unreliability, statistically invalid data, harm to children's well-being, development and their learning (Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury, 2017). The campaign was successful, and the baseline assessment was withdrawn for a second time (*Better without Baseline*, 2016).   A move toward reintroducing the baseline assessment has resurfaced and is facing the same vehement opposition (Ward 2019).

With specific reference to assessing the development of two-year-old children the Government built on the ages and stages questionnaire used by health visitors (The National Children's Bureau, 2012). This directly links child development in a linear and sequential manner to achieving early learning goals. The progress check aimed to review the child's development in relation to the three prime areas and should take account of the parent's views (The National Children's Bureau, 2012). The reality of the progress check is different, up to 58% of nursery teachers argue this has led to grouping children by ability, which ignores the evidence that mixed ability teaching produces greater developmental outcomes (reflecting Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017). It has been further argued the progress check is preparing children to meet baseline assessments, which results in children being *'subjected to an intense diet of literacy and numeracy designed to help them 'catch-up' will deny them of rich experiences that should be at the heart of their early years'* (Stewart, 2016, no page). This is because the complexities attributed to this age group and their development is beyond the scope of the check.

The complexities of the two-year-old child highlight the significance of pedagogical approaches, including the rise in interest on early years pedagogy, as it has been perceived as a vehicle to endorse a consensus of values and skills (Lorenz, 2008). *'Pedagogy'* is derived from the Greek word *'paidago-geo-'* in which *'paíd'* means 'child' and *'ágo-'* means 'lead' or 'teach'; thus, pedagogy means 'to lead or teach the child' (The Regional Youth Work Unit North East, 2010, p.19), suggesting an entanglement between social and early years pedagogy which has developed a professional commitment to educating children in the United Kingdom (Nelson, Spence-Thomas and Taylor, 2015). This commitment has resulted in a greater understanding of how children's learning milieus are consequential to their development (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). Tickell (2011) stated this socio-constructivist approach (Vygotsky, 1978) has become the foundation for learning and development within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Critically this approach underpins pedagogical approaches in the United Kingdom, as Tickell states *'practitioners…welcome the role of play in the EYFS,…the balance between adult-guided or directed and child-initiated activities… supported by research… view it as a validation of early years principles'* (2011, p.21).

Analytically evaluating pedagogical approaches, a research emphasis emerges that focuses on understanding the paradigm of pedagogy and its nebulous role within education. The historical evolution of the terminology in juxtaposition to the art of teaching encompasses theoretical viewpoints of Bloom's Taxonomy and child development theories from Skinner (1982) and Vygotsky (1978). Cole (1985) argued education provides meaning systems for teachers and learners which creates specific actor roles. Within this perspective, pedagogy is enacted. Equally, pedagogy has also been cited as *'the logic of leading children'* (Hamilton, 2009, p.6), emphasising it has a set of complex layers influenced by contributory factors. These include identity, political orientation, sociology, culture, androgyny, expectation, and output which reflects a multiplicity of school readiness. These pedagogical perspectives link to contributions from Bernstein (2000) and the theorisation of how societal conversations in everyday life echo and contour assumptions of social groups, linked to perceptions of the child.

Language processes initiated by social groups during the course of learning prompts an emphasis on environmental relationship, developing individual significance related to purpose. Bernstein (2000) furthered theory to develop pedagogical discourse to better understand how this is interpreted and practised, arguing the discourse is constructed by a set of internal rules underpinning two norms: instructional and regulative. The instructional element is reinforced by rules of selection, sequencing and evaluation. The regulative element relates to a hierarchal structure, an overarching rule concerning a legitimacy to learn. It could be argued the Early Years Foundation Stage is the overarching rule creating a legitimacy. However, it is debated the structure and the curriculum undermines the socio-constructivism approach as it fails to cater for the individual and unique child (Potter, 2007). The curriculum is further criticised for being explicitly authoritarian in terms of classifying outcomes, which have resulted in adopting more formal approaches to learning such as enrolling two-year-old children in early education (Kwon, 2002). Furthermore, it is endemic of competitiveness and results, based on models of division rather than inclusion (Soler and Miller, 2003; Locke, Ginsborg and Peers, 2002). It was reported this has continued to widen the gap for children in lower socio-

economic areas and created a dilemma for educationalists and organisations including the OECD (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012; Potter, 2007).

The OECD (2006) suggested the foci of school readiness, emanating from the United States of America, which resulted in the *National Education Goals Panel 1991*, has heavily influenced educational policymakers in the United Kingdom. The American 'readiness for school' model is based on children acquiring a set of skills prior to formal school, now resonating within the early years curricula. Bingham and Whitebread (2012) argued this influence has split the spectrum of pedagogy and interpretations within the United Kingdom. This has resulted in the early years becoming a preparation stage to meet minimum standards, rather than a child orientated and adult-guided learning approach: diminishing the individual child approach. They stated that:

> the natural learning strategies of young children…are not always encouraged…In England structural standards have been influential…it is often difficult for teachers to practice a curriculum in which young children are free to pursue their own interests and learning agendas. (Bingham and Whitbread, 2012 p.104).

The OECD (2006) suggested this contradictory framework has clouded the purpose of early years education and led to an intense focus on skill acquisition and meeting criterion, referred to as schoolification as noted earlier. This trend has been argued as creating a *'laissez-faire'* approach in the United Kingdom (Bingham and Whitebread (Wood and Hedges, 2016, p.389; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012, p.104), which subsequently influenced an early years framework that lacks attentive design. This results in teaching methods which fail to support holistic child development because teachers lacked the environment and tools that enabled them to provide high quality, planned activities. It could also be argued the drive for assessment and meeting criterion prescribed standards provided education ministers with the security to project a purpose of early years education to society.

At previously noted school readiness was first conceptualised from rhetoric into reality by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) in 1991 as a pedagogical approach for early education (Child Trends, 2012). The NEGP stated their concept of school readiness was multi-dimensional and embraced five dimensions: approaches to learning, social and emotional development, motor development and physical well-being, general knowledge and cognition and language development, inclusive of early literacy. Although this approach has been adopted within the early years statutory framework there is a heightened focus on curriculum, placing emphasis on efficiency which creates a dimension focused on educational output related to ascribing or adding value (Smidt, 2002). It could be concluded early years education within the United Kingdom may be devoid of true pedagogical practices at times by ignoring emphasis within the wider discourse to deliver a unified approach which fuses core pedagogical theory with practice (Bertram and Pascal, 2001).

Research from the *National Child Development Study 1958* (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2014) suggested curriculum and classroom sizes are also important factors within the pedagogical debate. Blair and Raver (2015) contended a core strand of pedagogy is developing self-regulation which can be limited by the current curricula. The current curricula is sequential, directed and led following whole-class approaches (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012; Iacovou, 2001). The essence of this debate is how pedagogues can successfully deliver theory in practice when classroom sizes exceed twenty pupils, and in exceptional circumstances can exceed thirty. The United Kingdom has now been ranked as having the largest classrooms by the OECD (2019) for the first time. Government manifestos have mirrored this on-going class size debate, for example, between 1979 and 1997 Conservative Governments argued against class size impact (Iacovou, 2001), but by 1995 their views assumed a more contradictory approach '*[although] small class sizes are of benefit in the early years of primary education…. reducing class size across the board…is expensive; there is no evidence to justify this'* (Iacovou 2001, p.1). In contrast the Labour Government in 1997 argued '*evidence shows the importance of class size for younger children. Smaller classes at this age*

mean teachers can spend more time identifying…individual needs and difficulties and offering the help children need to master the basics' (Great Britain. Department for Education, 1997, p.18).

Both manifestos received criticism for their methodological approaches and political bias (Bennett, 2001 and Day *et al.,* 1996 cited in Iacovou, 2001). The evidence for and against the argument of class size impact on educational outcomes is equally weighted in formal education, although it is argued smaller class sizes engender a more holistic and pedagogical approach (OECD, 2014). The continued class size debate about draws the discussion back to understanding the purpose of education.

Schooling or Learning?

The combination of schoolification with school readiness suggests a movement toward standardisation, finite outcomes, measuring capabilities and conducting early age assessments (Bayram, 2013a); thus, raising questions pertaining to the purpose of education for two-year-old children amidst the early is better rhetoric (Camarata, 2015; Bingham and Whitbread, 2012). The movement, which underpins the question of whether education is schooling, or learning, can be attributed to neoliberalism which has positioned children as citizens in the making, capable of creating an economic return related to consumerism and productivity (Sims, 2017; Hill, 2006; Foucault, 1982). The impact of neoliberalism on early education supports the ideal citizen rhetoric outlined by Pykett, Saward and Schaefer (2010). By briefly outlining Neoliberalism, and the impact on early education, the following discussion will draw on Freire (1976; 1985; 1988) and Illich (2011) to explore how the current perspective of school readiness interacts with the learning or schooling debate.

Fairclough (2002) discussed a new form of capitalism which restructured and rescaled society in terms of reformation of political and educational fields, creating relational differences affecting lives at local, national and global levels. This is in the same way Bronfenbrenner (1979) discussed the ecological systems interpenetrating and permeating each other. The transformative and relational proliferations gave light to new semiotic inferences concerning knowledge, such as ready or not ready and able or not able, rendering knowledge a commodity. Commodities such as this are exchanged at various levels within society which Fairclough (2002, p.13) called '*technologies of discourse'*, referring to the personification of current semiotic inferences of expert knowledge to restructure workplace practices related to consumption and economic exchange. However, the influence of penetrative and relative power underpinning the social forces of the semiotics bears significant relevance to the identities which are constructed within (Fairclough, 2002).

The relevance of New Capitalism, the use of language and relative power, can be located within the post-war society paralleling an inability, at the time, to manage and control the economic markets and social policies were criticised (Hayek, 1944, cited in Harness, 2016). In the global context, America and the United Kingdom were struggling to create a *'perfect storm'* (Harness, 2016, p.24) wherein the value of New Capitalism paved the way for new thinking to emerge – neoliberalism. Palley (2005) explains the terminology of neoliberalism was borne from Adam Smith and David Ricardo, classical liberal economy theorists, who advocated for advancing the logic of free markets with minimal state intervention. By the 1980's this rhetoric had become dominant to the extent it appeared in speeches by Prime Minister Margret Thatcher and American President Ronald Reagan. For example, Regan referred to *'getting the Government off the back of people'* (Lichtmann, 1980*)* and Margret Thatcher said *'The choice facing the nation is between two totally different ways of life. And what a prize we have to fight for… bring together men and women from all walks of life who share a belief in freedom'* (Hutyra, 2011-2019, no page) both leaders contributed to transforming the citizen concept by applauding individualism (Davies and Bansel, 2007).

Transforming the citizen concept was arguably led by the United States according to Adriany (2018), interestingly also the birthplace for the rhetoric of school readiness we currently recognise in the United Kingdom. The argument calling for a shift from the passive and state dependant citizen is enmeshed within the hegemonic discourse, underpinned by economic and financial markets which manifest within the individual subject who are positioned as *'economic entrepreneurs in their own lives'* (Davies and Bansel, 2007. p.248). This interpretation can be translated as socially actoring a position within society, linked to the work of Goffman (1959) and performing roles which shape our identity. A person's desire to be perceived in a particular way underpins the role they socially actor, as previously discussed in the theoretical framework this is an enactment of the molar line and Deleuze and Guattari's (1984) discussion on the means and order of production. The supposition of choice empowering citizens to become actors, proficient at furthering the interests in favour of their families (Rose, 1999) within the free-market rhetoric, has influenced what it means

to be considered as ideal. This is said to create truths enacted by a new wave of Governmentality (Davies and Bansel, 2007).

The conjecture of Governmentality as a performative action of the neoliberalist turn is said to have *'heightened individualism'* (Davies and Bansel, 2007, p.251) wherein the discourse establishes *'a regime of truth'* (Smith, Tesar and Myers, 2016, p.127). The truth is an entanglement of knowledge, power and techniques which are produced within a multiplicity to regulate the effects of power toward an outcome (Foucault, 1978). Contextualising this perspective, school readiness reflects a regime of truth, its meaning has been co-constructed at various levels such as being part of a political agenda, at local levels within schools enacted by practitioners and legitimised with parents. For example, school readiness has been produced and is regulated as a social norm distributed between the ecological layers affecting a child, circulating statements which endorse the concept's function sustaining its use in society (Foucault, 1978). Moreover, the movement of the school readiness regime of truth to develop children with the capacities and efficacies to become well-informed consumers, within the discourse of human capital, fulfils the ideal citizen rhetoric and creates standardisation (Adriany, 2018; Sims, 2017).

Neoliberalism is said to have created a *'devastating impact'* (Sims, 2017, p.1) on early childhood and education by using language which enforces the truth of school readiness to drive standardisation *'positioning children as investments for future economic productivity'* (Sims, 2017, p.1; Harness, 2016). The language of neoliberal hegemony in education includes *'efficient…effective… inputs and outputs'* enmeshing trajectories of finance and educational standards (Harness, 2016, p.36) and uses teachers and practitioners to influence the sociological construction of the discourse (Robertson, 2007). In doing so the ideological perspective becomes entrenched, creating an element of accountability and regulation via compliance (Davies and Bansel, 2007). As children learn they accept the legitimised truth, arguably a form of symbolic violence

(Bourdieu, 1997), creating a colonised culture within an isomorphic structure, such as ready or not ready, which homogenises knowledge and meaning (Giroux, 2011).

The significance of symbolic violence relates to creating or procuring cultural or educational habitas, which is strongly linked to social class (Bourdieu, 1977). The dichotomy of creating a citizen who will successfully be a consumer and be consumed requires skills and abilities to '*play the game*' (Bathmaker, 2015, p.66), and education has been heralded as a panacea to achieving the desired aims of the state (Hopkins, 2017). However, it has been argued '*to play their part in the neoliberal scenario, the newly responsibilized citizens must be unequivocally middle class*' (Davies and Bansel, 2007, p.252). The issue of social class becomes problematic within the relentless drive toward standardisation, as individuals failing to achieve or reflect the ideal citizen, usually due to inequality, are blamed for not taking advantage of opportunities available to them (Springer, 2010). This reflects a deficit view of families and children, raised as an issue historically by Marotz-Baden *et, al.,* (1979). Positioning families and children as lacking the capacity or desire to become consumers making responsible choices to shape their lifestyles, legitimizes educational interventions such as the two-year-old offer to embed a regime of the truth to necessitate school ready children. This is where the argument of schoolification emerges again and the purpose of education can be unpacked further.

Schoolification has no definition but reflects the early is better approach, shifting practice and routines from formal education to the pre-school environment (OECD). The underpinning motivation is addressing educational inequalities, to better prepare children for formal schooling and to increase children's educational attainment (Clausen, 2015). Whilst the premise of this is reasonable and somewhat admirable, analysis suggests the purpose of early years education becomes nebulous, raising the question whether early education creates a space and environment where children learn or if they are schooled. Illich (2011) argued all social reality has become schooled urging for resistance and a revolution against the state. Illich (2011) argued teaching has become confused with learning, and the same confusion can be seen in other things

such as with qualification and competence, arguing *'learning and the assignment of social roles are melted into schooling'* (Illich, 2011, p.11). A clear message and perspective emerged from the book *Deschooling Society* to rethink learning as intrinsically motivated and scaffolded by others, whereby the attitude toward *'growing up'* should be reconceived (Illich, 2011, p.72). This perspective was echoed by Giroux (2015) when arguing a hidden curriculum exists which creates conformity, shaping the ideal citizen.

Freire (1988) discussed schoolification as the domestication of education, knowledge and pedagogical practice but offered a solution to the false consciousness of concepts, such as school readiness – reflecting a mode of resistance discussed by Illich (2011). Freire's (1985) perspective of society and education reflects the entanglement outlined within the theoretical framework stating, *'to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world'* (Freire, 1988, p.3). Within this entanglement, it could be argued the practitioner plays a role in disrupting thinking to reconceive the isomorphic structure of binary opposites to adopt a more critical view of spaces and objects to create action. Smith, Tesar and Myers (2016) argued this reflexive criticality yields the ability to disrupt power discourses offering up the potential to develop new ideas and create new perspectives (Ang, 2014), producing an affect within the entanglement by negotiating pedagogical space. This thesis is an example of resistance and an action toward change (Freire, 1985) by disrupting the status quo to reconceive the concept of school readiness different to the current isomorphic structure, advocating a need for change.

They're just playing!

Play has been a focal point for educationalists, philosophers and theorists for centuries, working laboriously on defining the concept in relation to childhood and education (Cutter-MacKenzie *et al.,* 2014). The consequence of this has shaped and informed the premise of childhood and the image of a child an individual creates (Malaguzzi, 1993). The act of play dates back to prehistoric times, evidenced by several artefacts still used within today's cultures, including dices, balls, and sticks. In view of this, play has been acknowledged as a universal manifestation (Frost, 2010). Prior to the nineteenth-century child's play was solely considered a method to learn about adult life, mimicking actions and reactions. Although an in-depth historical discussion on why children play is not pertinent to this thesis, a summary of relevant theories will be given in relation to learning and cognitive development.

There is a universal consensus that play is a vital component of learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978; Frost, 2010). Cultural attitudes towards play worldwide have been influenced by educators and scientists, reflecting a temporal and cultural attitude (Frost, 2010). Although presenting a rationale for play has been argued as ambiguous, a cross-cultural analysis highlights how the value of play can differ, and why reaching a consensus is difficult (Sutton-Smith, 2006), especially when substantiating a connection to academic disciplines (Frost, 2010; Moyles, 1989). Equally, historical changes in perspectives have consequently transformed the nature of play (Frost, 2010) and to overcome any ambiguity and avoid '*false explanations or false grandiosity*' Sutton-Smith (2006, p.306) states the cultural rhetoric of play must be clearly outlined prior to any discussion. In doing so I will discuss how play can be compromised in relation to learning and school readiness.

The cultural rhetoric of play

Sutton-Smith (2006) described seven rhetorics of play, each loosely attributed to an activity type for descriptive purposes. For example, fate play is discussed in relation to gambling games and power play is associated with sports. Within this research the rhetoric of play is progress *'applied to children's play, is the advocacy of the notion … children … adapt and develop through their play'* (Sutton-Smith, 2006, p.304). This description matches the universal consensus of play mentioned previously and is strengthened by Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child which aims protects the rights of play. How play is constructed varies widely based on the culture constructing the play rhetoric, which is underpinned by values, beliefs and practices of individuals directly connected to the activity of play. For example, the social interactions, resources and meanings ascribed to the role of play. As a result, Gaskins, Haight and Lancy (2007) described three cultural interpretations of play; curtailed, accepted and cultivated.

Culturally cultivated play is heavily constructed by adults and is used to transmit social routine, norms and values accepted within mainstream society, this aligns with the argument put forward by Bruner (1966) on the cultural reproduction of symbols. It enables children to be socialised with the aim of creating specific developmental outcomes which will support how they make meaning of the world around them, allowing for a process of enculturation to unfold as they become accepted by others (Cronin-Jones, 2010). This dominates the perspective of play within the United Kingdom, a cultural attitude filtering through policies shaping educational standards (Holmes, 2011). There are issues which emerge within culturally cultivated play concerning the realities of provisions stimulating or used in play (Whitebread and Basilio, 2013). Gaskins, Haight and Lancy (2007) explain access to resources, quality of social interactions and the value attributed to play can vastly differ, even within one culture. Although a culturally cultivated rhetoric of play has come to dominate there has been a shift in focus from the act and purpose of play to establishing links with learning and development (Santer, Griffiths and Goodall, 2007). This surfaces in the commitment to

maintaining the provision of play within social policy and statutory frameworks, creating contradictory approaches in practice.

As stated in the opening paragraph of this section, Article 31 relates to a child's right to leisure, play and culture, stipulating:

> Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
>
> Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity. (UNICEF, no date, p.10).

Government responses to the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC) historically failed to address play, it was not until *Every Child Matters* 2003 play was identified as an integral and holistic aspect of children's lives. This influenced a Labour Government review titled *Fair Play*, culminating in the *National Play Strategy* in 2008. The entanglement of Article 31 and the perception of culturally cultivated play (Cronin-Jones, 2000) gained momentum in the Early Years Foundation Stage (2008), which dovetailed the intention and purpose of play with educational outcomes. This perspective of play was reified in the document *Learning, Playing and Interacting Good practice in the Early Years Foundation Stage* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009).

Within the report the child is firmly positioned as an active and powerful learner who has the capacity and agency to play and learn. The introduction of the guidance was aimed at 'demonstrating *how pedagogy, provision and assessment are interwoven',* despite the contradictory statement '*It may not always be clear how these two elements work together'* (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009, p.3). Despite this there was a clear focus on the outcomes of learning, an assessment of a child's capacity to meet the sixty-nine early learning goals stated within the Early Years Statutory Framework (Department for Education, 2008). The dovetailing of learning and play illuminates the contradictory perspectives of what play means.

For example, Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1995) argued play should reflect a period of fun and be child-led which should not be perceived as a binary opposite of work. Yet Briggs and Hansen (2012) discuss play in terms of a tool or resource children can use to progress their development. These perspectives are underpinned by developmental theories and it is at this conjuncture the discussion becomes dichotomised by whether play should be adult-led or child-led (Robson, 2016; Lester and Russell, 2010).

The adult-led versus child-led debate on learning and activities, including affording children opportunities, is long-standing and has been polarised according to Barnett *et al.,* (2008). More recently, Russell, Lester and Smith (2017) drew on a collection of research projects to conclude the child's freedom of choice for resources, access to environments and how they would be used can have the most beneficial effects on a child's development. There has also been a reported consensus a combination of child and adult-led activities also actively contributes to child development (Pascal, Bertram and Rouse, 2019; Whitebread and Coltman, 2015). This suggests there is a potential tension in deciding who should take the lead and when, which formed the impetus for the report *Teaching and play in the early years – a balancing act?* (Ofsted, 2015). Power is nuanced within the title which reflects the writings of Foucault (1980; 1982) and a transversal struggle and dominance of authority, as discussed previously. By applying Foucault (1980; 1982) the placement of teaching before the word play creates a hierarchal system within the title, and the teacher takes a position of privilege. Here play is situated as a resource teachers use to promote or engender teaching toward a goal, echoing an outcome over process approach. This alludes to an interplay of power within the adult child divide, potentially influencing the purpose of education and any associated regimes of truths the educational discourse may create (MacNaughton, 2005).

A tangible link can be identified between the report and my focus on the policy offering '*disadvantaged two-year-olds'* (Ofsted, 2015, p.4) access to early education.   Both steer practitioners and teachers to embed culturally cultivated play in early years practice to perpetrate social norms of getting ready. The objective here is not to lambaste teaching but infrastructure, repetitive contradictory statements in the reports contribute to the discourse of school readiness in a negative way. For example, the findings suggest most of the providers contributing to the report did not regard their time with children as '*teacher-led or child-initiated'* (Ofsted, 2015, p.5), yet a third of the providers repetitively used both terms when specifically discussing play. School readiness erupts within this divide. For example, when discussing which activities would be employed the early years environment and for what purpose it was stated '*approaches to early reading be viewed as the most formal approach to learning...sharply focused teaching sessions'* (Ofsted, 2015, p.6). This was shadowed by '*the adult decides everything; the most productive environment to work in and the range of materials they want children to use so the activity addresses a specific gap in learning'* (Ofsted, 2015, p.10). Directly after this statement the report equated child-initiated activities as rooted in play.

What emerges strongly is the uniting of school readiness with more formal and structured activities via the term adult led. In contrast to this child-initiated play is seen as free-moving, without agenda, experiential and unrestricted. This maps back to the theoretical framework and whether practitioners are being striated by school readiness in spaces, creating a movement of learning along the molar line affecting the distribution of agency and the child's ability to radiate colour. This is not due to the practitioners as people. It can be directly attributed to the constraints of the curriculum that steers the assessment of children against a progressively sequential system to meet prescribed early learning goals, used as a mark of quality. Underpinning this is choice, or more accurately the lack of choice for practitioners or the child to direct learning, cited as Hobson's choice (Leslie and Firth, 1990).

Analysing the rhetoric of play discussion, I have highlighted how play and links to learning are entangled, however it remains clear play is still compartmentalised to either adult-led or child-initiated (McInnes, 2019). It is evident children know and can play with an abundant amount of capacity and do so where and whenever they can create a space (Russell, Lester and Smith, 2017). What the literature does reveal is that there is less said about how motivated the adult is to play without being guided by outcomes or for the purpose of assessment. Moreover, it is worth noting adults, like children, are inherently playful beings (McInnes, 2019; James and Nerantzi, 2019). Proyer (2012) found recognising the capacity to be a playful adult can yield more beneficial outcomes in all facets of our lives including enjoyment, well-being, academic achievements, positivity, creativity, and spontaneity and life satisfaction. Some, if not all, these factors were previously identified historically by Fredrickson (2001; 1998). This raises the question of how playful the practitioners in this study might be, and whether this has an affect in the entanglement with the child and the environment and shaping the trajectory of school readiness. The entanglement is unpacked further in the next section.

The entanglement

Reading child development theories put forward by Piaget (1951), Bruner (1957), Vygotsky (1978) and Bronfenbrenner (1979), in conjunction with New materialism and Posthumanism, highlights significant themes which influences how practitioners might be entangled with children in more-than-human ways. A critical interrogation of entanglements demonstrates the complexity of the term and evidences the significance for this study. Some of the philosophical influences are discussed within this section, but they are not used as a conceptual lens. I will draw on them to demonstrate rhizomatic connections which affect the rhizome of school readiness and create an affect within entanglements. For example, the impact of language is central to identifying and labelling children as ready or not ready, potentially impacting on professional practice. This could also affect the way a practitioner attunes to a child.

Language has the potential to impact the distribution of agency and the child, influencing how they might embody their identity (Vygotsky, 1978). This can be linked to the work of Wittgenstein (1922) and his two discontinuous philosophical perspectives of language, in relation to constructing meaning. In Wittgenstein's (1922) offerings he stated language is not only verbal communication, which presents a truth or a totality of facts, but it also included a wealth of meanings that a formed preverbally, which is thereafter conveyed in the way we use language in time and space where anything is possible. In his work Wittgenstein (1922) reduces the object that is under construction in spaces to behaviour. It is at this point I acknowledged the introduction of Wittgenstein's philosophy could be considered offensive (reflected in Deleuze and Parnet, 1977), nevertheless I argue Wittgenstein's interpretation of language, as a limit within an event, serving as an entry point for Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy (1994; 1987) to attune to the mattering of the unseen elements of language.

The reality of phenomena such as school readiness emerges, beginning preverbally within society. Stern (1998) argued as we transition between preverbal and verbal states there is a gradual acquisition of meaning, fostered through attunement (Bowlby, 1980). Rooted in child-parent relationships, attunement is described as '*performance of behaviours that express the quality of feeling of a shared affect state without intimating the exact behavioural expression of the inner state*' (Stern, 1998, p.142). This transitional phase, in relation to the child's development, links to the work of Winnicott (1960). This particularly relates to how children continue to construct meaning and embody their identity when separated from their most important or significant other. The embodiment of the child's identity occurs within a space, which is comprised of various matrices which yield an affective capacity (Lara, 2017). The affective capacity within the entanglement is discussed in relation to a social struggle and incorporates an element of temporality (Blackman and Venn, 2010). This understanding of affect and the entanglement can be traced back to Bergson's philosophy (2001), and thereafter in Deleuzian traditions which have set the premise for New Materialism and Posthumanism as outlined in Chapter Two (Deleuze, 1993; Bennett, 2010; Coole and Frost, 2010; Barad, 2007).
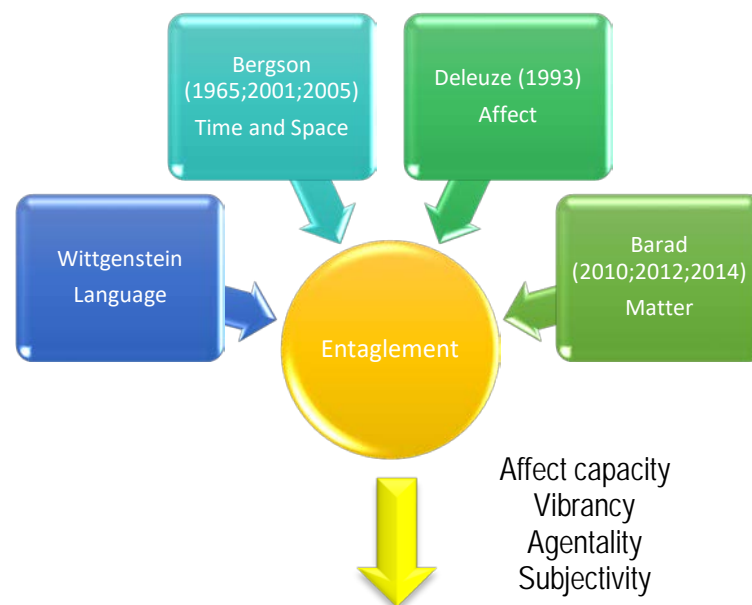
Figure 25.

Contributing theories surfacing from the entanglement and the implications for the becoming child.

The themes emerging from the brief, but critical disruption of literature (*Figure 25*), can be used to articulate how children multi-modally communicate their environments, attunement and affordances they are exposed to and also how links between home and school can be maintained. For example, through the use of transitional objects. These themes will be discussed in isolation as part of a fragmentary whole, as outlined within the theoretical framework, but are understood as forming part of the child's rhizome and becomings within entanglements to avoid being oedipalized (Murris, 2016). These themes form the basis of the forthcoming sections of this chapter beginning with multi-modal communication, titled as bodies in communication.

Bodies in communication

Aside from verbal communication, as noted earlier, another important aspect of becoming a socially competent human is learning how to communicate non-verbally (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). Skills include hand gestures, eye gaze, facial expressions, touch, posture, physical appearance, non-verbal vocalisations and smell. These skills are acquired throughout childhood and express the child's knowledge and understanding of the world, and the spaces they inhabit at any time *'providing an invaluable window in which to see children's social, emotional and cognitive development'* (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003, p.9). A practitioner's ability to foster an environment which takes account for nonverbal communication together with and the skills to respond can have a profound effect on a child's mood, their effective relationships and their cognitive development (Bambuterol, 2017). Understanding and respecting nonverbal communication emphasises the need to 'turn to notice' the child and how they communicate within their environments. Doherty-Sneddon (2003) argued a practitioner's failure to acknowledge expressions and forms of communication increase the risk of underestimating the child's abilities.

Kim, Roth and Thom (2011) used metaphysical perspectives of knowledge, which separates the body and mind, to argue knowledge should not be perceived as a pure or disembodied function. There is a metaphorical and metonymical process which culminates in our linguistic communication that stimulates the body to speak (Kim, Roth and Thom, 2011). It is within interactive environments and communicative spaces embodied action emerges and knowledge is co-constructed via touching, feeling and holding objects and using imagination within spaces and environments (Kim, Roth and Thom, 2011). The relationship between gesture and speech has shown that both are communicative tools which establish problem solving and reasoning (Roth and Thom, 2011; Cook and Goldwin-Meadow, 2006; Goldwin-Meadow, 2004) which can be drawn upon within the formal classroom environment to support learning and development. Interestingly Nemirovsky *et al.,* (2004) argued failing to understand and notice embodied communication renders singular assessments of written or verbal communication an unreliable indicator of a child's knowledge.

Children express their experiences via embodied communication, by using their bodies and movement to support their meaning making process (Egan, 1987). This perspective reflects the phenomenological notion of embodiment which perceives the body as lived and expressed, which can be influenced and influence (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This reflects the philosophical notion of affective capacities discussed within the theoretical framework. During spaces in time children use their embodied communication to articulate their agency and autonomy, a colourful sensation, to express themselves by connecting to their lived experiences (Mindell, 1985). As children draw on their surroundings, they channel their meaning to others through relational, visual, proprioception, kinaesthetic and auditory channels which climax with their own world phenomenon (Mindell, 1985). Gendlin (1997) called this the felt sense, a form of internalised bodily awareness as a body-to-mind-sensing prior to any conscious awareness.

Reading the works of Gendlin (1997) reveals the felt sense and the practice of focusing can be directly linked to entanglements of the environment, practitioner and child to support or facilitate meaning making in an embodied and experiential way. For example, Jordan (2016) stated the ability of focusing is both creative and profound which involves listening to what our inner feelings are telling us. This suggests in the early years practitioners could use the expressed felt senses of children, such as a sigh or an eye roll, during the entanglement to create an intra-action-reaction. In doing so the practitioner could scaffold the child's bodily response or body in communication to develop their symbolisation. Scaffolding in this way would support their making meaning to engender learning beyond the 'simply me', reflecting a relational ontology and the importance of how more-than-human matter matters (Jordan, 2016). Gendlin (1981) discussed the felt sense and the art of focusing by likening it to a camera focusing on a situation or object, creating a clear picture as the lens moves. This is a reflection of 'turning to notice' the child and the other sensations to invest in creative learning opportunities emanating from disruptions and cracks (Gendlin, 1981; Braidotti, 1997).

Turning to notice the felt senses returns the discussion to the work of Doherty-Sneddon (2003) and understanding how children use non-verbal communication to articulate their understanding of the world. A body in communication using nonverbal methods, such as gesture or gaze, is underpinned by intentionality and the intention of the child to share information with another person (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). However, the adult's reaction to the offering up of information within a social environment should be to attune to the body in communication and offer a response to acknowledge and scaffold learning (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003; Vygotsky, 1962; Piaget, 1959). Lewis (1955) regarded this as a secret language, which some adults fail to understand or even acknowledge. However, this could reflect historical child perspectives. Lewis (1955) reifies the entanglement of child developmental theories and the works of Gendlin (1981) by arguing anyone who connects or entangles with children under the age of five influences development and should attune to the body in communication and respond likewise.

The literature suggests children can strongly articulate their meanings and experiences in many ways, by drawing heavily on nonverbal means as previously mentioned (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). As we observe children and attune to their bodies in communication, we can make visible the lived experiences they share as they create sensations. Gendlin (1981) further suggests the interaction of the adult with the body in communication must recognise any means of communication and value the method of sharing in their practice. This raises the question of how practitioners within this study practice the intra-action-reaction when entangled with children in settings. Interestingly the intra-action-reaction is tentatively implied in the early years review, evidenced in the statement '*When working with young children, the exchange between adults and children should be fluid, moving interchangeably between activities initiated by children and adult responses helps build the child's learning and understanding*' (Tickell, 2011, p.29). This turns the discussion to focus on spaces where communication and entanglements occur, forming the basis of the next section.

A timely space

The effects of an environment on a child's learning and their development have been extensively researched, emphasising benefits and impacts (Piaget, 1959; Aubrey and Riley, 2019, Bilton, 1996; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Current understandings of the environmental impact on brain development, and therein learning is underpinned by studies involving animals, but there is a complexity attributed to defining what is good, enriched or enabling (Penn, 2011).   However, it is concluded the socio-constructivist approach to learning, as outlined by the Department for Education (2012), relies on an environment which is conducive to learning wherein playing and learning are equally positioned (Basford and Bath, 2014; Broadhead, 2006; Claxton and Carr, 2004; Soler and Miller, 2003). Linking this to the conceptual and theoretical framework for this would suggest the environment forms an integral element of the entanglement, with an affective capacity within the context of more-than-human matter as children draw on materiality to gain agency and demonstrate their autonomy.

In *Development Matters* (Early Education, 2012) the word environment is mentioned eighty-four times, cited as one of three key elements conducive to learning and development.   Moylett (2014) explained an environment must challenge the child but equally attune to their interests and their experiences to meet the needs of the unique child. This suggests developing enabling environments requires careful facilitation. It has also been argued learning environments should facilitate uninterrupted spaces and times so the child can immerse themselves in their activities and learn independently (Woods, 2013).   Stevens (2013) suggested the environment should be resourced using real-life equipment, such as toasters or blankets, to provide a sensory aspect of learning which can be used to engage or attune to the child, instead of plastics or consumer orientated products. The use of real-life objects or loose parts can also aid the development of language for young children, such as two-year-olds according to Brodie (2018). This is reflected in the Early Years Statutory Framework (2017) guidance material which states an enabling environment will be resourced

to reflect children's cultures and their communities, provide rich opportunities for learning in a child's play by using playful teaching and that the environment should facilitate exploration and risky play.

Directly attributable to this study, and turning to notice, the guidance explicitly states adults should *'Notice what arouses children's curiosity, looking for signs of deep involvement to identify learning that is intrinsically motivated'* (Early Education, 2012, p.6). However, the inference of noticing is heavily weighted toward the child and the word notice appears fifteen times in relation to the child's capacity to achieve an outcome. Moving beyond the onus of noticing, the premise of the child and teacher co-constructing learning adds a further element to the entanglement. This trifecta of human and non-human matter can be linked to the smooth and striated spaces discussed within the theoretical framework as a means of disrupting, destabilising normative discourses of what it is to be school ready, to think otherwise, which creates an inquisitive space between matter and meaning (Taylor and Medina, 2013). This provides the thick descriptions described by Geertz (1973) and Mills, Durpos and Wiebe (2010) to allow a child's voice to emerge within an inquisitive space in a new way (Spyrou, 2018). The culmination of recognising the child as nomadically moving within the spaces, the flux and the flow, between matter and meaning can be directly linked back to environments and the structuring of early years spaces two-year-old children inhabit.

According to Brodie (2018), the flow of the environment, room or space is extremely important and is directly affected by the placement of equipment and resources whether permanent or temporary. This ties to the points raised by Moylett (2014), but Brodie (2018) expanded on this further, expressing that careful consideration of the environment and the resources directly reflect a practitioner's strengths and their interests. Brodie (2018) reasoned the physicality and structures of buildings can cause limitations and physically restrict the nomadic movements of children in a fluid and non-linear way, between and within the resources, proposing preconceived environments potentially strait the agentic vibrancy children radiate as practitioners continuously assess the child in relation to homogenising discourses (Testing and Standards

Agency, 2018). This is exemplified in the statement '*Plan the room by considering how the children will use the space*' (Brodie, 2018, p.196). A critical analysis suggests the practitioner's perspective of the child or their own habitus directly informs how they equip and structure the playful environment, and the value they attribute to non-human matter.

The competence of any practitioner is critical when implementing the curriculum alongside constructing an environment which is a content-rich or a shared space according to Hayes and O'Neil (2019). The criticalness emerges in relation to being afforded with space and having an attuned practitioner who can scaffold learning to achieve the state of a masterful learner (Haynes, 2007). This defines the entanglement as a process of fluid knowledge and positions the child as an active creator equally as competent as the adult to make decisions and choices. This suggests the child should be valued in terms of their autonomy and social agency within early years education, to acknowledge the rights of the child as outlined by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child. These implications link back to attuning to the voices of children and furnishing them with the capacity and communicative spaces to enact agency and make sense of their identity. Overlooking these can be attributed to power discourses which strait the practitioner and the child, serving to reaffirm their being as subject and object (Foucault, 1980).

Recognising or accepting the voice of the child is an issue I previously discussed within the conceptual framework and is reflected in literature in relation to semantics, impacting on ambiguity and value (Spyrou, 2017; St. Pierre, 2010). For example, attention is drawn to the wording within investigative studies which state agendas for change are cited as '*giving voice to children…eliciting voice of children…making children's voices heard*' (Hohti and Karlsson, 2014, p.548). However, this suggests privilege is bestowed upon a child by the adult to elevate their status, permitting access to rights they are entitled to. This signifies boundaries are demarked and that access beyond them is policed and can be linked to modulations and enclosures. This is highlighted again by Hohti and Karlsson (2014) who state schools and educational systems are

resistant to change and that professional practice controls and manages the autonomy of learners. It is also argued educational spaces are dominated by the educator's voice, challenging the notion of equality (Myhill and Dunkin, 2005).

More concerning is insights from Spyrou (2017) regarding the practitioner's voice in relation to disclosing the child's voice, namely that it is shaped and influenced by the cultural and institutional norms to project a discourse. Therefore, researchers should use literature to inform their practice and be mindful of external influences shaping practice. In doing so we can uncover authentic voices, by turning to notice and recognising the active and agentic forces within the entanglement. This implies there is integral importance for developing attunement and attachment in early years practice (Bowlby, 1980). In relation to this study this would mean seeing voice that shares a lived experience of school readiness of human and more-than-human matter. I will pick this point up again in the section titled 'The two-year-old child' on page 136 after a further exploration of developmental theorizations. In the next section I will discuss attunement.

Attunement.

Attunement is more than being in tune with the needs of a child. According to Brodie (2018), it reflects an interpersonal and emotional interaction. It is a moment of harmony and reflects a dance in time and space, creating flux and flow of nonverbal interaction and reaction, creating a somatic foundation for children as they reach the age of three (Boadella, 2005). The nonverbal dialogue incorporates touch, eye contact, empathetic resonance and tone of voice which impinge on the body and the brain. This affords the child the capacity to form an emergent identity and their intersubjectivity. This is an internal working model which can be linked back to the work of Bowlby (1980). The dance and the movement are reflected in the child and adult's ability to create a shared emotion, wherein the adult can recognise the child's emotional state and then symbolise this back providing validation (Brodie, 2018). The attuned intra-actions provide the opportunity for the development of emotional regulation, which are linked to behaviours and can develop a sense of belonging (Stern, 1998).

The importance of attunement lies not in what is said but how it is said, epitomised within the statement *'body language can say so much more for young children than the actual words'* (Dowling, 2014, p.45). This testifies to the importance of practitioners understanding how children might communicate their experiences nonverbally, or how they might internalise symbols of school readiness which create an affect on their subjectivity. Winnicott (1967) found facial gestures are a vehicle to convey meaning in spaces where language achieves dominances. The faces expressive capacity is directly linked to forms of communication to convey the meaning of a material subject or object, which children achieve by reading facial gestures (Wright, 2009) such as identifying singularities as discussed in Chapter Two. Wright (2009) uses the example of being in foreign countries to articulate the impact facial gestures have on conveying meaning, arguing in these situations we become *'infas'* (Wright, 2009, p.103) and reach an agreed meaning without the use of verbal communication. Therefore, meaning is inextricably linked to situations and perceptions in time, which Wittgenstein (1958) called perspicuous presentation, using a picture to gesticulate his meaning (*Figure 26*).

Welche Thiere gleichen ein-
ander am meisten?
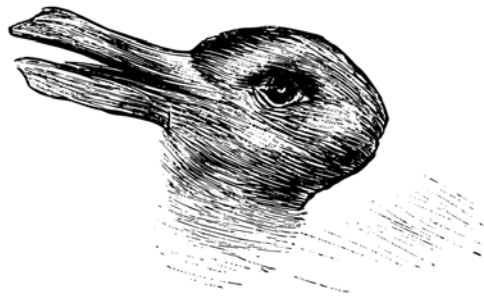
Kaninchen und Ente.

Figure 26.

Is it a duck or a rabbit? Perspicuous presentation used by Wittgenstein. What you see in the picture will depend upon how the images have been gestured to you and then internalised during your development and meaning making.

Used by Wittgenstein (1953) the perceptually equivocal picture was used to illustrate perception and interpretation. Wittgenstein (1953) demonstrated the picture can be seen as either a duck or rabbit but cannot be seen as both simultaneously. How we interpret our perception of the illustration at any one time is influenced by our awareness of concepts, language, our experiences and our historical being in the world. What this means is how one person perceives the illustration at any one time will be based on their cultural and historical background and the influences within their ecological systems. Therefore, when we problematize concepts, such as school readiness, and then perpetuate the discourse our interpretation and perception will be fundamentally shaped and influenced by our life experiences and affordances to date (Gibson, 1966). As a result, the child's lived experiences of school readiness will reflect their cultural capital and illuminate the affective capacity this has within the entanglement. Another element directly linked to this is the practitioner's perspective and interpretation of the child which may influence their practice. This has been directly linked to the relationships between the child and the significant other, which is where I now turn.

Attachment

Bowlby (1973; 1980; 1982) and Ainsworth *et al.,* (1971; 1978) theorised attachment and security in children, most commonly cited as Attachment Theory. Using the premise of how animals used distinctive signs of distress, Bowlby (1982; 1973) drew comparisons with children separated from their mother or dominant care figure. Bowlby (1982) identified desiring, clinging or crying behaviours as attachment and instinctive behaviours of human nature, concluding a healthy mental state that can foster emotional intelligence is founded in a consistent, secure and warm relationship between the mother-like figure and the child. This is achieved via four distinctive phases. Stage one includes the importance of gesturing and limited selectivity between birth and three months old. The gesturing includes a variety of behaviours including smiling, babbling or crying and desiring or clinging. During phase one the child's selectivity is limited and the child will respond to everyone in the same way as they will with the mother-like figure. Their joyful or pleasure stimulating behaviours kindle and promote a loving relationship whilst their distress behaviours help the child to maintain proximity (Bowlby, 1973; 1980; 1982).

Bowlby (1973; 1980; 1982) states the second phase concentrates the child's focus toward familiar people between the ages of three and six months old, in which the social interactions become more selective. During this phase, the child will begin to develop a preference for two or three people they are attached to, but a strong attachment will develop with only one person, known as the preferred individual. The preferred individual is cited as the person most alert and attuned to the child's signals, and the person who responds most to their joyful and pleasurable behaviours. The intensity of a child's attachment and their control of the proximal connection emerges during the third stage, between the ages of six months and three years. Separation anxiety and a fear of unfamiliar environments or persons emerge more distinctly during this stage, where distress behaviours are used more frequently as the child develops a working model of their preferred individual. In the final stage, from aged three onward, the child's primitive focus is on maintaining a proximal connection to the preferred individual and satisfying their intrinsic needs.

The notion of separation anxiety bears a significant relevance to this thesis as the child transitions from the home and their mother-like figure to an early years environment, between the third and final stages of their attachment. In accompaniment to his works on attachment Bowlby (1980) discussed separation in terms of three phases; protesting, despairing and detachment. Each phase incorporated specific distress behaviours. For example, protesting involves screaming or crying for the preferred individual, despair reflects a period of grief which is displayed as becoming withdrawn or quiet, and detachment involves integration in the environment and or accepting care from others. The notion of separation anxiety was underpinned by the concept of imprinting, creating a secure base or referential point for the child (Bowlby, 1982). Interrogating the work of Bowlby (1973; 1980; 1982) Bretheron (1992) concluded attachment theory disrupted previous notions of the mother/child relationship in relation or response to deprivation and separation by firmly positioning attachment as a healthy function which supports transitions for the child through to adulthood. This raises the question of practitioner knowledge on attachment and the stage the two-year-old child is experiencing as they ultimately crossing a phase not experienced by a majority of three or four-year-olds.

Ainsworth *et al., (*1971) extended the work of Bowlby (1973; 1980; 1982) firmly positioning the preferred individual or mother as a secure base. Using the Strange Situation test Ainsworth *et al.,* (1971) identified the child was more likely to adapt and explore new environments when the preferred individual was in a proximal range. The rationale underpinning this assertion stems from the preferred individual and child interaction which is fostered during the first three stages of Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1973). Three attachment styles emerged from the research and Ainsworth *et al.,* (1971; 1973) concluded the most beneficial style of the preferred individual is secure. As a result of the secure style the child will explore and exhibit joyful behaviours when the secure base is present in a strange situation with unfamiliar others. They will also exhibit distress behaviours when the secure base is no longer in sight, and when they reappear the child will actively and positively reaffirm the attachment and proximity. The relevance of attachment directly relates to the key person approach used within early years settings (Department for Education, 2017). Here the key person can support the child to transition by drawing on their secure base to establish a firm attachment within the

new environment. Emotions in early years are linked to transitions as the child moves between home and the school environment. This is explored further in the next section.

Transitions

As the two-year-old child begins nursery or a preschool setting this denotes a transitional period, and the term frames a fluid period of change which encompasses a social process of discontinuity, as the child physically moves from one state to another – home to setting (Webb, Knight and Bush, 2017). During the transition, the child will experience significant adjustments, both psychological and cultural which influence and impact their cognitive, social and emotional capacities (Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008). The influence and impact of this can be directly attributed to the radiation or loss of colour I put forward within the colourful sensation section in Chapter Two. How the practitioner attunes to the child during their transition can also impact on their social agency as they are active agents within the process of transition, and have the right to be respected and equally supported by taking in to account experiences (Uprichard, 2008).

As the child transitions from home to early education, their readiness proliferates through the ecological systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Piaget, 1959) which will and be influenced and affected by how they are perceived (Vygotsky, 1978). Ultimately, their ability to transition successfully will result in the label of school ready or not school ready. The transition from home to early education is cited as a vertical transition, described as an *'upward shift'* (Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008, p.2). The upward shift is described by Van Gennep (2010) as a specific rite of passage which comprises of three specific stages; pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal. Although this research is focusing on the latter two it is important to discuss all three as they describe the whole transitional period. More importantly the transitional processes have received lesser attention than other educational processes, such as learning literacy, yet transitions *'crucially and continuously shape children's experiences and…central in shaping children's life trajectories'* (Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008, p.2).

The pre-liminal stage is preparational and links to sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Within this stage, the parents, caregivers or practitioners prepare the child to separate from their dominant environment using play and communication to disseminate a routine to guide and scaffold the child through the transition (Woods and Pollard, 1988). This would suggest parents and practitioners should be competent in preparing children for change, with the capacity and knowledge to expedite the nature of the transition to the child by using their interest to stimulate the child as an active agent. This is integral as Dockett and Perry (2004) argued there can be a disconnect for many parents and children within the home school community, which directly impacts on their child sense of security, well-being and their sense of belonging during transition. A further link to language can be identified here surrounding the discourse of the disadvantaged child the two-year-old offer aims to target. Practitioners may affect the entanglement based on pre-conceived cultural norms, developed over time in relation to social policy, directly impacting how they perceive the child and their capacity to learn (Levin and Arluke, 1982).

The liminal stage directly relates to the child's physical movement between the home and school environment and their integration within the new setting (Van Gennep, 2010). This is when the child could be becoming-school ready, the transitional phase this research focuses on in particular the child's experience. The liminal stage draws heavily on Piaget's (1959) theoretical assertions of child development and the states of equilibrium and disequilibrium. Although the development discourse which underpinned Piaget's (1959) theory, specifically the notion of readiness at a particular age, has received critique (Reflected in Scott-Little, Kagan and Frelow, 2006) it remains useful. During this stage of transition the child will develop a specific schematic play to represent their current understanding of change, and as they begin to assimilate within the new world or their disequilibria. They will continue using their schema until they achieve re-equilibrium within the setting (Lourenco and Machado, 1996). The child's transformation is rooted in a progressive, psychological shift creating a personal and crucial reference point (Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008).

Disrupting the current logic and realities to reposition school readiness as a mode of successfully scaffolding a transition at any age creates an entry point for developmentally appropriate practice to emerge. This lays the foundations for an entanglement of developmental psychology and socio-cultural theory within the ecological system, cited as a guided participation approach (Rogoff, 1990). This is an extension of Vygotskian (1978) theory on proximal development to progress communication and practical activities which encourage the child's development based on their culture. Within this approach, the child and the adult are equally valued, and it reflects the dissolution of the subject and object boundaries. When this approach is established the child is perceived and accepted as an active agent, prenatally and beyond (Rogoff, 1990). This exemplifies why school readiness has now been cited as one of the three critical objectives outlined in the publication of *'First 1000 days of life'* (House of Commons, 2019). However, achieving this perspective wherein a trifecta of the child, home and school can be mobilised within the guided participation approach would require the current curriculum to be revisited and revised to reflect a spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960),

By facilitating a change in practice and the curriculum during the liminal stage of the child's transition, in juxtaposition to re-evaluating the status of the child, the practitioner and the parent can have a significant impact on the post-liminal stage and societal perceptions of school readiness. Lam and Pollard (2006) stated the post-liminal stage is reached when the child has successfully adapted to the new environment and their identity has changed to reflect their new position, such as an active learner. Literature also discusses reaching the post liminal stage as a border crossing within a rite of passage (Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008). This means the child can shift and adapt their identity between two domains to competently socially actor several roles, so the child is no longer *'betwixt and between'* (Turner, 1995, p.95). Conroy (2004) argued achieving this status in education is underpinned by the practitioner and the affordances provided for the children. For example, the role of the practitioner is to facilitate a space for the child to develop their critical thinking in order to challenge the status quo, achieved by creating or providing experiences that allow for the autonomy to be valued. This exemplifies the process over outcome approach and places educational experiences as the conduit to learning and becoming (Bruner, 1961). Supporting the transitional period, in

particular reaching the post-liminal stage and affording experiences, links back to the work of Bottrill (2018) and discussions on environment. In addition to this part transitional objects emerge in relation to security in the absence of the mother or significant other. The use and importance of transitional objects will be explored in the next section.

Transitional Objects

During distinct phases of change, or during transitions, it has been argued some children come to rely on transitional objects as a means to provide security and a sense of emotional protection during a time of deprivation (Fortuna *et al.,* 2014). The use of the transitional object is regarded as reflecting a high level of socioemotional development and sense of identity (Passman, 1987; Donate-Bartfield and Passman, 1985). The term transitional object and transitional phenomenon were theorised by Winnicott (1953) regarding a child's separation from their mother or their attachment figure as a substitution in their absence. Winnicott (1953, p.1) described a transitional object as the first 'not-me' possession that reflects an external reality by creating an illusionary experience, generating its own unique value to the child. The use of a transitional object begins in infancy but can extend throughout childhood, it might be accompanied by a specific behaviour pattern linked to schematic behaviours (Nutbrown, 2011), such as thumb sucking or rubbing a tag on the face whilst self-soothing. Together they provide reassurance during unfamiliar situations.

Parents and children have reverently linked the use of transitional objects to a variety of emotional states, arguing the use of the object provides an element of control and facilitates a communicative space free from condemnation or reprisal (Triebacher, 1996; Lehman *et al.,* 1995). Passman (1987) found transitional objects are particularly beneficial when a child enters a horizontal or vertical transition, beyond providing comfort or security. The study found when a child has a transitional object, they are more likely to explore and engage with unfamiliar surroundings which supports their successful adjustment (Passman, 1987). This assertion is supported by Steier and Lehman (2000) in response to anxious or fearful situations, they concluded more than two-thirds of children in their study relied on transitional objects in the absence of the significant caregiver. In relation to early educational settings these findings were maintained by Triebenbacher and Tegano (1993), arguing in educational environments connectivity to transitional objects becomes heightened and incurs or produces more ritualistic behaviours, including rubbing or touching the object more abundantly.

Fortuna *et al.,* (2014) also found children who spend full days in early education the attachment to a transitional object becomes more pronounced.

The research findings support Winnicott's (1953) assertion that the use of a transitional object is relational and has a precursory function for the child, commonly from birth. The transitional object serves a purpose to move the child from an illusory and omnipotent state to establishing a firm sense of self and an embodied identity as they *'distinguish between fantasy and fact, inner and outer, similarity and difference'* (Winnicott, 1972, p.112). However, Praglin (2006) probed the work of Winnicott (1953) regarding transitional objects and the notion of *'between'* spaces (Winnicott, 1953, p.8) concluding it is ultimately the responsibility of the adult within the child's proximity that directly impacts the transitional stage and its success, by allowing the child to indulge in fantasy without question. The importance of transitional objects has also been explored in animated films for children, with a recent example being the introduction of Forky (*Figure 27*) in *Toy Story 4* (2019). Forky is a girl's transitional object which must be retrieved at all costs.

Figure 27.

Forky is a transitional object which appears in *Toy Story 4* (2019) an animated film directed by Josh Cooley.

Direct links to practice can also be made. Cahn (2019), an early years practitioner, observed the use of specific objects by a child in his setting, directly used them to attune to the reaction of this intra-action resulting in the publication of *Umar* (Cahn and Pukes, 2019) (*Figure 28*).

Figure 28.

Umar (Cahn and Pukes, 2019) is a book which describes how a two-years-old's transitional object has been used to create learning opportunities for a child in an early years setting. The book contains advice and guidance for practitioners and parents on several aspects of child development which stem from the child.

The narrative reflects on the child's transitional journey and the between state at the end of the book, identifying Umar's love of keys as a transitional object. The author describes a reflexive moment which has inspired him to see things differently when working with two and three-year-old children, testifying a 'turn to notice' in his practice. The story narrates how the keys were used to help Umar develop his executive functioning and self-regulation by building on schematic play using the keys. The story and the contextualised afterword explain Umar was able to exhibit emotional intelligence and created critical moments for other children, creating a unique opportunity for Cahn (2019) to create communicative spaces which react instantly to the child's interest, reifying the here and now. The importance of transitions and transitional objects raises the question of whether objects seen as important within the discourse of school readiness and how they might be used to gain agency.

The use of transitional objects can be further likened to the use of artefacts in children's play. Hennig and Kirova (2012, p.226) explain artefacts can be seen within play episodes as a link to a particular cultural practice, including *'singing while doing housework'* as means to mediate their own learning. In particular the use of artefacts in this way helps the child to circumnavigate the two identities they have developed as they become acculturated within the school environment. This is underpinned by the competing forces between the child's home life and their school life. In the ability to navigate these worlds the child becomes able to develop and exercise agency. This links to classroom resources, to question who decided upon the resources and why, and, more importantly what is their cultural perspective or habitas which results in the classroom environments becoming *'loaded with values'* (Bang (2009, cited in Hennig and Kirova, 2012, p.229). The use of artefacts in play was also highlighted by Vygotsky (1978). In his theorizations of the affordances pretend play provides Vygotsky (1978) found the ability of the child to recreate real life events during their imaginary play resulted in higher mental processing. This was due to the child playing with the assigned meanings of objects, which Leontiev (1981) calls a leading activity. The capacity to exercise agency, circumnavigate identities and use artefacts in support of new experiences suggest a model of the child at odds with some previously existing constructions of childhood. This leads me to question what it is to be a two-year-old child, which is explored in the next section.

The Child

Despite advances in recognising the child as an autonomous social agent with affective capacities some historical influences can still be seen (Crain, 1995). To understand how the childhood was interpreted historically this section will provide a brief overview using two influential theorists Locke (1922) and Rousseau (1762). The introductory overview demonstrates how the child, within constructions of childhood, has consistently been viewed within the subject object divide. Breaking away from dominant discourses creates an entry point for a becoming-otherwise perspective, disrupting the status quo with the potential to affect professional practice.

Looking back

Perceptions of the child and of childhood have changed over time with many differing perspectives (Reynolds, 2014). A perspective put forth by Locke (1693), an English doctor and philosopher, is grounded in intelligibility, responsibility and education. Locke (1693) argued the child is born a blank slate, a tabula rasa, gaining knowledge and meaning from sensory experiences. This was based on repetition, imitation, punishment, or reward. This regarded the moral development of the child in supremacy to their educational development, pushing the nurture of the child first and foremost (Craic, 2005). This perspective of children concerning education is not without criticism. Freire (1985) argued this moralistic, instructional form of teaching reflected what he coined as the Banking Concept of Education. Freire's (1985) concept argued children were situated as receptacles metaphorically filled with knowledge by adults or teachers as a passive process, which reflects the adult's perception of what is important and what should be learned. This approach to teaching, and positioning the child as passive, stifles their creativity and moves learning away from the child's intrinsic interests, maintaining an adult gaze (Murris, 2016).

Locke (1693, Section1) said '*The little, and almost insensible impressions on our tender infancies, have very important and lasting consequences'*. In Locke's (1963) argument the adult is integral, and he identified how children experience education and who delivers education will have a lasting impact. Although the quotation was intended with a positive tone it leaves a space for a negative impact to emerge, suggesting the perception of the child held by the adult is still important as this creates an interplay with their educational experience. Further analysis arguably positions the child as active within the process of learning through resisting normative processes, illuminating inconsistencies in his writings (reflecting Russell, 1945). More notably, Locke's (1693) argument for learning to be contextualised to enable the child to identify the relevance of the subject, is contrary to the need to instruct and develop the child to a preordained perspective which also alludes to the child as an active learner.   Locke (1693) also proposed children learn sequentially, mastering one topic before moving on to another, linking his ideas with later Piagetian theories (1959) (Craic, 2005).

A perspective of the child as an active learner, proficient in creating their own capabilities was presented by Rousseau (1979). His construction of childhood was a forceful move opposing social norms as the singular marker to develop or guide the child, arguing education and learning stem from a trifecta of the environment, people and things – which I interpret as including non-human matter. Rousseau's (1979) analysis of historical perspectives argued the child was always becoming man and society was fixated on how the child could be developed to become adult. This poses the rhetorical question of whether education is "*making a man or making a citizen*" (Rousseau, 1979, p.39) which can be linked back to neoliberalism. Moreover, children have a unique way of sensing the world and develop their own capacities educationalists need to stop and notice the child and their being in the world as stated in the argument society '*always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he is man*' (Rousseau, 1762, p.1).

This perspective positions the child as curious, with an abundant capacity to learn which is directly influenced by their experiences and senses (Rousseau, 1762). The child, largely by their own capacity, develops their language and grammar which can rival an adult by instinctively employing grammatical rules; even if mistakes are made the child can correct this over time. This influenced other theories outlined by Vygotsky (1978) and Chomsky (2015). The child begins to develop a sense of independence and learns how to walk, feed, and explore the world through '*autonomous discovery*' (Bertram, 2018). A sense of reasoning and meaning making emerges which is linked to their bodily movements and senses; their being in a space of time proprioceptively. Analysing Rousseau's (1762) approach to learning and his perspective of the child endorses a developmentally appropriate approach underpinned by experiential learning (Neuman, 2000).

However, it would be simplistic to provide and critique various chronological perspectives on the constructions of the child and childhood as this would strait the discussion to merely provide a mode of analysis which is linear and does not reflect the aims of the research. By diffractively reading literature about school readiness and therein constructions of childhood present the opportunity to disrupt historical

perceptions. This point is given credence from Malaguzzi (1993) who stated our cultural and internal pictures of childhood enforce our perceptions and the infrastructures that surround or affect the child, such as early education. This can be linked to the theoretical framework which asks us to move beyond what we already know, to disrupt our thinking.

→Disrupting perceptions

The democratic practices currently embedded within the United Kingdom *'places first and foremost, for technical practice: places where society can apply powerful human technologies to children to produce predetermined outcomes'* (Moss, 2007, p.7). By challenging this ideology and disrupting thinking *'we need to locate the problem, not in the children, but in inappropriate provision'* (Whitebread and Bingham, 2014, p.187). In relation to school readiness, we need to perceive the child as autonomously capable of developing cognition–emotion integration, this places significance on self-regulation to systematically coordinate their emotional arousal with cognitive control which recognises the child with autonomy and agency (Blair and Diamond, 2008). This suggests the physical social and emotional skills of the child should be equal to all other subjects.

In an analysis of school readiness Neaum (2017) details competing discourses are at play in early years education which informs societal perspectives of the child, further arguing the perception of the child in our current educational system is sequentially deficit. Analysing the current educational structure, the child continuously passes through sequential stages of education, grouped by age, which positions them as lacking skills and capabilities at the beginning of each stage of their journey. How the child achieves the desired outcomes lies firmly with the practitioner's ability to mould and scaffold their learning to the culturally cultivated norm – The Early Learning Goals. There is little or no acknowledgement of the child as powerful and autonomous with agency in the literature pertaining to the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017). The discussion informed by Neaum (2017) advises us the child is homogenised, deficit and dependent upon the more knowledgeable adult to progress or enhance their capabilities. This is a contradiction to the intended perspectives of the child the Early Years Foundation Stage Review was aiming to achieve (Tickell, 2011).

Slater, Jones and Proctor (2019) build on this, arguing children in all aspects of education are positioned as inferior, drawing on both toilet discourse and school readiness. Slater, Jones and Procter (2019) argue current developmental discourse surrounding school readiness is projected from the standpoint of heteronormative perspectives of the child; thus, they are white, able, heterosexual and middle class. The effect of this is to other children who fall beyond the realms of these classifications, such as a disadvantaged child or a child with special educational needs. The practitioner excuses or dismisses their inability to conform to the rhetoric, diminishing their capacity and positions the child as *'never to be fully developed'* (Slater, Jones and Procter, 2019, p.413) a contradictory approach inherent in this perspective on the child. This begs the question how the child makes meaning of their educational journey and how they can present their experience of being othered.

Beginning with the dichotomies of able or unable and school ready or not school ready Slater, Jones and Proctor (2019) explain a child with an impairment is always perceived from the position that they are never fully agential, capable of fully becoming as they and their bodies are situated within a constant flux and so will never meet the ideal rhetoric of the heteronormative perspective of what it is to be child-human-adult (Slater, 2015). This would mean a child who has not yet mastered the use of a toilet will always be perceived as not ready, based on not being able to meet prescribed outcomes which create a vis-à-vis of policy and practice. For example, Tickell (2011) stated all children are unique yet, if their uniqueness falls outside the parameters of what is assessed to meet the early learning goals, they are perceived as not ready or dis/able (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2010). A further contradiction can be seen in the grouping of children by age and following the sequential developmental assessment of the child-adult-human discourse (Slater, 2015). Kontopodis, Wulf and Fichtner (2011, p.9) have also criticised this perspective stating the rhetoric of the *'general child'* as an adult in the making relies on *'the normative conception of a universal a-historical, rational human being'.* Kontopodis (2019) states the current global trends have created a tension between individualism and otherness.

To move away from the sequential development of the general child suggests an enmeshing of developmental theories to reconceptualize the two-year-old child by including several perspectives. To do this I will entangle Piaget (1959), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1960) and Bronfenbrenner (1978) to conceive the two-year-old child. The rationale for these theorists is underpinned by the concept of readiness, the proximity of the child and adult within early education, the premise of the more knowledgeable other, the development of cognitive ability and the intra-action-reactions which create affects. This will present an understanding of how the child is perceived unpinned by the quote *'Only in interaction with the outer world does the individual come to acquire his or her subjectivity'* Gabauer and Wulf (1995, quoted in Kontopodis, Wulf and Fichtner, 2011, p.1)

The Two-year-old child

The concept of readiness introduced by Piaget (1951) has proliferated affecting our conceptualisation of readiness in relation to the early years, and resulting in school readiness influencing a preparational stage of education for children, argued as creating schoolification (*Ring and O'Sullivan, 2018;* Bingham and Whitebread, 2011). The response to school readiness in the wider discourse is condemnation, as discussed earlier (reflecting Saving Childhood Movement, 2014). What emerges from this is a need to think differently about school readiness, linking back to the discussion on the recent publication of the *First 1000 Days* (House of Commons, Health and Social Care Committee, 2019). Within this section, I decentre school readiness in an attempt to problematize the concept to understand the concept's gravitas in relation to the developing two-year-old child. By decentring developmental theory to read Piaget (1959), Vygotsky (1978), Bruner (1960) and Bronfenbrenner (1978) as an entanglement the potential to reterritorialize early years practice for the two-year-old child also erupts.

Piaget's (1959) theory of cognitive development describes how children develop their learning over four critical age-related stages; sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. The theory explains how knowledge progressively changes chronologically with each stage signifying a distinctive shift in a child's meaning making process and understanding. The emphasis is placed upon the child's thinking in comparison to adults. The theory postulates children do not know less than adults, they merely need to transcend the sequential stages to acquire the same level of thinking abilities (Piaget, 1951). The shift in thinking does not mean children lose their previously acquired cognitive ability it means their thinking changes and develops. The thinking process is underpinned by four concepts; schemas, assimilation, accommodation and equilibration.

Object permanence and what matter matters are a key factor, as between the ages of birth and two children use their senses to learn and create schemas '*cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by the core meaning*' (Piaget and Cook, 1952, p.7). The child achieves this by using senses of taste, touch, vision and movement, cited as egocentric. Within this, the child is said to lack the knowledge and ability to identify an object separate to themselves as they believe they are the centre of the universe, and therein everything occupies an existence only in relation to them. This makes it difficult for the child to understand another person's viewpoint (McLeod, 2018). For example, a game of 'peek-a-boo' or 'where's it gone' can challenge a child's thinking as they are unable to see the object, therefore it must no longer exist. For object permanence to develop, the child must move through the six stages reaching early representational thought (Piaget, 1952).

Piaget (1952) specifically focused on children's development rather than all aspects of learning and his perspective of intellectual growth, as a process between assimilation and accommodation, can be pinpointed to the publication of *A Review of Primary Education in 1966* which influenced the Plowden Report (1967). Within the report, several reoccurring themes emerge based on Piaget's (1952) theory including individual learning, flexibility, the importance of play, environment and learning in conjunction with discovery (McLeod, 2018). Readiness from this perspective emerges as a significantly negative factor by suggesting children should not be taught certain concepts until they have reached an appropriate stage, based on biological maturity. In practice, this creates more confusion and can be taken out of context, such as influencing a pencil grip. Within *Development Matters* (Department for Education, 2012) the guidance suggests between the ages of two and three the child will be beginning to use three fingers to hold a pencil, citing tripod grip as a parenthesis. In contrast, occupational therapists state, they would not expect this grip to develop until a child is four and pushing a particular grip at an earlier age can be counterproductive as they state '*Getting a 3 year old to use a tripod grip when their muscles aren't developed enough will only result in them using an awkward version of the grip and these incorrect habits are hard to correct over time*' (Mennillo, 2019, n.p).

A two-year-old child through the perspective of Bruner (1957) would loosely be viewed as developing within the iconic mode, which means the information they learn is stored visually. Visual representations create images within their thoughts. Whether the formation of mental representations is conscious, or unconscious is unknown and there are arguments both for and against both (McLeod, 2018). Bruner (1957) argued cognitive development results in the ability to think independently, aside from cultural and socially reproduced concepts or categories. The child's ability to extend problem solving to invent new concepts and categories emerge, in which the aim of education is conceived as stimulating autonomous learners. Language is a key component within this theoretical perspective, acting as a mediator between environments, stimulus and responses thereafter. Bruner (1966) shifted developmental discourse away from the linear age-related stages put forward by Piaget and Inhelder (1956), depicting cognitive development more fluidly which results in three modes of representation. Knowledge and information are stored within these modes cited as enactive, iconic and symbolic. Bruner (1996) argued symbolic representations shape a cultural reality and whilst the representations are in the individual mind the significance is firmly rooted within the culture they are borne from. This provides the basis for cultural exchange. The tools the child uses to understand and organise the symbolic representations are interdependent with their cultural system. This suggests the process of learning and thinking cannot be devoid of a cultural connection. The learning and development that unfolds incorporates concepts, problem solving, and categories created by the cultural connection which enable the child to invent new ones.

Experiential and environmental factors are recognised within this as influential to the child's cognitive growth and this perspective positions the child as active, distinctly differing from Piaget and Inhelder's (1956) perspective of readiness. Bruner (1960, p.33) asserted a child, regardless of their age, can understand complex material stating, *'any subject can be taught effectively in some honest intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development'.* Two-year-old children at the iconic stage begin to use images to store information such as recalling the connection between a McDonalds and a toy offered in the Happy Meal. How this is internalised will depend upon the language used by the significant other during their communication. Language enables the child to discern abstract concepts by acting as a stimulus for cognitive thought. Bruner (1960) stated children can actively construct their own knowledge. This implies education should develop children's symbolic thinking as a process rather than an outcome, and that the practitioner's role is to support the child to solve problems, which can be used in a variety of situations through a spiral curriculum.

Bruner's (1960) spiral curriculum is borne out of repeatedly presenting ideas using a variety of opportunities such as the child's natural inquisition or interests, at any given time. This begins by continuously reinforcing the underlying principles of different concepts and how they are structured rather than relying on memory alone. The iterative process develops understanding from simple to complex over time, and links to other concepts are established within this process. Bruner (1960) argued this spiralized learning helps children to organise their knowledge within a structure relatable to them, which increases the accessibility of their knowledge and how they can be applied beyond the learning environment. This process becomes most successful when the entanglement of the child, environment and the concept is scaffolded by the practitioner (Bruner, 1966). The practitioner's role is to meet the child at their level of learning to work with them through the iterative process, rather than attempting to manipulate a child's learning to reflect a preconceived level. This renders learning as individualised and unique to the child. The premise of Bruner's (1960) theory of cognitive development overlaps with Vygotsky (1962). Bruner (1960) and Vygotsky (1962) both placed

emphasis on the environment, particularly the social environment, equally agreeing the role of the adult should be to be active in supporting children's learning.

The BioEcological Systems Theory (1979) suggests the interactions and influences between the individual and the environment are layered into systems which shape the developing child over time. The nested systems are cited as microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem. The two-year-old child is closest to the microsystem which incorporates the structures which they have direct contact with, including any relationships or interactions such as with the school or their parents (Berk, 1984). It is understood the relationships and interactions are impacted via two routes, toward the child and away from the child. This is directly related to the intra-action-reaction discussed within the theoretical framework in Chapter Two, which Bronfenbrenner (1979) discussed as bi-directional influences (Ryan, 2001). The two-way influences also occur outside the layers and between the systems, but the influences are considered strongest at the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1978). This evidences the potential impact matter can have on children's entanglements and outlines the importance of 'turning to notice' the child, meeting them at their level of learning to move toward the zone of proximal development.

The Mesosystem is the second layer of the structure surrounding the microsystem. The interaction included within this layer continue to include the child, the parent and the school but it is more concerned with how the parent interacts with the practitioner and the school which influences the child (Berk, 2018). However, the inclusion of the parent and or the school must be grounded in direct intra-action. If direct contact is not established, then the influence at this stage is inhibited (Ryan, 2001). There is a supplementary layer which is closely linked to the mesosystem which is cited as the exosystem which is particularly important to note as it incorporates the lives of the parents, their schedules and their resources. This sublayer does not directly interact with the child but has a unidirectional influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This could be linked to habitats and capital, as discussed within Chapter Three. Any negative or positive interactions between the

school, parent or within the community proliferate and directly impact on the child, influencing their sense of self (Ryan, 2001).

Bronfenbrenner (1978) stated the macrosystem differs in a fundamental way as this layer includes the notion of time in relation to the environment and encompasses the wider discourses of cultural and societal beliefs or subcultures. Essentially this layer is the influence of social norms and accepted behaviours, such as ensuring the child is ready for school and reflects the values articulated by an educational provider. These values create general prototypes which become *'blueprints'* existing in an explicit form (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p.515). For example, a classroom could be considered a blueprint as each school is structured by classrooms, similarly organised and holding the same function. Social Policy is also encompassed within this layer, explicitly, as social or educational policy shapes and forms our expectations and social responsibilities toward the child, '*Macrosystems are conceived and examines not only in structural terms but as carriers of information and ideology that, both explicitly and implicitly endow meaning and motivation to particular agencies, social networks, roles, activities and their interrelations'* (Bronfenbrenner, 1978, p.515). Identifying the importance of this ecological system is pertinent, reflecting the entanglements children emerge in.

The emergence of the BioEcological Systems Theory (1979) is directly related to the concept of readiness metamorphosing in the United States of America. This resulted in the formation of a Head Start Programme, to ensure all children were ready for school, families were ready to support children and the environment was ready for the child (The United States, Department of Health and Human Service, 2018). Bronfenbrenner (1979) was an integral influence and the co-founder of the Head Start Programme (Ryan, 2001), his approach to school readiness was heavily influenced by Vygotsky (1978). Ryan (2001) presents a visual representation of the theory which could be argued as a representation of a rhizome, illustrating a link between global

influences, society, culture, school, religion, family and community amongst others which influence the developing two-year-old child in relation to their behaviour, cognition and biology.

The writings of Vygotsky (1978) and his Social Development Theory have underpinned specific and experience dependent learning in the Early Years Statutory Framework (2017). Vygotsky (1978) found when children make meaning of their world their community occupies a central role. The theory states learning precedes cognitive development, supported by the statement '*learning is necessary and universal aspect of the process of the developing culturally organised, specifically human psychological function*' (Vygotsky, 1978, p.90). This is a clear contradiction of Piaget (1956). Vygotsky (1978) also contrasts to Piaget in his writings on intellectual adaptation by arguing children internalise the tools of the culture, such as language, which are transmitted by adults and adapt intellect. Within this theory, the basic materials and abilities for intellectual development are present at birth, cited as elementary functions. These are attention, perception, sensation and memory. The interaction with a social environment develops each of these functions to become effective strategies for mental processing or higher mental function. The cognitive functions are influenced by beliefs and values which emanate from the culture and therefore become socio-culturally determined, reflected within the BioEcological Systems Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). How intellectual property is adapted will vary from child to child, an indication every child is unique and will learn at their own pace based on their development of concepts.

Like Bruner (1960), Vygotsky (1978) argued social interaction is key to cognitive development and this interaction should at times be mediated by a skilled adult who can model behaviour or verbal instruction. Therein the dialogue becomes cooperative and collaborative which enables the child to understand the instruction or action the skilled adult has given, this is internalised as information and used to guide or regulate their performance. This assertion is underpinned by the perspective of the curious and active child who is involved in their own learning, making it possible to discover and develop new understandings using

schemas. The repetitious pattern of behaviour, a schema, allows the child to explore and express their developing ideas. For example, a child and their parent are constructing a jigsaw. If working alone the child may attempt to solve the puzzle repetitiously and poorly.   If the parent models or demonstrates basic strategies such as shape, fit and size the child will be able to put pieces together more successfully. Once this is achieved the offer of praise should support the success. This will allow the child to become more competent and confident in the activity of puzzles.   In this instance, the parent becomes the more knowledgeable other and scaffolds the child within the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Children's development and learning during the formative years are impacted by external influences such as the practitioner and the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) highlighting the importance of schematic play in children's early educational experiences to develop and build upon their interest to support learning (Nutbrown, 2012). A significant theme emerges between schematic play, the influence the environment and a practitioner's knowledge of schematic play. Palaiologou (2016) states practitioner knowledge of schemas can be linked to the level of qualification the practitioner has been accredited with. The appropriateness of qualifications has been studied in the past by Sylva *et al.,* (2004a) who conceded that early years staff typically hold a minimum of a Level 3 Childcare Qualification which does not explore imperative concepts such as schemas and their importance in relation to child development and learning.   Qualifications have also been more recently addressed in the revised Early Years Statutory Framework (2017) although the minimum requirements have not changed. Research suggests (Woods, 2016) practitioners should hold the developmental and individualised knowledge of the child to identify the ways children in their setting use schematic routines to develop and learn, this has been supported by Louis *et al.,* (2013) and Nutbrown (2011).

It has been argued by Grimmer (2017) many practitioners employed within early years education fail to understand the schematic term of reference and cannot identify existing schemes children epitomise in their play. This results in missed opportunities for learning. An inability to recognise existing schemas and the missed opportunities highlight the significance of 'turning to notice' the child in the early years as conceived within the theoretical framework. The 'turning to notice' directly links to the knowledgeable other and scaffolding within Vygotskian theory to meet the child at their point of development to build upon child-initiated experiences by making connections with the world, developing their meaning making. Contradictorily this premise is already outlined within the Early Years Statutory Framework (2017) which states '*Practitioners must consider the individual needs, interests and stage of development of each child in their care and must use this information to plan a challenging and enjoyable experience*' (Department for Education, 2017, p.9). This salient point is given further gravitas by Grenier (2014) who argued early years practitioners must understand underpinning schematic theory before they can identify a schema in action, as this aids planning, and the ability to support the child to expand upon their interests.

The cited literature discussing schematic play highlights a further tension regarding disruptive schemas. If a practitioner is unable to identify a schema, they will be unable to identify the rationale and purpose of the disruptive schema within the meaning making trajectory. For example, Grimmer (2017) discusses a child who demonstrates a containing schema within a setting. The child continuously empties boxes of toys and empties trays. This behaviour can be perceived as challenging or disruptive if the practitioner is unable to identify this as schematic play (Nutbrown, 2011). This could lead to labelling children unnecessarily, including as not ready for school. Kumar *et al.,* (2018) use a child's trajectory schema, continuously throwing toys, to add further weight to this issue. The continuous throwing of toys is often a way for child to make sense of their world and their emotions, displaying an interest and reflecting their level of development (National Day Nurseries Association, 2018). This could be problematic for the two-year-old who is compared to their older peers.

Understanding disruptive schemas enable practitioners to influence development by disrupting the child's learning by scaffolding their understanding of the world and positively reinforcing effective interaction (Nutbrown, 2011). A reason for disruptive schemas is cited as emotional intelligence which is fostered through secure attachments. It has been argued that '*countless repeated moments of attunement or misattunement between carer and child*' can shape the child's emotional well-being because of the expectation's adults have (Goleman, 2009, p.100; Stern, 1998). Knowing and using the child's schematic play to plan and meet the child at their level expands the premise of the knowledgeable other and proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). This is the difference between what a child knows or can achieve as an active independent learner to what the child is capable of with the influence and encouragement of a knowledgeable other. The zone of proximal development is the space or area where the child is most receptive to sensitive instruction and guidance, this stimulates the development of skills which will be transferred to a shared or a supported skill to become an independent skill, previously outlined in the jigsaw example earlier.

Vygotsky (1962) argued there was an intrinsic link between language, learning and the child's social environment, asserting language plays two critical roles. Firstly, the dissemination of meaning to children when linked to an object or symbol and secondly a powerful tool for intellectual adaptation. Within this perspective language assumes one of three forms; social speech, inner speech and private speech (Vygotsky, 1962). Social speech is an external form of verbal communication with others, inner speech is the connection between words and independent thought and private speech serves an intellectual function which is self-directed (Vygotsky, 1978). At the beginning, speech and language are separate systems and Vygotsky's (1934) theory states they become interdependent at approximately three years old. When the two become entangled thought becomes verbal and speech is representational (McLeod, 2018). It is at this point the child's monologue is internalised becoming their inner speech, which is integral to cognitive development. The consideration of speech as a transition from social to inner speech is grounded in private speech being

the initial manifestation of the child's inner speech. This differs from Piaget's (1959) perspective which argued inner speech is covert, a dead-end presenting an inability to adapt

When children transition to private speech the need to collaborate with the knowledgeable other begins to dissipate and the collaboration becomes internal, enabling the child to plan an activity or strategy aiding their development. The use of language in this way promotes self-regulation and accelerates the child's thinking and their understanding of the world (Berk and Garvin, 1984). Vygotsky (1987) suggested the child who uses vast amounts of private speech would become more socially competent than children who were unable to achieve continuous inner speech, creating a further link to the child's social environment. Applying this theory, a two-year-old child would be transitioning from social speech stage to the private speech stage. An example of private speech would be a child talking to themselves whilst they play, directing their own behaviour such as 'the block goes here and I am going to put that here, ah no! No! I can't do that, what if, yes, yes!' This has also been referred to as 'self-talk' (Clark, 2004, p.189). To successfully maximise self-talk the practitioner should observe to meet the child at their level, develop their interest by scaffolding and create an environment conducive to collaborative learning which summarises, questions, clarifies and predicts play (Vygotsky, 1987). This is an opportunity for child and practitioner development as they make meaning of each other and the world they both inhabit.

Vygotsky's (1978) writings on child development and language have received criticism as they have not been as robustly scrutinised as the work of Piaget (1959). This is due to the lack of hypothesis to test, the translation from Russian to other languages and the assumption the theory is culturally universal (McLeod, 2018). Rogoff (1990) argues verbal instruction which supports scaffolding may not hold equal value in other cultures and their approach to learning. This is based on cultural and environmental influences which contribute to the sense of self, a differing between races, cultures and places. However, Berk (2018)

conducted research with 75 children engaged with a mathematical task and concluded private speech, in this instance, developed similarly across all children regardless of their cultural background.

There are further similarities in the theories put forward by Vygotsky (1978) and Bruner (1961). Both theorists agreed the child is an active learner and should be included within their development and learning trajectory emphasising the environment is critical. The adult or more knowledgeable other should understand the child's level of cognition and therein use this level to scaffold (Bruner, 1978) their development and learning within a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978).A critical analysis of the literature suggests society's current approach to supporting children's development is outdated because the child is not always seen or valued, and only by enmeshing developmental theory can we attune to the holistic child (Neaum, 2017). This suggests current developmental approaches are aligned with meeting prescribed and formalised skills, homogenising children and reflecting the notion of the ideal citizen as current early years educational practice is entrenched within the neo-liberalised discourse (Moss, 2014). Murris (2016) has taken a different approach to constructions of childhood in conjunction with developmental theory, identifying the current positioning of the child within society inadequately reflects the child's becoming.

In a simple, but effective table, Murris (2016) (*Figure 29*) illustrates current figurations of the child, the theoretical influences, what is lacking and what is required of society to achieve a more than child-adult-human discourse (Slater, 2015). The illustration shows what has gone before, with an emphasis this should not be ignored, to offer a new perspective, a mangle of the old and the new – *'an inhuman materialdiscursive becoming 'iii'* (Murris, 2016, p.91) – the posthuman child, influencing the next section.

Figurations of child	Theoretical Influences	What child lacks by nature:	What Culture Needs to Provide:
Developing Child →	Aristotle, Darwin, Piaget, Vygotsky	Maturity	Maturation, Guidance, Mediation
Ignorant Child	Plato, Aristotle, Locke	Rationality Experience	Instruction, Training
Evil Child	Christianity	Trustworthiness Goodness	Control, discipline
Innocent child	Romantics	Responsibility	Protection Facilitating
Egocentric Child	Piaget	Empathy, Social norms & values	Socialisation Inculcation
Fragile Child	Psycho-Medical Scientific	Resilience	Protection Medication

Figure 29.
.
Murris (2016, p.91) figurations of the child when read through singular theorists, evidencing the emerging perspective of the child.

By diffracting current perceptions to deterritorialize our knowledge of the child and their becoming, the child can be reterritorialized through a New Materialist and Posthumanist ontology. In doing so the voice of the child can be seen in more than linguistic ways to reconceive how they can emerge with agency. An instinctive objection to this would be questioning how one can see a voice in a society which privileges linguistics over other modes of communication. The theoretical framework offers the answer by urging me to think differently and become creative with analogies and metaphors (Kane, 2011). Therefore, the voice of the child when applying Murris (2016) is the equivalent to seeing the wind as the leaves and objects are affected by its force, creating movement. Furthermore, a visual representation of voice in more-than-human ways is demonstrated by birds on autumnal days (*Figure 30*). In the next section, literature from Murris (2016) disrupts knowledge further to reconceptualize voice.

Figure 30.

A bird singing in winter, even after the voice has stopped it can still be seen creating an affect. (Imurg, 2019).

The Post-Human Child

The language of learning has gathered momentum resulting in education becoming a game of *'learnification'* (Biesta, 2015, p.76). The associated productivity and output of this educational process has been centred toward the educator/teacher/practitioner with an unrelenting focus, creating a normative construction of the child (Murris, 2016). This discursive shift has influenced language which has morphed beings and non-material objects into learners, learning environments and more within the neoliberal agenda which has been fed by reporting educational infrastructures such as Ofsted, the OECD and other European and National dimensions (Biesta, 2015; Davies and Bansel, 2007). Biesta (2015) argues this has proliferated through to educational research which is failing to ask what the purpose of education is and why. More importantly, the result is the continuation of current educational discourse which is failing to notice the people, the process and the relationships of education. The main issue emerging from this is the accepted notion education equates to quantifiable learning (Biesta, 2015). Murris (2016) drew on the work of Lyotard (1992) to explain the biggest challenge for all of society to overcome is to unlearn what they have come to know in the production of knowledge to position *'reality as an active verb'* (Haraway, 2008, p.6).

Building on the salient points from Biesta (2015) for researchers to focus on people, the process and relationships of education, aside from attainment levels, Murris (2016) presents a new perspective, the posthuman child. In *Figure 31* the extending lines of flight and the rhizomatic connections, yet to be mapped, of the child can be seen creating a link to the theoretical framework.
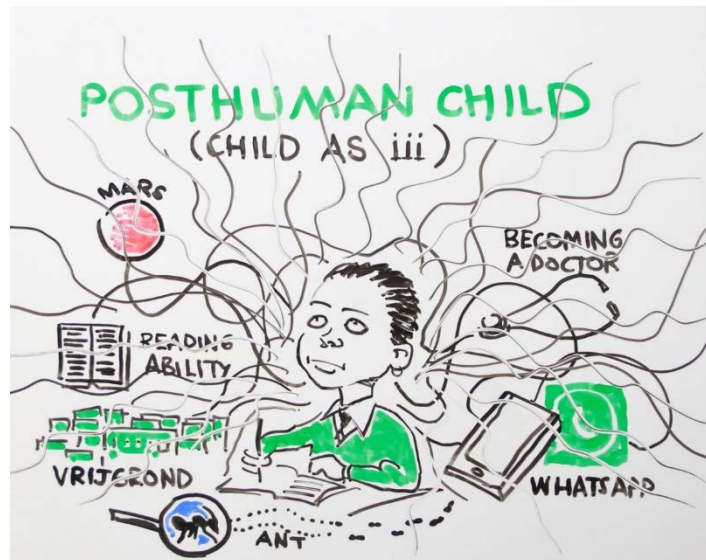
Figure 31.

Murris (2016, p.91) demonstrated the rhizomatic connections and sensations proliferating from the posthuman child which are used to articulate a voice in more-than-human ways. These connections and sensations are what matters to the child.

The posthuman child is not the binary of the posthuman adult as there is no distinction of the child as a subject or an object in the traditional metaphysical sense. According to Barad (2007) life is a linguistic, material, discursive, dynamic and iterative production, here the child emerges with agency as a becoming (Davies, 2014; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). This is an alternative to the (con)figuration of a specific being in the world. In a sense the child is freed form striation calling in to question the human subject. As a result of this, linguistic terms such as subjectivity are diffracted and reconfigured in new ways. For example, a child who is mark making with paint on paper in early years settings uses the agential forces at play in the paint, paper and space to show their subjectivity and voice. The child uses more-than-human matter to disclose their individuality, subjectivity and demonstrate their agency by making connections with their own bodies, other bodies, between bodies and within spaces (Hultman and Lenz Taguchi, 2010.

To describe perspectives of the child and the posthuman child Murris (2016) I, i, ii and iii and then the posthuman child using 'iii' in a shade of grey different to conventional font. This is a queering of the personal pronoun I to introduce the child within a material-discursive discourse, such as described by my discussion of the 'material-discursive knot' (Carpentier, 2017, p.4) on page 29. The child as the capitalised I is discussed within the rhetoric of the current rights framework. The child as i is infantilised within previous rhetoric and is only able to enact their rights or use their subjectivity when the infrastructure or individuals afford a platform to do so. The child as ii is developed to meet the conventions of society within normative processes connected to education which reinforce binary opposites, such as school ready or not school ready. This demonstrates that even if we enmesh all these perspectives by figuratively adding the i's the iii will not be achieved (Murris, 2016).

 This perspective of the child disrupts knowledge to move beyond what has been learnt and what society relies upon, opening up a new space. Within this space, research can reconfigure the child within entanglements to blur the subject object boundaries to reconceive agency, subjectivity and voice. This is a stark contrast from normative discourses replicated by current structures, including the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (Murris, 2016), although, the advocacy of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child should not be discredited (Murris, 2016). The child's experience of school readiness could figuratively map the perspective of the iii creating colourful sensations by using their body in communication within a material-discursive discourse. The impact of this is using the intra-action-reaction to inform practice to create a reflexive, iterative process that has entry and exit points. By understanding the child as 'iii' who can create colourful sensations implies the child is continuously enacting their subjectivity, agency and voice (Murris 2016). The child's voice is produced in communication with other beings and non-human matter. The voice emerges or erupts like an earthworm breaking ground within an event and does not reflect a universal experience (Mazzei, 2014).

In this chapter I have explored the emergence school readiness from rhetoric to reality and highlighted the tensions which have erupted over time as the concept has created an affect in the early years. I have discussed the development of children by entangling theory to understand the two-year old child in relation to this study. Using Posthuman and New materialist perspectives I have come to identify what a two-year-old child is in relation to theory to understand the children entangled within this study. In the next chapter I outline the methodological approaches and methods used to reach the lived experience of the two-year-old child.

Chapter Four

Methodology

Figure 32.

Methodology equipment and tools; GoPro, Dictaphone and research journals.

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches used to explore how school readiness is experienced within an entanglements and classroom events. As I 'turn to notice', the methodological approaches emerge within an iterative and fluid process, cartographically mapping the rhizomatic affects of school readiness to illuminate how the concept affects early years practice (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). Employing an *'illuminative evaluation'* research strategy enabled me to continuously transgress from the currently fixed notions of school readiness (Parlett and Hamilton 1972, p.10), providing the freedom to attend to colourful sensations as I plugged in to classroom events of human and more-than-human matter (St. Pierre, 1997). My nomadic approach of zooming in on the two-year-old child's lived experience influenced a multimodal sensual autoethnographic approach to discover how children's knowledge, meaning making and realities are formed in a unique and creative way (Hohti, 2016; Pink, 2015; Braidotti, 2011). The research process formulated a critical enquiry of school readiness from the child's perspective, making rhizomatic links to critical hermeneutics (Moustakas, 2009). As the research focused on the sensations emanating from children's events in early education a case study developed (Yin, 2014), however this is in the Deleuzian sense of events. This research was exploratory in nature, allowing the process to naturally unfold and refold by 'turning to notice' distributed agency and voices in more than linguistic ways (Mazzei, 2013a).

Is it *just* autoethnography?

Autoethnography sets out to understand emotions and experiences of everyday life to create a metaphorical space to think differently, evaluating what currently constitutes as knowledge and how social realities are constructed (Adams, Jones and Ellis, 2015; Burr, 2003). However, researching the realities of children, exploring their life-worlds and the rhizomatic connections they engender with other matter requires a *'phenomenological sensitivity'* (van Manen, 2015, p.2) and Pink (2015) elaborates on this salient point further by introducing sensory ethnography. I position sensory ethnography as an intra-action-reactional method which has enabled me to account for sensory experiences within events, ways of knowing and being in the world (Davies, 2016; Pink, 2015) Much like the material turn I outlined in Chapter Two, Howes (2003, p.xii) frames the use of sensory ethnography as making a '*sensorial turn'* and a tool which creates lines of flight to understand our pasts, our present and our future in creative ways (Biesta, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 2004).

The sensorial turn nuances the paradigm of hermeneutic phenomenology which stems from interpretivism. The discussions put forward by Howe (2005) and Pink (2015) reify how we as people and as researchers are unable to distance ourselves from our intergenerationally passed history which conditions our interpretation and reality. This forms the basis of our judgements, biases and prejudicial viewpoints which are tentatively passed from one to another in everyday actions. This includes conversation which is bound by linguistics. Moreover, hermeneutic phenomenology asserts meaning is produced not just reproduced and it is important to note the *actual* meaning is mutually constructed (Schwandt, 2000). The aim of hermeneutic phenomenology does not simply seek to uncover our understanding, it aims to identify and unpack the conditions which surround the milieu of our understanding, so facilitating the constructed reality. Language and culture emerge as pivotal within this approach (Taylor and Medina, 2013). Sensory ethnography builds on this approach by robustly incorporating multimodalities of the child continuously, to identify them as social beings rather than as a child-artefact (Dicks, Flewitt, Lancaster and Pahl, 2011). However, considering the ontological positioning, the child's events will not be interpreted but will be (re)presented.

Sensory Autoethnography

This study metamorphosed into a sensory autoethnographic narrative aiming to uncover the affective capacities of school readiness, noticing agentality and voices by decentring the child and disrupting current knowledge (Pink, 2015; 2009; Pink and Morgan, 2013; Dicks *et al.,* 2011). Sensory autoethnography builds upon the theoretical and ontological positioning within this thesis creating an affect on the research design. The affect emanates from non-representation as it '*seeks to cultivate an affinity for the analysis of events, practices, assemblages, affective atmospheres… of everyday life*' (Vannini, 2015, p.318) to move this research beyond simplistically knowing and telling what has already been observed or told. This approach uses creativity within traditional modes of data collection to exercise passion inspired by '*the poetics of embodied living, in enacting and the very unactualized…to reconfigure thinking, sensing and emphasising the singular powers of action locution and thought*' (Vannini, 2015, p.319). This was achieved as I metaphorically invoked the starling murmuration of fluxing and flowing, interacting and reacting to develop a greater focus on events and the phenomenon of school readiness in conjunction with the two-year-old child. This illuminated affective moments within events, disclosing multimodal communication during the child's everyday performances within their entanglement, affecting their lived experience (Doel, 2018) This allowed the analysis process to '*rupture, re-imaging and to generate possibilities*' (Vannini, 2015, p.321) by 'turning to notice' the silences, non-verbal communication of human and non-human bodies and recognising these moments as voice with affective sensations.

Within my sensory autoethnographic method I drew on an idiographic approach, identifying personal lived experiences within the context that we as beings have an embodied presence in the world; we construct our lived experience by knowing, sensing and feeling what unfolds as events (Vannini, 2015). An idiographic approach offered the possibility to uncover organisational behaviours in relation to school readiness which might affect practice and the perspective of the child (Luthans and Davis, 1982). Incorporating this approach enabled the research to identify idiosyncrasies and personal responses to school readiness, simultaneously

journaling how the child reacts and responds. I queered the traditional understanding of idiosyncrasies from recognizing quirky behaviours to recognised eye-rolling or homogenising comments as an eccentricity which can create sensations within my research-child-practitioner-matter-entanglement, creating an in-depth account of participants' lived experiences, allowing for an empathetic understanding to contextualise meaning during the process of analysis (Jupp, 2006).

An illuminative strategy

Whilst conducting this research I used a phased approach to encounter school readiness which Parlett and Hamilton (1972, p.10) refer to as *'illuminative evaluation'* which is not a methodological approach per se but a *'general research strategy'* (Parlett and Hamilton, 1972, p.17). This approach is derived from an eclectic and adaptable approach wherein there are recurring concomitants which cannot be separated without compromising the research; such as education, moral beliefs, social norms and thereafter training which legitimises a truth (Foucault, 1980). The illuminative strategy traced the concomitants to explore and encounter school readiness as a fluid and unplanned process to identify alternative themes/theories/trajectories previously unidentified but deemed relevant due to the sensation they created (Massumi, 2002). This methodically reduced the enormity of my enquiry to evaluate emergent issues which required greater concentration at a later stage, such as the importance of more-than-human matter and mattering of voice (Sinkovics and Alfoldi, 2012). This method of progressive refocusing was inherent to the literature review which was continuously altered and adapted to align with the sensations created during the initial phases of the project. This provides rigour and robustness to the study and facilitated a critical rhizomatic analysis of events to support the (re)presentation of the children's lived experience of school readiness.

This method of inquiry is heuristic and is underpinned by an autobiographical process to *'understand one's self and the world which one lives'* (Moustakas, 2009, p.15). The first chapters of this thesis evidence this journey began with a desire to understand the puzzlement and troubling trajectory of school readiness for Eleanor' which expanded to understand how school readiness affected practitioners' perspectives of a child and the interplay with a child's experience. However, the application of heuristic inquiry extends beyond the entry points documented within this thesis and is aligned within the 'turning to notice'. Moustakas (2009) explains intuition and indwelling are prominent features of heuristic research which are other words for sensation and 'turning to notice', as discussed in the theoretical framework. Neither the illuminative nor

heuristic methods could have been achieved without my ability to focus on the felt sense to link thoughts and

feelings with experiences (Moustakas, 1994; Gendlin, 1981).

Outlining a community of practice

Wenger (1998) states identifying a community of practice helps researchers to understand how those affiliated with the community learn their subject specialism, how learning is transferred between each other and ultimately how they apply meanings to their behaviours or practice. This approach allowed for cultural norms and values of the community to be identified and analysed. During this study the 'communities of practice' approach enabled me to entangle with an eclectic mix of individuals with differing cultures, knowledge bases and power relations who share a common goal to work together. Through a '*mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire*' (Wenger, 1998, p.72-73) it informed my mapping of school readiness. This created rhizomatic connections within educational communities informing my iterative and cylindrical approach (Denscombe, 2010; Parlett and Hamilton, 1972). The descriptive domains of a community of practice, (reflected in Wenger, 2015), indicate individuals are usually members of one or more community during their lifetime and they often move between the roles of core member or peripheral participant depending upon their affiliation or the subject knowledge at the core of the community.

Within this study, an overarching community of practice is recognised as those whose shared goal is delivering education and includes members such as The Department for Education. Three community of practice members emerged within this study assuming the position of a participant; the practitioners, parents or guardians and children. Each member assumed the position of a core or peripheral member dependent upon the event (Wenger, 2015). For example, when observing the child-practitioner-environment-entanglement my role as researcher was peripheral, as is a parent when the practitioner discusses their child's development. This evidences the flux and flow within the entanglement and demonstrates the metaphorical movement outlined by Vannini (2015). The community of practice approach supported decentring the child in relation to my ontological positioning by locating the child as an equal and active member of the community (Wenger, 2015). Each member of the community voiced their knowledge of school readiness so supporting the analytical process by explaining how they embodied school readiness.

Ethically researching with children

In view of the *'ethico-onto-episte-mology'* ethical implications arose concerning the voices of the children to ensure the findings reflected their true lived experience of school readiness (NSPCC, 2013; Shaw, Brady and Davey, 2011; Tisdale, Davies and Gallagher, 2009). All children within this study are positioned as experts in their own lives as I embody my ethical responsibility regarding the knowledge I am producing in this thesis by recognise the child's being in the world, their connectivity to other bodies and matter and equally allowing their potential to become-otherwise to emerge (Davies, 2016; Bennett, 2010; Braidotti, 2006a). Within the traditional approach to ethics, individual assent was sort from all children prior to any observations, conversations or tours - appendix one. To gain assent I directly asked, *'Can I watch you play this game for a little while?'* and variations thereof. If at any time the child *'show[s] no'* (Skånfors, 2009, p.10) the event was not pursued. To document assent a child-friendly method was used to uphold the child's rights (Shaw, Brady and Davey, 2011). This was in respect of the international rights-based framework *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 12 which states all children up to the age of eighteen have the right to freely express their views on all matters affecting them and so must be held in credence. This validates the findings and provides additional credibility, raising the quality of the study overall (Shaw, Brady and Davey, 2011).

To maintain the voice of the child in view of the Posthuman ontology created an affect two-fold. Firstly to ensure Eleanor's voice in Chapter One remained a true reflection of her own voice in more than linguistic ways and resisting representation, and secondly to find a way of (re)telling and (re)presenting the children's lived experience which remained true to the actual event that occurred. To ensure Eleanor's voice within this narrative remained authentic I asked two of her friends, Isla aged nine and Joseph aged seven, to ask Eleanor questions about how she thinks she is viewed within our family and about our life together using some basic prompts to stimulate her memories as a (re)telling. The children were chosen as they know Eleanor well and frequently visit our home with their mum. Isla and Joseph can both read and write and helped Eleanor and I

edit the narrative to support the introduction (*Figure 33*). In respect of ethics, names have been changes and consent was obtained for the use of the photograph.

Figure 33.

Isla proof reading Eleanor's narrative whilst asking her questions

The clue for the second affect remained in the wording 'lived experience' as detailed by Macintosh and Wright (2018). Drawing back to phenomenological sensitivity van Manen (2015, p.9) stated the lived experience is *'as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize, categorize, or reflect on it'*. This promoted the use of vignettes, excerpts directly taken from the research journal detailing what and how the event unfolded. This is a further break from the dominant discourse of presenting observational data. Taking heed from Masny (2014) the role of the researcher is to read the observation in a way which allows the event to be deterritorialized and reterritorialized to enable an unfolding. Using vignettes are a method of allowing the process to happen. This is the underpinning rationale for the use of the hyphen and the brackets within representation and retelling, as outlined by Murris (2016). In the next section more conventional ethical considerations are discussed.

Ethics

Other ethical considerations were also upheld throughout the study, for as Bell (2010) expressed ethics regardless of institutional guidelines are a personal and moral guide if nothing else. Whilst conducting this research I was mindful of ensuring the process would not cause harm to any participants, would not be deceitful and would maintain all participants 'and institutions' privacy and confidentiality (Grix, 2010). Despite the inference from Bell (2010) ethical approval was granted by Northumbria University Ethics Committee and conducted following guidelines from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018).

To begin, informed consent followed a sequential process which began with gatekeepers. The lead practitioner or the headteacher who expressed an interest to participate were sent a letter clearly outlining the nature of the research and the use and any potential future use of data (Appendix two). I provided an opportunity to discuss the research prior to giving consent to avoid any ambiguity (Bryman, 2016). The option to withdraw at any time was made clear. Once the gatekeepers provided consent, they sent out a request for participation to all children in their class, containing the same levels of information within the gatekeeper letter. Once parents indicated they would participate, informed consent (Appendix three) was obtained to observe their children in their early educational setting. Consent was on an opt-in basis and the parent/guardian was given the right to withdraw their child from the study at any time. In respect of guidelines from Shaw, Brady and Davey (2011), and my guiding moral principles, assent was then obtained from the children participating in the research, as previously discussed.

To uphold principles of confidentiality the geographical locations of institutions have been removed and generic character names from *The Trolls* (2016) have been employed for the child participants. All identifiable names, addresses, codes and transcripts have been protected to avoid breaches and will be destroyed following the agreed timescale outlined within the informed consent (Farrimond, 2013). Confidentiality was maintained by storing all personal handwritten or identifiable data in a locked filing cabinet only I had access to. All interview recordings and transcriptions were stored electronically on the university network hard drive

which remains password protected. All electronic documents were also password protected to disable editing or printing; additionally, information was only stored, used or reproduced in accordance with the intended purpose and in accordance with data protection. The University hard drive was chosen as the most appropriate storage method as the service is centrally managed by an IT team and regularly backed up thus, minimising the risk of unauthorised use, loss or theft (Bryman, 2016; Farrimond, 2013).

Zooming in on an entanglement

The premise of Stake's (1995) progressive focusing has guided this research to encounter school readiness in the broader context and then through an iterative process continuously focus in on the lived experience of two-year-old children to meet the aims of the study, and answer the research questions. This is what Hohti (2016a) coined as zooming. The terminology was created in reference to writing with the aim of '*going very close to a specific event or concept, an approach which is at the same time both somewhat careless yet also detailed, in aiming at attending to entanglement*' (Hohti, 2016a, p.51). This research used the premise of zooming to attune to entanglements and classroom events listen to voices in more than verbal ways. Zooming in provided the opportunity to observe and document the intra-actions within the entanglement and analyse what it is to be a two-year-old child in early education and what it means to become-school ready; critically discerning how a child can be perceived as being and becoming within early education. Zooming in on the entanglement required two methods to gather data; semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations. In the next section I outline how reliability and validity were embedded within the process of becoming-thesis.

Refraction

Reaching the lived experience of the two-year-old child, their becoming, by zooming in on entanglements became informed by sensations and affects occurring throughout this study (Hohti, and Karlsson, 2014). The onus of this has been tied to the conceptual framework as a mode of constructing validity. It would be prudent for one to argue generalisability, that responsibility rests with the reader to recognise the implications of the study and the adopted approaches to inform other studies in the future (Fusch, Fusch and Ness, 2018; Marshell and Rossman, 2016). This statement is made as I contend no research can be value-free or free from bias (Denzin, 1978). Reliability was embedded within the research protocol conceptualised before the study commenced and is evident in the multi methods adopted as a result according to Tellis (1997). With reference to personal bias affecting credibility protocol requires data collection to be triangulated which Flick (2009) contends can reduce bias. Triangulation in qualitative study differs from those which are quantitative or mixed methods as the researcher is seeking to understand a phenomenon which is unclear and the focus is on individual meaning or multiple realities (Kakabadse and Steane, 2010). In an attempt to further mitigate any bias or value entangled within this study Denzin's (2012) premise of crystal refraction was used to influence a multiple encountering of data. This was achieved by adopting multiple methods of analysis as a mode of triangulation to provide validity, reliability and credibility, supported further by Thurmond (2001) who states multiple methods of analysis aid the process.

A case study of children's school readiness events.

Using a Case Study approach in this thesis emanated from the desire to provide in-depth knowledge of school readiness within the context of the real world, contained by a bounded system of early education (Bryman, 2016). Case Study research can produce invaluable information about real-life behaviours and reflects a collection of disciplines and theories enmeshed together to understand specific cultures from the inside out. This multidimensional position enabled me to construct explicit inter-subject knowledge because I was culturally immersed within the study, forming part of the entanglements with children (Taylor and Medina, 2013). Yin (2014) a prominent writer in the field of case study research defines this method as *'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'* (Yin, 2009, p.18), which signifies my intentions for this research.

Stake (1995, p.xi.) also defines case study research as *'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances'.* These influential definitions pay homage to achieving *'thick description'* as I circumnavigated a *'multiplicity of complex conceptual structures'* inextricably linked which some may consider *'strange, irregular, and inexplicit'* as I aim to *'grasp and then to render'* Geertz (1973, p.10) my encounters with school readiness. I understand thick description to mean observing and understanding social meanings and how they can structure and affect the research participant's world (Mills, Durpos and Wiebe, 2010). With specific reference to case study research, with the potential to generate thick descriptions demands, I can identify *'operational links … traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence'* (Yin, 2009, p.9) by using a variety of methods to ensure no singular lens is used, allowing for multiple facets of information to be revealed (Baxter and Jack, 2008), so linking with triangulation.

Employing a case study strategy emerged from the pull of traditional qualitative research paradigm, however mindful of employing rhizomatic thinking which was influenced by the intra-acting philosophies and theories I conceptualize the case study approach in the same way I conceptualized classroom events (see Chapter Two, pages 40 – 48) inspired by Deleuze (1981; 1986; 1989; 1993) and the use of vignettes (Masny, 2014; 2013). To achieve this the observations and analysis methods conducted paid due regard to all matter within the entanglements (Barad, 2007). In summary, case study research can exemplify real people within real-life contexts. Its strengths lie in the rich in-depth data it can produce and the holistic picture of a phenomenon it aims to depict. There are criticisms of using a case study approach, concerning replication, bias, validity and the distinct lack of scientific value. Flyvbjerg (2006) contends these are merely misconceptions and misunderstandings regarding the aim of the research by those in opposition.

Defining the event is crucial (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2012; Mills, Durpos and Wiebe, 2010; Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) elucidates cases of interest in educational research are people and the programmes they deliver because of their uniqueness, stating *the case* can be anything; a child, classroom, a reform or a combination. For this study, school readiness which has developed from other concepts alluded to within education policy to become an explicitly referenced phrase defines the case. Explorative in nature the typology forming the basis of this study is instrumental as the process of research is influential in gaining an insight into the lived experience of the phenomenon of school readiness. This allows the research to uncover any casual relationships between the two (Yin, 2014). However, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with case study research that I explore in the next section.

Entangling disadvantages and advantages

It could be argued this case study is subjective and therefore not easily replicated, however, the participants are considered real-life experts regarding school readiness which can aid the development of knowledge, equal to a scientific contribution via the event cases. The journal entries and subsequent vignettes and any identified connections thereafter could be used to generate a theory for future studies which have the potential to be replicated, as (Walton, 1992, p.129) argues case study findings *'are likely to produce the best theory'.* I accept not all the event cases within this thesis can be replicated because of their uniqueness (Yin, 2014; Stake, 1995) but I gain reassurance from Bassey (2001) who argued the ability to generalise any study is by far outweighed by its reliability. Building on a contribution to knowledge my event cases engage with all available sources of data connected to school readiness, clearly outlining rhizomatic connections to move past mere description to demonstrate an understanding which yields the potential to inform practice and disrupt current thinking (Mills, Durpos and Wiebe, 2010). This evidences the advantageous nature of case study research to expand knowledge of complex and contemporary issues (Yin, 2014).

Sensations that glow

Careful consideration was given to choosing an analysis method most suited to this thesis as it blurred the binary boundaries of traditional and non-traditional research. To arrive at an analysis method, I re-immersed myself in the research journals and metaphorically stepped back into the entanglements, allowing the data to playback to me (Proctor and Hackett, 2017). This provided an opportunity to re-read and re-familiarise myself with the entries, to thoroughly grapple with the quantity and quality that had been produced, to ensure this thesis provided justice for the participants and (re)present their experiences which could potentially open up a communicative space to affect early years education (Denzin, 2012). Like my ontological positioning, the analysis method ruptured from within this thesis event to deterritorialize methodology and become reterritorialized by attuning to sensations which create an affect as it glows (MacLure, 2013; Masny, 2013). In this way data is encountered and seen as a living thing which has the ability to speak and create a sensation in the body by making itself *'intelligible to us'* (MacLure, 2013, p.660). This occurs when

> a fieldnote fragment or video image – starts to glimmer, gathering our attention. Things both slow down and speed up at this point. On the one hand, the detail arrests the listless traverse of our attention across the surface of the screen or page that holds the data, intensifying our gaze and making us pause to burrow inside it, mining it for meaning. On the other hand, connections start to fire up: the conversation gets faster and more animated as we begin to recall other incidents and details in the project classrooms, our own childhood experiences, films or artwork that we have seen, articles that we have read. And it is worth noting in passing that there is an affective component (in the Deleuzian sense) to this emergence of the example. The shifting speeds and intensities of engagement with the example do not just prompt thought, but also generate sensations resonating in the body as well as the brain – frissons of excitement, energy, laughter, silliness. (MacLure, 2010, p.282).

This approach is two-fold; creating a sensation in the body and also in the brain (MacLure, 2013). According to Pierre (1997) this troubles the usual and Cartesian notion of logic and interpretation by aiming to understand what is being produced within entanglements, such as a school ready child (Deleuze, 1994). This is a movement beyond the binds of mere linguistics and the influence of language in everyday lives to conceive the lived experience as something which emanates from the intra-action, a convergence of human

and more-than-human matter (Masny, 2013). This could be 'turning to notice' a moment in time, an action, a smell, a sneer, or even an eye-roll which glows (MacLure, 2013). To portray these events and sensations vignettes are used as Masny (2013) explains they form an assemblage with sensations which have deterritorialized knowledge; a sensation will be written in **bold** hereafter. St Pierre (1997) argues this makes the process of creating and disseminating vignettes transgressive, by writing the sensation in bold affords the analysis the capacity to bring forth the intangible and virtual to affect the process of reading, a reading of the world and a reading of the self without centring the human (Masny, 2013).

The *Actual* Methods
Progressively focusing on school readiness at a local level

The iterative process embedded within the research design influenced the generation of data at a local level. This was achieved by developing focus groups with early years practitioners within the region which is progressive focusing as discussed by Stake (1995), and heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). The focus group participants were actively employed within a pre-school provision offering free early education and care for two-year-old children. These requirements formed the participant selection criterion and the application of purposive sampling (Bryman, 2016). Social media sites and pre-established educational contacts were used to recruit the participants. In total two local authority early years improvement managers, one pre-school manager, three early years practitioners, and two pre-school assistants agreed to take part in the focus group. All of the participants were unconnected. A choice of venue, dates and times were provided in an attempt to negate any power imbalances and allow a space for participants to freely discuss their experiences, feelings, and perspectives of school readiness (Foucault, 1980). A note-taker, unconnected to the study, was employed to accurately detail the thoughts and feelings expressed by the participants during the two-hour session. The session was also audio recorded to support the analysis process.

The focus group was opened by posing the question *'What is your understanding and/or experience(s) of school readiness'*, I then facilitated the conversation by posing provocations. The questions for the focus groups were formulated following the mechanics of questioning discussed by Morgan and Krueger (1998) and followed the trajectory of opening, introductory, transition, key and ending questions; thus, extrapolating a broad exchange of feelings and motivations regarding school readiness at a local level (Morgan and Krueger, 1998). All participants actively engaged with the process and unanimously shared a consensus regarding the discourse of school readiness, evidencing a community of practice approach (Wenger, 1980). The consensus was based on their individual experiences gained during their practice. The data which

emerged from the focus group was used to inform the final and most in-depth stage of my research; 'turning to notice' the lived experience of school readiness from the perspective of the two-year-old child. The children and early years settings that participated in this study will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Entangling with big humans

Semi-structured interviews are considered an effective method for exploring perspectives of complex concepts such as school readiness (Bryman and Cassell, 2006). The semi-structured interviews accessed practitioner perspectives of school readiness to aid my understanding of affect within the practitioner's entanglements with two-year-old children; as Denscombe (2010) states semi-structured interviews are used to gather in-depth and rich data which supplements and enhances research findings. Consequently, the participants were given greater autonomy within the research process as they contributed to the co-construction of knowledge. The semi-structured interviews helped to develop a rapport with the participants by providing the space and opportunity to talk in more depth regarding school readiness, enabling the practitioners to attribute meaning to actions and for personal thought patterns to emerge (Bryman, 2012; Denscombe, 2010). The semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity to eliminate ambiguity by probing for more detail or introducing new lines of questioning based on a participant response (Whiting, 2008).

The interview questions were constructed from gaps in the literature review and further informed by the analysis of the 'walk with me' encountering of school readiness and the focus group. In the traditional sense this is cited as a 'go along' interview which is a mixture of interview and observation. The researcher would 'go along' with the research participant on an outing, occurring in a natural environment as the participant goes about their usual activities (Kinney, 2017). Here school readiness is a non-human participant, and to recreate what I have encountered as school readiness goes about everyday activities I have reconceptualized the 'go along' interview as a chapter, this serves to act as a metaphorical walk with me through my intra-actions with school readiness. For the semi-structured interviews, the initial questions were trialled with a person unconnected to the research to ensure the questions were clear, would address the aims and objectives of the study and would avoid any misconceptions or preconceived ideas. Piloting was conducted as Cousin (2009) contends piloting or trialling helps to refine questioning to ensure the interview

moves beyond simple conversation, developing a robust approach which is capable of exposing prime areas for analysis and offer the possibility to act on new information which could have been missed. In total eight semi-structured interviews were conducted, comprising of six early years practitioners and two parents of a two-year-old child.   The interviews ranged in length from 30 minutes to one-hour dependent upon the personal views and perceptions of school readiness.

Sensing the lived experience within (an) entanglement

Classroom observations are used to generate data documenting pupil, teacher and power dynamics and the multiple facets of their intra-actions according to Basit (2010). Bryman (2016) stated structured observations are employed by researchers immersed within the social setting of their subject area to construct a set of rules to adhere to during pre-determined timescales. The rules help to denote what behaviours should be observed and recorded ensuring the case study remains focused. Based on this and the rhizomatic nature of this thesis the observations were unstructured providing an opportunity to directly access the lived experience of school readiness by fluxing and flowing within or alongside the entanglements. This enabled me to see what was really happening from the child's perspective rather than constructing a personal account of what teachers or I think might be happening (Basit, 2010). The observations were aimed at documenting how the child is immersed within an entanglement, how they are perceived and the various roles they enact during their time within their setting.

The observations were detailed in a journal, as a method of capturing the natural setting to document the social processes of school readiness unique to the early years settings. This method was identified as the best way of 'turning to notice' the children's voices, as in-depth and prolonged observations in the participant's environment can engender an intimate and informal relationship, creating a more relaxed participant who will share their lived experience (Bailey and Nunan, 1996). Walshe, Ewing and Griffiths (2011) support this by stating observational research can help facilitate an understanding of a phenomenon and provoke analysis of why people do what they do in response to specific situations or phenomenon. Walshe, Ewing and Griffiths (2011) also state the role of the researcher in observational research is interchangeable and fluid, which links back to the community of practice approach and evokes the starling murmuration (Wenger, 1980). To develop the intimate and informal relationship the participating settings were visited twice weekly without an agenda over a four-week period for the sessions the children participating in this study visited, and I assumed the role of a peripheral member (Kawulich, 2005).

Accumulatively I spent twenty-four hours at each setting prior to conducting any research. Within this time, I became a familiar and a known person to all the children in the setting, moving beyond the intense attention a new person can attract, as documented in the 'walk with me' chapter. I was conscious I did not want to be perceived as a practitioner, so I used play incited by the child to develop any entanglements with the children. This was founded on waiting for the child to interact and saying thank you when I was included in their activities to offset power imbalances (Tisdall, Davies and Gallagher, 2009). Once the research process began, I introduced myself to the whole class, explaining who I was and why I was there, using the assent booklet as a visual aid. I passed around artefacts, such as my journals and my lanyard, which helped the children to create a material connection to the process and opened a communicative space for questions to be asked. My approach supports the ethical protocol of gaining assent from children and accepting they have agency and their rights.

Using (a) rhizoanalysis to think differently

Rhizoanalysis is inherent of the framework underpinning this becoming (a) thesis and builds upon my articulations of sensations which resist representation in a sedentary way (Deleuze, 2004). Taking direction from Masny (2014; 2013; 2012), Honan and Sellers (2008), O'Reily (2006) and Leander and Rowe (2006) scholars who have worked extensively to move beyond the boundaries of traditional analysis to articulate what rhizoanalysis is and what it does, I deeply engaged with the rhizo thought process to (re)tell and (re)present the children's lived experiences (Honan and Sellers, 2008). Masny (2014) explains this provides a space in time to understand a concept in relation to being in the world at that time, like a snapshot of an event within an event. This is the process of seeking out the *'and…and…and…'* (Deleuze and Parnet, 1977, p.10) within a rhizome as the zigging and zagging concept creates an intensity within the assemblage as it passes through making aggregations between points. At this conjuncture, the intensity yields an affective capacity to provoke disruption by contextualising the intensity from the perspective of the raw lived experience and the inclusion of the researcher's voice (Honan and Sellers, 2008). This is surfacing or making the invisible, visible by way of text. This reveals the discourses in action to make audible the unspoken voice of the child (Honan and Sellers, 2008) to (co)produce data reifying the child from the perspective of the *'iii'* (Murris, 2016).

This is a *'reading, reading of the world and self through affect in assemblage'* Masny, (2012, p.80, cited in Masny and Cole, 2012) as an immanent and intense process which requires the researcher to immerse themselves heavily in the (co)constructed data and reflect on their emergent sensations. This allows the raw telling of the children's events to be (re)presented in the same manner they unfolded and folded in situ, to give the reader a raw experience of the child's becoming alongside the becoming (a) thesis, forming part of the rhizome. Within this process I as the researcher become decentred, like the child within the events, relinquishing control of the analytical process to allow for lines of flight and sensations to disrupt, enabling the virtual sense of the event to become actualised through the rhizo thought process (Masny, 2013). This

is a transgressive approach which repudiates the notion of categorisation in the traditional sense but moves toward deterritorializing methods in a non-traditional way to trouble and problematize signifiers (St. Pierre, 1997) by *'plugging in'* to school readiness (Masny, 2013, p.339). Deleuze and Guattari (1994) stated by plugging into the rhizomatic flux and flow of a concept and the events it passes through requires an air of uncomfortableness to be embraced due to the loss of certainty, reliance on fixed images and transparency. However, Leander and Rowe (2006) argue this provides a new space for research to move beyond preconceptions and ask new questions adding a uniqueness to the research.

I accept conducting rhizoanalysis can be considered unpredictable with an air of uncertainty, however the philosophical intensive, affective capacities within this thesis calls for this research to embrace the unpredictability and move away from fixed images which inform our truths and knowledge to deterritorialize school readiness (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994). Masny (2014) explains employing rhizoanalysis disrupts the ethnographic normalcy which becomes subject centred. By using vignettes as an entry point, directly taken from my research journals, a raw telling of the child's lived experience is (re)presented which can form the basis of provocations, creating new ways of thinking about, with and through school readiness in early education creating an exit point (Masny, 2014). This moves the ethnographic elements of this research to mirror children's becoming in the world rather than just their being in the world (Masny, 2014). What constitutes as reading is linking the event unfolding around you to read it through your own experiences and in relation to how you are in the world (Masny and Cole, 2009) such as I did with *The Trolls* (2016) in Chapter One. These fragments individually and together create connections and ruptures extending the rhizome of the child to aggregate with concepts such as equality or agency. My reading of the vignettes is informed by Sellers (2015) and following their presentation there will be an afterword titled *'Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption'* to move uncodeable data, the embodied event, and my silent conversations into words and problematize school readiness in writing through (a) rhizoanalysis (St. Pierre, 1997).

The rhizoanalysis can also be loosely linked to a more traditional ethnographic analysis process of 'explanation building' (Yin, 2014, p,141) which is pattern matching, emerging from the readings producing the vignettes. The end goal is to build a potential explanation of the phenomenon of school readiness according to the participant's lived experiences. It is vital to note in explanation building the study is not concluded with a definitive answer(s) which can be generalised, the aim is to highlight or identify the potential for further study - attesting to the openness and fluidity of becoming. This naturally occurs as the analysis makes causal links between occurrences which can be difficult to measure, such as translating policy into practice. Conclusively the eventual explanation provides a series of iterations which refine the case studies to provide a plausible overview of a phenomenon. The analysis and findings may link to pre-existing theory, however, due to the uniqueness of the case this is not always possible therefore new theory may be developed in the future (Yin, 2014; Tellis, 1997; Stake, 1995). This method of analysis was applied to the focus groups.

Mindful of embedding validity and reliability by conducting multiple methods of analysis I applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) sequential stages of thematic analysis to the research transcripts as a way of drawing out key themes. This was considered a suitable due to the lack of an allegiance with any one theoretical approach. The intended aim of this approach is not to reach a definitive conclusion of what is occurring, aligning with my intentions not to interpret the children's lived experiences. Ultimately Braun and Clarke (2006) position thematic analysis as a tool which enables researchers to examine events, realities or experiences by following six sequential stages which could be argued as beginning with transcription. Due to the lengthy time invested in transcribing interviews, I was afforded with the initial opportunity to familiarise myself with the data which emerged during the interview process, something which becomes enhanced through my re-reading of the transcripts. I then initially coded the transcripts and began to search for themes to hone and define. The construction and defining of themes was a movement between reading, identifying, searching and locating details within the responses. The emergent themes from the initial map were

continuously coded resulting in six main themes and three sub themes and are outlined and confirmed by statement is Chapter Six.

Zones of Indiscernibility and the entanglements

Using the zooming and rhizoanalytical approach I illuminate five entanglements in Chapter Six which are comprised of space, materials, early years practitioners, a child and me. At various times other children exit and enter the entanglement as do other people or things. In this section, I introduce the settings and the children who agreed to share their lived experiences. To maintain their anonymity and confidentiality I have ascribed pseudonyms which were influenced by *The Trolls* (2016). The settings were chosen following an open invitation to take part in the research. Originally only four children were entangled in the in-depth becoming (a) thesis event, however, this increased to five. For example, Creek's entry point in this research resulted from my involvement with a local authority and through a mutual friend.

Zone one.

Zone one is situated in a town with mixed levels of socioeconomics and is one of four primary schools in the area. In 2016 the primary school setting was judged as good by Ofsted and the pre-school received a grading of outstanding. The setting is attached to a state-funded primary school and considered a feeder. The setting has an allocation for 30 places and is **oversubscribed** with 46 children on roll. The setting is staffed by practitioners, five are qualified to level 3. There is one member of staff qualified to level 5, an early years practitioner who is the deputy manager of the provision. Inside the setting, there were several static areas which did not change during my time there, such as the reading corner, the role play area and the small world area. There was one area which did change over time influenced by topics, and the changes included materials, presentation and resources. For example, at Christmas, the area was snow-related and prior to that, it was dinosaur themed. The setting had a visible kitchen, but entry was only permissible to staff. The children had access to an outdoor area and a woodland section. The woodland section was not open access and use of the area was **scheduled**. There were various wall displays including **a family picture board**, numbers and letter displays and a mark making display. There was a carpet area with a stereo and an interactive whiteboard.

Entanglement 1

Branch is a two-year-old boy who has no siblings and resides with both parents close to the setting. His keyworker is a practitioner qualified to level 3 and he attends pre-school every morning from 9.00 am until 11.45 pm, funded using the two-year-old offer. His Grandma works at the setting on a part-time basis. Branch is energetic, lively and full of vigour.

Entanglement 2

Poppy is a two-year-old girl who has an older sister and resides with both her parents a few miles from the setting. Her key worker is qualified to level 3 and she attends pre-school three mornings a week as she is struggling to transition from home to school. Poppy is quiet and reserved in comparison to her peers.

Zone two

Setting 2 is in a town considered affluent and is one of eight preschools in the area. The setting received a grading of good from Ofsted in 2014 and the feeder school is judged as Outstanding. The setting has a capacity to enrol thirty children but is **oversubscribed** and has forty children on roll. The setting employs five early years practitioners qualified to level 3 and is managed by a practitioner qualified to level 5. The setting is in a **shared building** alongside a community outreach programme for vulnerable adults. Inside the setting, there are various static areas including sand and water play, a puzzle and problem-solving area, a **twinkle resource desk** with mark making facilities, a role-play section, **two-story areas** one for two-year-old children and another for three years old and above. There is a carpet area with a stereo. Outside children can access a limited area to play which is **scheduled by staff and is weather permitting**. During snack-time, children must access another room on a **rotation basis as the space is not big enough for all children** to attend at the same time.

Entanglement 1

Creek is a two-year-old boy who does not have any siblings and resides at home with both his parents. Creek regularly spends time with his grandmother and together they attend several playgroups in the area. Creek attends the setting every morning five days a week, he is very confident and has an extensive vocabulary and converses with ease. His key worker has worked at the setting for one year and previously worked at a private setting but was **unhappy with the provision for play and the prescription of the curriculum.**

Entanglement 2

Suki is a two-year-old girl who does not have any siblings and resides at home with her mum. Suki's mum works at the setting but is not her key worker. She attends the setting all day, five days a week, partly funded by the two-year-old offer and the remainder privately. Suki's key worker has worked at the setting for seven years and is qualified to level 3 and manages the provision. Suki is shy and reserved with new people but confident with her peers.

Zone 3

Zone 3 is a private provision graded as outstanding by Ofsted in a rural village. The setting has spaces for forty-nine children but only has twenty-seven on roll. The setting employs nine members of staff qualified mainly to level 3. Inside the setting, the children had several areas they can visit including a mark making area, a paint/play-doh/water area which is rotated. There was a reading corner and technology corner which housed a **computer and interactive whiteboard** the children could use when supported by practitioners. Access to the outdoor area was **always permitted** and not hindered by the weather. Outside the children had access to a **wealth of ride-on vehicles, water areas, mud kitchen, small woodland area and a platform which resembles a stage**.

Entanglement 1

Through contacts, I was entangled with a parent and their child to discuss family support and child development. The parent wanted to gain a further understanding of how children learn to talk and how this links to cognitive development. The child I met was turning two and he had limited vocal communication. When misunderstood he would become frustrated and react.   Cooper's home environment was stable, and he displayed a strong bond with his mother. Cooper attended a preschool with wrap-around care and established a strong bond with his key worker at the setting. I visited the family home several times and shared conversations around his routine, their routine, their lifestyle together and the activities they engaged in. I did this as a parent of a two-year-old child sharing common ground and facilitated a relationship with the mother and Cooper. I witnessed Cooper play at home and outside of his secure settings and became familiar to him. As I watched Cooper play I could not help but think **of him in relation to school readiness** and what would be expected of him in the classroom in view of his recent diagnosis of Autism.

It was at this stage of our relationship I explained my research and asked if mum would agree for their story to be shared from the perspective of school readiness. Mum consented to take part in the study and gave her consent for Cooper to be included creating a new entry point. The previous phases assumed and focused on children considered as developing according to expectant milestones and therefore the categorisation or labelling of school readiness would be based on this. But what if a child has a special educational need or impairment as highlighted in the literature? I am not suggesting children with impairments are not school ready or lacking in capacity to their peers, my new and disrupted thinking was based on accessing a previously unconsidered experience of school readiness. Although this was not a major focus of this study the thinking could not be overlooked, leading to interviews with two parents, whose children with an impairment, on their perspectives of school readiness and how they felt it influenced or shaped the educational journey for their child.

Is this just a story?

My turn to the material and sensual world erupted throughout this journey rendering my position as somewhat of a novice (Ellis and Levy, 2009). Despite this, enmeshing the case study with events in time helped to guide the research to locate and access the lived experiences, the expressions of agency, subjectivity and reconceptualising the child's voice by attuning to the body in communication with the material world. Research which illuminates the lived experience of two-year-old children through their voice is unique; to date, as no research disrupts or problematizes the current ideology of school readiness whilst disclosing the two-year-old child's voice simultaneously. Underscoring this is that working at the limits of research in early education could be considered a limitation. What culminates in this thesis is a collection of stories becoming narratives, becoming a (re)presentation of the child's voice by evidencing a process wherein I have thought, felt, done and analysed the story/narrative/voice continuum to understand and unmask what matters to children regarding their entanglement with school readiness (Jude, 2017; Rooney, Lawlor and Rohan, 2016) . Objectivity emerges strongly as I have been from the outset immersed in the becoming researcher and becoming thesis (van de Vijver and Demarest, 2013) However, my positionality in this research has been clear from the outset in my writing and during my entanglements.

The events, voices and post-human children entangled within this thesis represent a small-scale study. This could be considered a limitation according to Bryman (2016) as it is difficult to generalise the findings to replicate future studies. However, the aim was to reach the unique voice of the child which renders the argument for generalisable findings mute. The findings which do emerge throughout, offer the potential to develop a further study to see whether the affective events are replicable in other settings. The premise of further research validates the voice which has been unmasked within this process and does not detract from the valuable contribution to research this thesis offers in the discourse of early education (Denscombe, 2010).

No longer fit for purpose

At the preliminary stage of the research, accessing children's voice underpinned the aims of the study; as this progressed it remained the focus but in a different way due to the shift in my ontological positioning. This led to rethinking the original intentions of adopting the Mosaic Approach as outlined by Clark and Moss (2011) to validate the voice of the child. The voice of the child is positioned as paramount in the research process and Clark and Moss (2011) explain this can be achieved by adopting mix methods ranging from tours, maps and photography. This approach progresses via stages to use dialogue and reflection as the researcher and child co-construct meaning (Walsh, 2011). The dialogue and reflection act as a disruption to open new lines of flights and consider possibilities for the area of focus (Clark and Moss, 2011). I originally intended to use child tours, maps and photography to access, in part, the lived experience of the child. To determine the plausibility and suitability of this method I asked Eleanor to conduct a pilot study.

Eleanor demonstrated the ability to take photographs, took me on a tour of her preschool and enabled me to map her interests but this did not align with the aim of uncovering her experience of school readiness. The photographs did not provoke discussion or open a communicative space for (re)flection. This was largely due to her age, without the inference of limiting her ability, they showed what mattered at that moment such as a book, a plant, a car or her face. What stimulated and enthused Eleanor one day did not hold the same attraction the next. The use of objects to generate her subjectivity also changed. This understanding strengthened my material turn as it emerged all matter mattered to Eleanor and no preference could be ascribed at that time for an object, space or place. Eleanor passed through places in my observation and used numerous objects to reify her subjectivity and agency which became unmasked when I 'turned to notice' her moving in and through her educational zone. The entanglement emerged at the location where lived experiences were created and affected, resulting in the method changing to observations.

The use of GoPro's in this research with children was also considered and ethical approval was sought and granted by Northumbria University. The aim was to detail the lived experience directly from the child's perspective as they would wear them strapped to their body with minimal intervention for outsiders as conceivably possible. Assent and informed consent was obtained from various parent, but, the use of the recording equipment was abandoned for several reasons. Firstly, when piloted the children were most concerned with recording their own faces in a zooming fashion, and obtaining footage resulted in practitioners intervening which skewered the aims of the method. Secondly ethical implications arose in (re)telling the child's experience of school readiness as I would have to do this by excluding children not included in the study. Finally, when the time did arrive to use the GoPro's the classroom observation elements of this research had metamorphosed, therefore first-hand observations prevailed as the most suitable method.

This chapter has outlined the methodological approaches subsumed within this thesis, detailing why the research design drew on sensual autoethnography due to my involvement within the narrative which runs throughout this thesis. I outlined a progressively refocused approach which culminated in zooming in on the entanglement to access the lived experience. In outlining the methods, I used I have provided an overview of why those particular methods were considered the most appropriate by highlighting methods I considered no longer fit for purpose. I now turn to my own tracing of school readiness as a preliminary phase to data collection, I will outline my thinking by highlighting sensations which have created an affect.

Chapter Five

'Walk with me':

Tracing my experience of school readiness

Figure 34.

A picture illustrating a 'walk with me' journey, hand in hand.

This chapter is a diffracted literature review which makes physical my exploration of school readiness. It creates emergent themes which guided the observation of the entanglement. This is an entry and exit point within my journey of becoming thesis which began with the report '*What does 'school ready' really mean?*' (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years (PACEY) 2013) and this chapter details my reactions. The initial tracing of the semiotic chains proceeded to include a wealth of policy documents, academic articles, local authority strategic plans and research linked to the roll-out of the two-year-old provision in early education. In part the initial tracing formed the basis of the literature review in Chapter Three. This created a new line of flight to observe, feel and experience school readiness, spurring a desire to encounter the characters of school readiness by '*plugging in', similar* to agitating soil and disrupting the ground (Masny, 2013, p.339).   I attended conferences, events, and training aimed at individuals working within the early years and events aimed at working with two-year-old children. I cannot categorise the tracing of school readiness as a phase of data collection per se; but I do describe it as an illuminative process which was rhizomatic, creating fluxes and flows emanating from a sensation which created an affect.

Why trace my lines of flight?

Within the theoretical framework, I explained I would trace school readiness to produce a cartographic map based on intensities which I felt whilst reading the document published by PACEY (2013). Within the document, the co-functioning of education and school readiness depicted multiplicities between social policy, professionals, educationalists, families and Government. Although the growth of the rhizome was acknowledged within the report it exemplified there is no specific origin of school readiness. However, the concept can be mapped through semiotic chains (de Saint-Georges and Weber, 2013). A metonymical cross-referencing of school readiness acknowledges my inability to locate an exact point of origin and endorses why *The Plowden Report* was chosen as an entry point for the literature review. Frigerio *et al.,* (2018) provides additional weight to this by explaining reaching a definitive conclusion on where the concept began would prove impossible as it has morphed from inference and has been influenced by many factors. As I continued on my journey of becoming, I invoked the starling murmuration becoming rhizomatic to trace school readiness (Deleuze, 1984). The 'walk-with-me' tracing of school readiness within the wider discourse is my presentation of sensations and affects linked to school readiness creating an autobiographical (re)telling which has affected this becoming thesis.

I have chosen to (re)present my encountering of school readiness as a (pre)lude to the emergent data in Chapter Six and my (re)presentation of the child's lived experience, to draw the reader into my world as if we were side by side. I used a journal throughout this becoming-thesis and my becoming-researcher to continuously make and document sensations, such as feelings, observations and conversations. I ascribe the utmost importance to my (re)flective journal as a method and tool guiding which informed my decisions and choices to explore other concepts connected to school readiness. This enables me to create transparency within my journey as I:

make it clear how the researcher's own experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies have influenced their research interests, the way they choose to do their research, and the ways they choose to represent their research findings. (Harrison, MacGibbon, and Morton, 2001, p.325).

As I (re)read my journals and I was taken back to a personal experience of education which created the entry point for school readiness. Following Eleanor's birth, I was employed within a Nursery and Infant School in an area considered deprived. As part of the senior leadership team, I was responsible for delivering policy in practice but not as a teacher. Part of my role was engaging with the community to communicate how education can break cycles of deprivation, manage the data for closing the attainment gaps and ensuring the school conformed to the requirements and expectations of the governing body. Within this role, the concepts of deprivation, attainment, national averages, requirements and expectations existed as characters with a purpose. For example, using free school meals and attainment simultaneously creates an image within our thinking shaping perceptions. This explains further Deleuze and Guattari's (1994, p.81) point which states *'A concept has meaning only in relation to an image of thought to which it refers'.* Questioning their existence did not develop within the community of practice as they (re)produced the meanings of the images (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, simultaneously the characters created an entry point for school readiness with an affective capacity. In the next section I narrate my journey of experiencing school readiness which will detail how school readiness might be cut together-apart to think differently (Barad, 2003).

When agency as distributed and not defined in terms of humans or non-humans we enact agential cuts when researching phenomena. The cut serves to provide a moment of stability. In a documented interview Barad states an agential cut is *'cross-cutting the cutting, reiteratively reconfiguring thought/ doing/matter/meaning without end'* (Juelskjael and Schwennesen, 2012, p.19). This is a dis\continuity that is enacted by one move which does not creativity or innovation but indebts itself to the entanglement of past and the future (Juelskjael and Schwennesen, 2012).

Entry Point School Readiness

My role within the school had become organised and stratified, delineated within a binary presupposition of readiness and unreadiness (Malins, 2004). Initially, I would previously have argued this was a result of my desire to be successful within my role. However, it was the reassuring model of consistency and social norms my role afforded, this underpinned my personal movement toward strata and limitation. Yet, this can never remain stable if we question and challenge the status quo as we seek out a new becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984). There is an impetus for change within us all which I faced when I metaphorically came face to face with school readiness. When faced with a concept within a multiplicity we have a choice to accept or question. If it is accepted the need to question its existence is rendered as irrelevant. However, if we seek to question what the concept is and what it can do, we run the risk of modifying our thoughts. By the nature of questioning in the first instance, to accept or contend, signifies this is the result of an impetus which can be subconscious or conscious. I now affirm this was my becoming restratified and *'lured by, the socius'* (Malins, 2004, p.88) territorialised within a comfort zone. On one particular day I left for the house for work to work with the leadership team to continue to plan a two-year-old provision. As I dropped Eleanor off at her day care setting within a school I witnessed a two-year-old child walk through a school door sucking on a dummy, wearing a school uniform, clinging to his mother crying and questioning "will you come back?"

The child provided a momentary statement using his body in communication to articulate at that time in space school readiness had manufactured a preparational phase to become-school ready. There is now a clear distinction the school ready child will be competent in several skills or abilities informed by the early learning goals. Historically, PACEY (2013) stated the current understanding of school readiness is not what was originally intended highlighting a discord between rhetoric and reality. Reusing the machine analogy put forward by Deleuze and Guattari (1983) and reconceptualising policy and school readiness as connected machines, it is important to acknowledge what is occurring in between the two machines as this is where

knowledge can be deterritorialized and reterritorialized. This serves as a prelude to data collection and reaching lived experiences. Uncovering what is happening between the two desiring machines is reflected within the theoretical framework and could be contributing to the emphasis on acquiring skills and abilities as a measure of school readiness. The tangibility of the skills or abilities subsequently frames school readiness as a social responsibility for anyone working with children (Ladd, 2005). This creates a multiplicity with others such as health visitors, family support workers creating a movement beyond the sphere of education which evidences rhizomatic connections; linked to the discussion of the fragmentary whole (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). This movement towards a collective agreement that all of society need to develop children to a certain standard, to become competent in a set of skills and abilities, determined by age could be argued as stratification which provides the constancy Malins (2004) described.

My previous acceptance for all children to perform within a predefined spectrum as the 'norm' was challenged. As I read around normalising childhood and behaviours of children in education, I learnt of a movement called *Freedom to Learn* chaired by Dr Max Hope. The movement attracted British Educational Research Association (BERA) funding to unpick whether challenging the current status quo of education could improve children's experiences, reduce social and educational inequalities and have a positive impact. During the conference in Edinburgh, many keynotes spoke, but two provoked my thinking the most. Sue Palmer, author and Chair of Upstart Scotland spoke at length about how childhood has become toxic. With three distinct references to education, Sue Palmer stated the reduction of play within the early years and the formalisation of education, explicitly for two-year-old children attending pre-school provision, is responsible for decreasing the natural development of independence and their social and emotional skills. Schoolification was also discussed by making links to formalising the early years and homogenising children through the erosion of play (Ring and O'Sullivan, 2018; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012).

The second keynote Diane Reay, a renowned author and Professor of Education at Cambridge University, discussed her own experiences of education. Diane described how judgements and values were consciously made about her because of her family's socioeconomic status; which resonates with my own personal experience. However, Diane Reay went on to argue the status quo of education is unjust, and in her paper following the keynote, argued:

> we have an educational system characterised by low autonomy and high accountability in which neither teachers nor children are adequately respected and trusted. Instead, classrooms should be environments where the main concern is learning not control... teaching is all about getting children to perform well in relation to very narrow, test-driven targets. (Reay, 2015).

Both keynotes argued the culture of all facets of education has shifted to adopt a more formal approach to meet prescribed standards and deliver outcomes through testing. Within this rhetoric parents become part of the culture by developing and maintaining the status quo (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), they become stratified and territorialized. This can be linked back to the development of false consciousness and the legitimisation of a truth within society which calls us to respond in a manner which is guided by an invisible hand (Darrow, 2010; Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1991). This perspective of grouping people and normalising children in respect of attainment, meeting educational standards and conforming to these discourses form part of the multiplicity.

My experience at Edinburgh led to a new line of flight, to view the culture of education and to witness intra-actions and observe the lived experience directly on a large scale. The Education Show held at Birmingham MAC provided the opportunity to observe and intra-act with an educational culture in action in one location inclusively; as the event attracts approximately 10,000 attendees and within excess of 300 exhibitors. Held over two days the Education Show describes the event as '*Educating and inspiring [as a] recognised education & learning community platform. Offering innovative ideas, resources, and insight to enhance passion for pedagogy*' (The Education Show, 2017). As I entered the venue the amount of activity was breath-taking, and the expanse of the venue was overwhelming. There was a remarkable business feel with persons

or companies showcasing their products to educationalists. It felt like an old-fashioned street market, similar to those once filling the banks of Newcastle Quayside on a Sunday afternoon. Marketers were miked up and pitching their goods vying for buyers to come and listen. It was a hard sell. It was almost possible to forgive the furore surrounding the speaker platforms as without the sales from the businesses the keynotes may not have been possible, an issue which has been raised by Nutt (2016) and Ball (2013a). This interconnectedness and interdependence is a reflection of the orchid and wasp (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) as they keynote is becoming-seller and the seller is becoming-keynote. The connection to economics emerged as a sensation and linked my thought back to the title of school's business manager at work, something I previously overlooked. Interjecting business model qualities within education places children as a commodity where they can become a consumer or be consumed (Wyness, 2018). This also creates a connection to the neoliberalist agenda discussed in Chapter Three.

I attended several keynotes throughout the day and two addresses specifically created an affect. Kevin McLaughlin, a primary school teacher, described himself as the round peg in a square hole. He advocated there should be no one size fits all approach in education and because of his ethos he transformed his classroom to enable children to create unique journeys. His perspective of children was clearly articulated as he argued the whole class approach inevitably means some children will be left behind. To overcome this, he stated education should be a balance between the child's agenda, their pace of learning and the curriculum. However, his standpoint is about developing practitioner knowledge of the child, something which takes time. This creates a tension with current transitional movements of the child which is regimented (Foucault, 1979; Van Gennep, 2010). Schoolification emerges strongly at this point again (Ring and O'Sullivan, 2018; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012) and links to the provocations put forward by Illich (2011) regarding the purpose of education. McLaughlin's pedagogical approach begins to decentre developmental theories to read them diffractively and in conjunction with each other as he begins to reconceptualize the child (Murris, 2016).

The second address was titled 'Growth Mindset', a method of promoting learning in children by adopting an 'I can do' attitude to learning as intelligence is developed (Muncaster and Clarke, 2016). The address was delivered by Nadia Hussain, the winner of the Great British Bake-Off series in 2015. In her address she discussed barriers to her success, and how developing a more positive attitude toward her own competencies, skills and pursuing her desires enabled her to overcome these barriers. The emerging discussion between the keynote facilitator and Nadia significantly focused on the 'not being able' to achieve as an inherent personal trait, and the barriers to becoming successful ultimately came from Nadia's own disbelief she could achieve anything. This is exemplified by her winner's acceptance speech *"I'm never gonna put boundaries on myself ever again. I'm never gonna say I can't do it. I'm never gonna say 'maybe'. I'm never gonna say, 'I don't think I can.' I can and I will"* [Hussain, 2017]. Nadia's discussion epitomised the pressure to be ready, reach attainments and to meet goals suggesting even she has felt the affect of school readiness in a different guise.

Entries in my journal regarding this event were initially of confusion. Nadia Hussain is a middle-aged, married woman, who has a stable home environment, typically argued as middle class, with low confidence and a diagnosed panic disorder. Her personal journey to achieve a high-profile cookery competition and achieve success as a journalist, writer and ambassador for children holds only one obvious link to education; growth mindset. Hussain's achievements were not based on an academic struggle. These barriers stemmed from the opportunity to develop self-confidence as part of her education and an ability to challenge the normative behaviours within her own becoming to build upon these successes in later life. The sensation which emerged was connected to Nadia's identity and agency. Nadia's focus on being the ideal pupil, she proclaims on her website, meant her capacity to be socially and emotionally competent were overlooked which has proliferated throughout her life, she explains;

'Your wings were clipped somewhere along the way, but I think it's time for you to fly'. So, I entered Bake Off because he was right. I had lost myself in the madness that is life, I was everything, a daughter, a sister, a wife a mother but I still was nowhere near finding me (Hussain, 2017).

The passage endorses the affective capacity the concept of deficiency can create, simultaneously evidencing her fragmentary whole and illuminates the connections between concepts affecting our identity (Osgood *et al.,* 2013). As I continuously diffract Hussain's (re)presentation of her lived experience she epitomises a neoliberalist success by challenging herself to reach the level of citizenship set by others as she took account for her own success (Sims, 2017; Foucault, 1982). Moreover, the event Hussain unfolds epitomises Fairclough's (2002, p.13) discussion of '*technologies of discourse'* where knowledge creates consumers within an '*order of production'* which is based on desire (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977, p.296). Effectively Hussain moved within the lines of transversal communication within the molecular and molar line to facilitate her own becoming.

Throughout the day it became apparent behaviour management is the core concern of many schools and classrooms. The number of stands, exhibits and speakers discussing classroom behaviours and pupil management was incontestable. Each exhibit and stand paid significant attention to stickers, classroom behaviour charts and certificates. The wording pertaining to targets (see *Figure 35*) and to 'keep it up' evidences a relentless focus on continuing to achieve and meet prescribed levels. Some stickers focused on the child's ability to sit and listen and reinforcing conformative behaviours (West, 2015).

Figure 35.

An example of stickers available to buy at Birmingham MAC Education Show.

The sensation emanating from my encounter with the sticker stall was to question 'what about the child who cannot achieve what is asked of them? What about the child who has an impairment or is in childcare? What about the child who is disadvantaged? What if the event bears no relevance to the child? The use of stickers is legitimising the truth of meeting attainment levels set by a universal provision which does not cater to individuality or difference.

Following on from the educational event at Birmingham I returned to my research questions, specifically question one - what is the two-year-old child? This affected a change of direction, I wanted to intra-act with any training or conferences aimed at supporting practitioners and early years settings in preparation for enrolling two-year-old children in their setting. I used previous educational contacts to scope events and in total, I attended eight training days and five conferences, which I consider events in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense all with the potential to affect and be affected. Two of these events were poignant, creating sensations. The first was a training conference titled 'Play, Progress and Achievement: Exploring Learner-centred

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Practice' by Dr Ferre Laevers (2015); the second was 'Learning and development with two-year-olds' by Kate Reed (2016) from the early years company EYPS. Both events focused on how children learn, the environment and how practitioners could maximise the learning experience for the child. Although sharing common ground the way they were pitched was entirely different.

Dr Ferre Laevers, based at the Research Centre for Experiential Education at the University of Leuven in Belgium, discussed a new educational model for pre-school which began in 1976 saying;

> twelve Flemish pre-school teachers, assisted by two educational consultants, start a series of sessions with the intention to reflect critically upon their practice. Their approach is 'experiential': the intention is to make a close, moment by moment description of what it means to a young child to live and take part in the educational setting. This careful observation and 'reconstruction' of the child's experiences brings to light a series of unsatisfactory conditions. Too many opportunities to sustain children's development remain unused.

Experiential education and learning is focused on and driven by establishing the quality of provision in relation to the outcome by placing emphasis on the process of learning. The outcome is judging the wellbeing and involvement of the children attending the provision from their perspective. The keyword in Dr Ferre Laevers keynote was concentration, explaining the levels of concentration children themselves attribute to their own entanglements with things engenders a deep level of learning, which is spurred by their energy and stimulation of things. This reflects a 'vital agentic materiality' with a capacity to create an affect (Bennett, 2010, p.112), which occurs as the child carves a space in time, a zone, and reflects the discussion of the child transcending '*the physical, the symbolic and sociological*' within smooth spaces (Braidotti, 2002 p.33). The keynote personified the uniqueness of two-year-old children stating their learning requires highly skilled and creative practitioners who are qualified to develop the child without an agenda. More recently this event has been discussed by Engles (2017) regarding children's creativity. Arguing findings from a longitudinal study conducted by NASA, Engles (2017) explained current educational systems diminish the child's brainpower as they are over judged, criticized and their approaches within spaces are censored, dumbing

their creativity. The event endorsed the sensation I had felt previously around the need for experiential learning and enrolling two-year-old children in a space which was never intended for them.

The next event was a training session specifically aimed at practitioner who would be entangling with two-year-old child and was delivered by Kate Reed. Her biography states Reed is a Nationally renowned Early Years Consultant with an extensive career as an Early Years Foundation Stage teacher, as an education consultant, an advisor on *Birth to Three Matters*, an Early Years Foundation Stage advisor, local authority education advisor and the co-author of *A step by step guide to the EYFS* with Linda Tallant, published in 2010. The session was interactive, and more practitioner based than the previous event, opening with information on brain development within the first three years of life and how this is related to learning. The neuroscientific discussion on neurons, synapses, pruning and density over time explained processing information, working and short-term memory, inhibitory control, flexible thinking, emotional regulation and co-regulation. The training demonstrated the developmental differences between a two-year-old and three-year-old child which problematizes the two-year-old offer in relation to meeting the diverse needs of children and builds upon the previous sensation.

The training also covered how two-year-old children make sense of their world and their meaning making processes. There was a discussion on how to engineer an environment specifically for two-year-old children and what types of resources practitioners could use. Delegates were asked to think about what a two-year-old child is in relation to skills, abilities and capabilities. Some of the responses were then discussed in relation to typical child developmental milestones. For example, one delegate stated she had expected a child to be able to pay attention more and understand the consequence of their actions within their environment. By discussing milestones, inhibitory control and flexible thinking the practitioner could understand this skill was still in a state of becoming. This was followed directly by a discussion of what motivates two-year-old children to learn. Several videos were shown of two-year olds playing and delegates were asked to remark on what

they observed. The session concluded on the concept of quality and meeting the child's needs. What emerged in my thinking was the need for two-year-old settings to ensure the learning was experientially developed through child-led play. This raises the question of whether the current curriculum within our school is fit for purpose and whether consideration of alternative formats, such as a spiral curriculum, would be more suitable (Bruner, 1960).

The next significant entry in my journal is the British Early Childhood Education Research Association Conference (2017), an independent self-funding organisation which is managed by the Centre for Research in Early Childhood. The aims of the associations are to improve the services for young children and families by creating a space for practitioners and researchers to disseminate findings. Their specific aims are using research to create a positive impact on practice, the construction of knowledge and capturing all voices within research to make a vital contribution to policy within the United Kingdom. The event was opened by keynote Colwyn Trevarthen on *'All learning is play-based'.* The address discussed the importance of play, interaction and the development of meaning within a rich environment which allowed allows a movement of play. Neuroscientific development of the child featured heavily within the keynote alongside the importance of interactions with their significant others from birth.

The overarching theme of the conference in Birmingham was 'Play-based Pedagogy: New/Re-developed Strategies for Supporting Children's Learning' in Birmingham and the presentations focused on personal research within this area. Many of the presentations alluded to or referenced school readiness. My journal documents the feelings of delegates as appalled and upset when school readiness, the formalising of the two-year-old provision, and the erosion of play were discussed. One entry details a delegate being reduced to tears when a presenter discussed how children are being equated to nothing more than a tick box. A rhetorical question posed by one delegate 'what are we doing to these little children' sparked much debate regarding the limiting of capacity some adults place on children and how education is done to children rather

than with them, raising a further debate of who is doing the learning and for what means. Schoolification of the early years emerged strongly again (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012).

This notion of limited capacity within an agenda for learning, in conjunction with school readiness, led to scoping conferences and events engaging all these themes. This was achieved by a Public Policy Exchange Conference (2017) titled 'Transforming Early Years Provision, Increasing School Readiness: Insuring all Children can reach their Potential held in London. The working party for Public Policy Exchange state they;

> hold regular interactive seminars which provide an invaluable interface for policy discussion, debate and networking…. events offer local practitioners, civil servants and other stakeholders…insight into current policy thinking… opportunity to feed into future policy development across all areas of public policy…speakers are unrivalled in calibre, ranging from government ministers and senior Whitehall officials to leading local authority figures and voluntary sector representatives.

The event was organised by keynote speakers who also formed the discussion panel to facilitate and guide the audience discussion. The panel comprised of MPs, Early Years Curriculum Advisors, Early Years Trusts, Early Excellence directors and school improvement advisors. The theme of school readiness prompted debate around how practice was currently being framed by policy, current issues of language development in the early years, the difference between readiness and unreadiness, skills and abilities which should be developed in children, the deficit approach to school readiness and the purpose and agenda of play within the early years. I felt this was the beginning of a movement toward challenging the status quo of early years education and school readiness. There were no outcomes or action points to move the debate forward to challenge emancipation, liberation or developing a space for agency to emerge which raises rhetorical questions of how we influence policy in the early years for the benefit of the child.

Getting to grips with School Readiness

This phase of experiencing school readiness was at a setting level and included ten unstructured observations covering a large geographical area ranging from Scotland to London and Cumbria. The expanse of the geographical area was critical to gaining a broad (re)presentation of school readiness and early education. By including several local authorities, it was possible to observe numerous leadership styles, educationalist approaches and local responses to school readiness. The rationale for the initial visits was to build and develop knowledge of school readiness and preschool provisions. My aim was to develop and inform my understanding of how pre-school provisions are being structured and delivered; in relation to other stages of education, namely the Foundation Stage and Later Foundation Stage. By structure what is meant is how provisions are presented, form part of school systems overall, link with school settings and how preschool provisions are delivered to children in real-world settings.

Each of the settings labelled themselves either as a preschool, nursery, infants, primary school, day-care or childcare setting. I will use two of the early years settings to depict my experience within the context of the real world. The rationale for selecting only two settings was due to their focus on school readiness within their practice and actively providing free early education and care to two-year-old children. However, this does not detract from what was learnt and observed from the other settings, discussed within the conclusion of this phase, although it would be untenable to include them all in this narrative in relation to saturation (Faulkner and Trotter, 2017). Using my journal entries, I will attempt to (re)create my encounter with the two provisions to depict a clear and visualizable tour.

Setting 1 was judged as Outstanding by Ofsted in 2014. As I walked through the setting there are many displays to support the current curriculum topics delivered within the classes. Displays exhibit children's work and include quotes from **various policies, charters and education frameworks,** for example, "every child has the right to be safe". The classrooms are organised in academic years leading to an outside play area. All doors are closed. **All the children wear school uniform.** The reception class display children's work, pertaining to the curriculum, and there are dedicated and structured play areas. Staff deliver structured activities such as story time. The class is managed by one teacher and one teaching assistant. As I walked through the space the children were being read a story.

My access to the early years space is gained by walking through the reception classroom, although, this is not the route parents would take. On approach to the provision, there is a sectioned, separate outdoor area. **I was told the space was currently under construction as a result of eighty thousand pounds in additional funding being awarded to extend their current provision to include two-year-old children**. Despite some of the outdoor provision not being finished a number of activities enabling children to engage in self-directed or risky play were on offer. The physical early years room was carefully organised and partitioned to include an eating area, quiet area, snug, activity zones and a carpet area. The walls are adorned with numerous Early Years Foundation Stage Framework **quotes and children's promises.** The provision is managed by four members of staff including one senior manager, one manager and two assistants. All the staff are qualified to Level 3 or equivalent. The children range in age from two to four. Outdoor time is **timetabled and playing on equipment is structured by sequencing children numerically.**

A typical whole class activity involves movement, working on physical development, listening, gross and fine motor skills. An observed activity comprised of three parts. Part one involved all the children running the length of the school field to catch bubbles. The field was the size of a rugby or football pitch. It was an adult-led activity based on verbal instructions. Staff assisted children who did not engage wholly in the activity or those who **could not keep up with the pace of movement.** This included verbal encouragement **or carrying the child from point A to B.** Part two involved a story which encouraged participation. Children had to re-enact the story and noises. Part 3 involved assessing a picture and expressing their personal feelings towards the activity described within the pictures. The children were seated around a table, given a pencil and verbal instructions. The staff stood at various points around the tables to provide support. **Staff leant over children to correct their work or wrote over illegible writing**. The activity culminated in a final verbal question posed to each child taking it in turn to answer. Each activity lasted approximately thirty minutes.

Setting two was judged as outstanding by Ofsted in 2014, acting as a flagship school within a hub regarding practice and collaborative working. Setting two is based within a school setting, situated next door to a Sure Start centre, and enrolled children aged two to seven. **Numerous displays supporting current curriculum topics occupy every available wall space.** The displays illustrate children's work. The classrooms are organised in academic years and lead to an outside play area. All doors are closed. Children of all ages are encouraged to wear a school uniform; however, **this is not mandatory**. The early years class has thirty-one children ranging in age from two to four and is managed by six members of staff all qualified to Level 3 including one manager, two assistants dedicated to children aged five and three assistants dedicated to children four and under.

The classroom dimensions appear larger than average with **designated areas for various activities** including reading, carpet time, quiet time, painting, play-doh and role-play. The setting has an extensive outdoor area wherein outdoor play is scheduled and visually displayed on the staff boards within the classroom. During scheduled outdoor time children are free to move between areas they choose whilst being observed by staff during their allocated and scheduled time. The outdoor activities included a sandpit, willow tree burrow, outdoor kitchen, climbing frame, hula hoops, swings and balance beams. Some play is scaffolded by one member of staff however, **children are largely left to explore on their own**. A typical whole class activity involved movement to work on physical development, listening, gross and fine motor skills as an adult-led activity using verbal instructions. Staff assisted children who did not engage wholly in the activity. This included verbal encouragement. The activity was enhanced by using a large screen projector and music. Children were required to mimic the sounds, movements and physical actions of an animal in time to the music. The activity took place in the carpet area and all staff participated. The activity lasted approximately five minutes. At various times of the day children aged between two and three used a separate room. The layout and format mimicked the reception classroom, for example, staff notice boards **regarding schedules for activities** and outdoor play and areas of play were on display. When the children were separated, they were supported by two assistants. This section of the setting was managed by one teacher **whose degree was not in early years or child development.**

This chapter provided a tracing of school readiness as I came vis-à-vis with the concept and we bumped into each other at various points. It offers up insight into the journey I have been on and that I continue to travel, as I uncover what school readiness is and how it affects early years education, more specifically how it is experienced by children. The sensations I received whilst getting to grips with school readiness by visiting provisions was the replication of structure and formalising of spaces in the early years. Each setting used wall spaces to document or highlight their ethos as if they were a pitch to parents to signify why their setting was the place they should choose, almost as if the school was setting out a stall on the wall. I was perplexed to see the splitting of play as outcome/agenda driven versus free play. Within this divide, learning erupted as an action which can only be delivered when an adult is present. It was almost as if the child's free play did not contribute to their development or learning because they were 'just playing'. Moreover, there was a clear inability for the practitioner to engage with play and remove the agenda, driving the play toward the outcome. Even when the practitioners did play it did not translate as if they were invested in the act of play with the child. In the next chapter I continue to zoom in on school readiness beginning with scoping professional perspective via a focus group and accessing their lived experiences.

Chapter Six

Encountering Data
'Cutting together-apart'
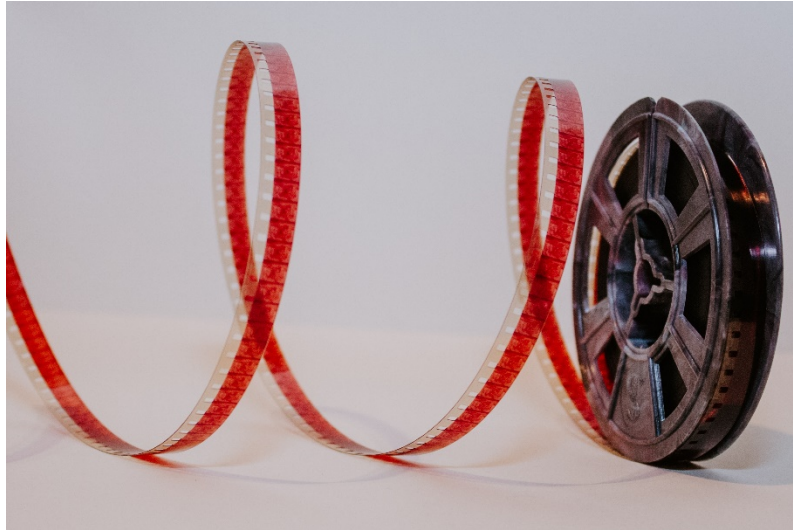
Figure 36.

A movie reel. This chapter is a presents lived experiences as if they were stills in a movie, cut from a reel.
A snapshot. A moment in time.

The entanglement of New Materialism and Posthuman inquiry affords this research the opportunity to rethink the concept of school readiness in relation to the decentred child. This created a qualitative project which focused on the intra-actions, reactions, agential cuts and cutting together-apart (Barad, 2003; 2007). Employing this approach, I positioned school readiness as a phenomenon with connected entities including non-human matter within an intra-action (Barad, 2007). Through specific intra-actions properties and boundaries of the components of phenomena become fixed, established and determinate and particular concepts and material articulations become meaningful. This is a result of material-discursive practices and also apparatus that are determinative of matter and meaning. Therefore, phenomena is/are basic units of reality that are produced between and within the flow of intra-actions. This is a shift in realism toward *'entangled material practices of knowing and becoming'* (Barad, 2007, p.56). Different phenomena can be produced by different interactions and I argue being school ready is an example of this, creating and establishing boundaries within educational practice where school readiness has become fixed and established in policy, including the Early Learning Goals, acting as an apparatus in which matter and meaning is produced such as becoming-school ready which is measurable and becoming-otherwise which is not. Here the intra-actions of the school-ready child and other phenomena *'effects an agential cut between "subject" and "object"'* (Barad, 2007, p.140). Here the cut was produced within the research-assemblage (Fox and Alldred, 2017) to see how agency is shifted with intra-actions to *'expose intraactive mattering as becomings'* (Charteris, Nye and Jones, 2020) illustrating affective capacities.

As the researcher I became *'part of and the result of ongoing intra-actions of the world'* and what constitutes as data is cut from a larger assemblage of empirical materials wherein sensation emerges at the intersection (Nordstrom, 2015, p.394). What unfolds in this chapter is a differential and flattened force where control has been relinquished, allowing the sensations to be noticed by making visible discourse and intra-connections (Monforte, 2018). These are effective forces already connected and entangled with school readiness to legitimise what is produced in those moments, or through snapshots justifying what I conceive as affective data within an *'enactment among research-data-participants-theory-analysis'* (Mazzei, 2013, p.733). The

interactions give rise to transformations for the topic and the data to remove oppressive binary opposites, mattering relevance to re-turn to school readiness and the intra-actions. This a metonymical mapping of a school readiness to track the use of its word in conjunction with actions and events within a chain of significance (Lacan, 2003).

I have argued school readiness is:

> a 'multiplicity' which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage's only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a 'sympathy'. It is never filiations which are important but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind. (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p.69).

The data collection sought to trace school readiness since *The Plowden Report* to establish how and why this connects to free early education and care for two-year-old children. Language and power could reign supreme within this approach however, in view of my ontological positioning the noticing and the importance of more-than-human matter were given equal weighting within the entanglements. It is important to reaffirm this thesis does not affirm the political philosophy of school readiness but lends itself more to the political ontology as the participants are compromised within a political reality. Subsequently, the fieldwork did not set out to rationalise or critique school readiness but act as a tool to (re)present experiences of school readiness but, more importantly seek to observe how this affects people and objects, particularly two-year-old children. To do this a free-flowing illuminative strategy was used, as an iterative and continuous cycle of movement to continuously zoom in on the lived experience.

Using raw data, I (re)present the lived experience of the participant's realities as a '*spacetimemattering*' (Barad, 2007, p.234), supported by a diffracted discussion in discreet sections to unfold school readiness events and illuminate the affective capacities occurring within the entanglements, which I call colourful sensations. The discussion aims to avoid interpretation to tentatively address the research questions

supported by the framework and literature, discussed in Chapter Three. The first two sections use statements and responses taken directly from the professional focus group and practitioner interviews to build the discussion pertaining to the emerging themes. A thematic analysis of the practitioner interviews identified themes to foreground and parallel the sensations occurring within the observed events. As I zoomed in on the entanglement within the entanglement the sensations created were conceptualised as vignettes, taken directly from research journals with the intention of making visible the invisible. I have highlighted the sensations in bold. Emergent themes will be discussed as either colourful or uncolourful. However, these should not be considered as binary opposites of each other, it is a flow and a movement.

Colourfulness relates to moments of discursive-materiality wherein voices are recognised in more than verbal ways and respected as equal to human and non-human matter. The uncolourful themes represent the striation of space, time and body to move the rhetoric of school readiness along the molar line, wherein spontaneity and creativity are never fully embraced, fulfilling a prerequisite of what it is to politically become school ready within a neoliberal agenda. Subsequently, the findings and discussion become enmeshed in view of the entangling nature of everything subsumed within this thesis. Thereafter, a culminating discussion will break from the dominant discourse and creatively (re)present my own observations of how school readiness moves within society, with the desire to territorialize people, spaces and matter in a unique way. This, in some way, is an attempt to end a journey that never really ends. I will always be becoming, and this thesis will always be becoming thesis as the children age and develop further. It is simply unseen, no longer made visible by this event.

School Readiness in the Focus Group

The reality of school readiness was the emphasis of the focus group from the perspective of early years professional, focusing on the entry points of school readiness within the geographical location. The initial question began objectively, in an open manner, asking participants to articulate their own understanding of school readiness. Unanimously all participants articulated school readiness was merely concerned with getting children ready for school. The participant responses lacked emotion, passion or enthusiasm. Initially, it was presented as a wholly acceptable phrase or concept which directed rhetoric into reality in terms of bringing policy into practice. I was entirely surprised by their responses as their enthusiasm to take part in the focus group was driven by a passion for the children they worked with, yet here the enthusiasm and commitment to support learning was not conveyed. Whilst aiming to remain objective throughout this process it became clear that to reach the passion and perspectives of the participants it was necessary for me to share my own perspectives of school readiness and what led to the study. By sharing a lived experience, a common ground was established.

I draw on sensing wonder to read my engagement with participants and the data emerging from the focus group to make *'new connections spark*[ed] *among words, bodies, objects, and ideas'* as '*I have chosen something that has chosen me, and it is that mutual "affection" that constitutes "us" as, respectively, data and researcher'* (MacLure 2013a, p.229). I present the statements which created sensations directly following the questions I posed. I employed the rhizomatic analysis as adapted from Sellers (2013) Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption to identify affects as themes, (table 1) to inform the experience and implications of school readiness from a professional perspective.

Table 1.

Themes emerging from focus group responses following the rhizoanalysis.

Colourful	Uncolourful
Holistic development	Agenda
The value of play	Schoolification
Learning	Homogeneity

Statements causing sensations

Question – 'What is your understanding and/or experience(s) of school readiness'

'Hate, hate, hate!'
Early Years Practitioner

'They [children] *learn to behave – sitting on the carpet and lining up'*
Pre-school Assistant

'It's conformity'
Local Authority Early Years Improvement Managers

Provocation 'Can you explain further -why conformity?

'Children become conditioned'
Pre-school Assistant

'Individualism is lost'
Early Years Practitioner

'It becomes a parent 'v' setting agenda thing'
Local Authority Early Years Improvement Managers

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→

School readiness has territorialised a striated space to move children and adults within an attainment-based trajectory.
School readiness is causing a bitterness and resentment in the working facets of participants lives – do they return to smooth spaces when they no longer become a body of the local authority?
Has school readiness territorialized parents to conform to the rhetoric of the early learning goal?
How does the child resist striated spaces to show their colour?

Question – 'Can you define school readiness, or do you use a model of school readiness in practice?'

'The Pacey school readiness model'

Unanimous

Provocation 'Can you describe the premise of the model?

'It's loose, the descriptors. It's about independence'
Pre-school Assistant

'It's about developing self-help and coping'
Pre-school Assistant

'Helping children develop self-confidence and self-esteem'
Early Years Practitioner

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→

School readiness from the perspective of the practitioners should focus on the physical, social and emotional efficacies of children to develop their emotional intelligence to support their being in the world.
Resources should not just be toys.
Children's imagination should be valued.
How do children want to entangle?
Adult gaze – where is the child in the (co)construction of space and matter?

Question – 'Describe the issues of school readiness affecting your practice?'

'Potty training'
Pre-school Assistant

'Competitiveness'
Pre-school Assistant

'Targets'
Local Authority Early Years Improvement Manager

Provocation 'Can you describe what you mean by competitiveness and targets?

'Having to compare children against each other constantly and in other settings'
Pre-school Assistant

'Getting lists from the DWP, targeting families to take up the offer [Free Early Education and care for Two-year-olds]. Door knocking to get people to use the offer'
Local Authority Early Years Improvement Managers

Follow up question 'You have to physically go knocking on doors to get families to enrol their child at a pre-school?'

Reply 'Yes! The local authority has been targeted to get a percentage of children eligible enrolled to narrow the gap, the margin. It's not working'
Local Authority Early Years Improvement Managers

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→

School readiness is competition, targets and league tables.
There is an air of business model within the responses.
Are schools business looking for a return?
Deficit families – targeted approach. Do they know these families?
What is the criteria?
Have they asked the child if they want to go?

Question – 'If you could alter or influence school readiness what that be?

'Emilia Reggio inspired'
Early Years Practitioner

Developmentalist based, individual and informal'
Pre-school Assistant

'Free play remove formality structure and open door. Life is not schooling'
Pre-school Assistant

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→

Is schooling learning? Schoolification.
 Is there a better way to 'do' the EYFS?
Can we trust children, and do we need to report their development in this way?
Do children care about their development and the structure of the EYFS?
What matters to children?

Diffracting a discussion

Diffracting the discussion emergent during the focus group to understand what the child is becoming suggests a continuing ambiguity. The unanimous perception of school readiness was of children becoming ready to enter formalised education, by way of engendering skills or habits to sit and listen to didactic and prescriptive methods of learning and meeting prescribed outcomes. This is strongly linked to schoolification (Bingham and Whitbread, 2011). I propose in this event becoming-otherwise is a reterritorialization of becoming-school ready to meet the rhetoric of the ideal pupil, which is driving practice by creating an agenda of school readiness which links to homogeneity and conformity (Becker, 1952). This supports the notion that attempts to reconceive the Early Years Foundation Stage, in response to Tickell (2011), have still not been achieved and remains '*ambitious in intent'* (2011, p.2). Unexpectedly the affective capacities striating and territorialising early years spaces to develop conformity is not only imposed on the children but on the practitioners too, as they reconstruct and alter their practice to conform to measuring school readiness implicitly to explicitly (reflecting Fox and Alldred, 2017). For instance, the measurement of school readiness by using the early learning goals was only published in 2017 and prior to that no tangible description was available yet practitioners were required to assess development.

As school readiness encourages social actoring within performative roles of child and practitioner the concept fails to attune to the holistic development of the child, as is reflected in the works of Goffman (1959). This is due to the agenda which affectively has territorialised school readiness to drive practice, which has metamorphosed alongside the growing use of the term school ready (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). Developing children holistically was intended as the cornerstone of the Early Years Foundation Stage as argued in the initial review which fuelled a momentum of change, arguing that:

> A truly integrated set of services can provide support for children and their families that goes beyond the sum of its parts, helping to develop a more holistic understanding of each child, and ultimately increasing the certainty that children will receive the support that they need. (Tickell, 2011, p.26)

and *'It is nonetheless important to recall the holistic nature of children's development which occurs across domains'* (Tickell, 2011, p.95) and finally:

> Development does not occur in one domain at a time, but holistically; for example, when babies and children are learning to manipulate objects they are at the same time acquiring basic mathematical concepts such as 'one' or 'more'. They are learning to talk at the same time as they are becoming literate through listening to stories, making marks and engaging with books. (Tickell, 2011, p.96).

This cohesion of services and a drive toward perceiving the child as unique, developing at different rates, did not emerge as a perspective per se, it emerged in the early years professionals' responses as a binary opposite of the practice they delivered. It was clear that this was not due to having choice. When the choice was problematized, and practitioners were asked to consider why they did not deliver the practice they thought should be, none could give an answer. Contradictorily, it was clear if given the choice they would change the notion and perspective of school readiness. When reading this through the lens of the theoretical framework the practitioners and children are moving along the molar line of ideology striating their creativity, for as Windsor (2015) argued the molar line reproduces a prescriptive ideology which informs and affects the identity of others which shapes discourses such as early education. Equally, due to the speed and intensity of school readiness to get a two-year-old child ready for school within one single academic year means practitioners do not have the space or time to reach a molecular state, to slow-down, to think differently and unpack what the molar line of school readiness is enforcing or creating (Merriman, 2018).

There was a resounding inference within the early years professionals' responses that school readiness is influencing homogeneity, both in practice and regarding children, an invisible force or hand driven by political power as discussed by Foucault (1982) and Burchell, Gordon and Miller (1997). School readiness, despite being loathed, has created a guide and comfort blanket which is shaping and guiding practice in an area of

education which is aiming to tackle vulnerable and disadvantaged children. There is an assumption these two-year-old children must be developed by early years practitioners suggesting the families are incapable of doing this alone. As the local authority participant stated *'It's up to us, they're not getting the right support at home, so we have to fill the gaps'.* The label of disadvantage is based on selection criteria of income or employment status which adds to the perspective the child will struggle in comparison to their peers, legitimatising the intervention the two-year-old offer provides. This upholds the need to identify and single out these families, as evidenced by the response to the question *'Describe the issues of school readiness affecting your practice?'* and the replies to the provocation question thereafter. These assumptions feed the perspective of the child which stays with them till they enter into formal schooling as historically found by Rist (1970).

In my own experience I received a local authority letter offering free childcare for Eleanor based on not being in full-time employment and experienced the door canvasing approach. The sensation I felt was, as if, the two-year-old offer is at times being rolled out as if the local authority were selling the newest model of a mobile phone with gimmicks of fun and learning, when the reality is they are dealing with families and children. This reflects the metaphorical hurling of bricks described by Jones and Duncan (2013) and the enactment of symbolic violence put forward by Sulkunen and Bourdieu (1982). In this sense, local authorities are acting with an intensity which is striating spaces to bind early education and put forth a truth of what it is to be school ready creating a social norm (Lysen and Pisters, 2012). More troubling is the emphasis placed on material wealth as a precursor of being a productive or good parent. Within the response *'It's up to us, they're not getting the right support at home so we have to fill the gaps'* it is clear the local authority are aiming to offset the discord between family and institutional habitas, almost if the adult gaze has morphed into a political one identifying individuals who might not fulfil the ideal citizen rhetoric (Adriany, 2018; Sims, 2017). What the participant referred to was visits and trips as opportunities for learning, yet these would still not be routinely delivered in the pre-school environment, supporting further the political agenda territorializing school readiness.

Building on the participant's discussion and critically analysing the letter that is sent to parents prior to conducting door to door canvasing highlights a business, medicalized and deficit approach which is undermining families and children. It also serves to devalue the early years sector and practitioners. For example, the letter has been constructed to depict a winning ticket and uses sensationalist and emotive language to increase take-up. This does not reflect the seriousness of other reports, such as Allen (2011), urging the Government to tackle or address factors impacting upon child development. Allen (2011 for instance argued that:

> Early Intervention is an approach which offers our country a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next, and to make long-term savings in public spending. It covers a range of tried and tested policies for the first three years of children's lives to give them the essential social and emotional security they need for the rest of their lives. It also includes a range of well-established policies for when they are older which leave children ready to face the challenges of each stage of childhood and of passage into adulthood – especially the challenge of becoming good parents to their own children. (Allen, 2011, p.vii).

The letter to parents additionally devalues the scaffolding and emotional support the parent/guardian can give their child. For example, the letter states children can have fun, experience new activities, make new friends and get a good start to their education. This raises various rhetorical questions such as "What experiences can the parent not give the child that the setting can? Does the child not have fun at home or out with the family? Why can the parent not give the child a good start to their education?". This links back to neoliberalism and developing the child to conform and meet state ideology and continuously fails to attune to the voices of the child and their family, which was raised as an issue by Gibb, Jelicic and La Valle (2010).

Play and learning are also cited on the letter and throughout the focus group the themes of development, learning and play were continuously overshadowed by the participants' emotive reaction to school readiness and the dominant focus it has created. This makes visible the sensations school readiness is creating for practitioners (Deleuze, 1986; 1989). The emotional responses emerged as a result of asking *'if you could alter or influence school readiness what would that be?'* Each response supported the notion the Early Years

Foundation Stage should be a mixture and overlapping enmeshment of developmental theories to date. This reflects the transdisciplinary approach discussed by Kontopodis and Wulf (2011), reflecting the conceptualization of the Posthuman child put forward by Murris (2016), allowing children to be and become at a rate that reflects their own uniqueness (Davis, 2016). The importance of play also emerged during the latter question which I link back to schoolification (Bingham and Whitebread, 2011). The participants' responses suggest the rhetoric of play has been altered to create a tension between types of play. One participant called for the formal structures of play to be removed and ended her input by stating *'life is not schooling'*. The tension which emerges is between the child's right to play and the premise of culturally cultivated play.

The distinct difference in perceptions of play emerges at the intersection of the participants' statements *'Free play, remove the structure. Life is not schooling'* and *'they are going to have to get used to school life so we might as well get them to line up and have carpet times now'*. From the first perspective play is currently afforded to children in respect of their rights and is not linked to their learning and development, yet the drive of school readiness is culturally cultivating play to reify the social norms of formal school life (Whitebread and Basilio, 2013; Holmes, 2011; Gaskins, Haight and Lancy, 2007; Bruner, 1996; Cronin-Jones, 1999). The agenda driving the cultural cultivation of play is the need to meet the early learning goals by using play as a form of evidence, typically found in children's learning journeys made available for discussion with Ofsted and parents. Within this discourse, the notion of play is problematized further with an additional tension emerging between the agenda for play to meet developmental outcomes and afford the child their rights in respect of Article 31 UNCRC (Gov.uk, 2010). In this instance, the right to play is queered in the same way as the voice of the child which is never truly respected or seen in the sense as the 'iii' as discussed by Murris (2016). A discrepancy emerges within the application and use of play, what play is, what it is for and in what remit it should be scaffolded or free from agenda. This can be linked back to the playful adult and agenda free practice as Fredrickson (1988), Proyer (2012) and De Kovan (2015) clearly argued the playfulness of any one person has an impact on the well-being and a whole raft of other outcomes which can be directly

linked to the holistic development of the being, the value of play and the impact of our learning and development as humans.

Critically reading these lived experiences, the voice and respect for children as autonomous agents and experts in their own lives failed to be projected from the early years professional participants which I consider to be a finding which stands alone.   This is directly attributed to the perspective of the child and recognising the child's material, discursive subjectivity in everyday life to move beyond learnification or schoolification to wholly invest in the entanglement and process of learning (Biesta, 2015; Bingham and Whitebread, 2010; Davies and Bansel, 2007). Linking this back to the research questions the two-year-old child is conceived in the eyes of the practitioner and is becoming-school ready based on the practitioner's practice. Play becomes the conduit to achieving school readiness, but this is never from the child's term of reference. Play is rendered to be subject and object in a traditional and metaphysical sense emphasising how the co-construction of knowledge or what it is to become school ready from the child's perspective is mute (Kim, Roth and Thom, 2009). The child whose body is in communication is not valued or seen therefore the intra-action-reaction can never be achieved unless the practitioners 'turn to notice' the child and develop their felt sense (Gendlin, 1981; 1997; 2002). However, this is not due to the practitioner's ability, this is a result of territorialization and the striation of spaces, practice and the practitioner's voice.

The focus group made visible the broader lived experiences of school readiness from a variety of early years professionals. The discussion which supported the focus group themes will be expanded upon to develop an all-encompassing view of school readiness to address the research questions. To follow the zig and zag's of school readiness I aim to build on the early years professional focus group to uncover the lived experiences in specific locations from the perspective of practitioners working directly with the child participants in this study. In the next section I will (re)present the zones and the sensations they created as I encountered them. No discussion follows the introduction to the setting as this is continuation of the metaphorical 'walk with me' mapping, to draw the intended audience in to my journey of becoming-thesis as I trace school readiness.

Sensations at the zones

Prior to conducting the entanglement observations, I attended and played with children at two settings. There was a remarkable interest in me initially and several children focused on my being there, consciously involving me in their play throughout their entire sessions. The novelty factor ebbed away, and this allowed me to conduct my observations. The following introduction to the zones is the making visible my preparational stage of familiarising myself with the children and vice versa, to enable assent to be gained. My narrative (re)presents an overview of a day in each setting culminating in an established pattern. The sensations, reading in and beyond my lived experienced informed the observations of the entanglements thereafter.

Zone 1

The setting follows a set routine which is led by the deputy manager. As the children arrive, they are greeted by the Manager and **ushered away** from parents. They hang their coats up on pegs which are allocated to the child via a picture. The cloakroom doubles up as a play area which is linked to the main room via two doors. After hanging up their coat's children are greeted by the deputy who is **sat near the carpet area.** Music plays in the background. **Most children sit on the mat. The two-year-olds within the setting dance and play.** Once everyone has arrived children sit down and a more formal, but relaxed, way. A personal welcome is extended to every child using a welcome song. The children guess the day of the week and proceed to count how many children are in class, one child is selected each day to **write** the number of children on the board. Following the welcome song children are encouraged to dance and *'shake out their sillies'.* After the greeting children are free to play, unless called to **do a job** with a practitioner. Self-directed play is the approach taken within the setting and children are free to move between spaces, including indoors and outdoors.

Prior to snack time children are asked to tidy up so they can get their snacks. **'If we don't tidy up we can't get our snacks'.** Children are encouraged to clean their hands and return to the carpet. Counting is used again to identify how many cups are needed. Children are **told** which table they should sit at using colours and asked to **sit smart like soldiers.** Snacks are prepared by adults in open view of the child and is organised on a rota basis including fruit, cheese and crackers. **There is continuous conversation between practitioners and children.** On occasions children are asked to use their **indoor voices.** After snack time children can return to playing within the main room. Staff record children using iPad, taking photographs and **mapping development against a tracker.** Conversations are held between staff to identify a child of focus to complete observations.   **'Jobs'** are also discussed, and the tasks particular children are required to complete. The routine and approach **strongly mimic** a reception classroom.

Children played freely and rarely did the practitioner get involved unless directly asked or when progress toward an early learning goal was **being assessed**. The Manager worked in her office but followed an open-door policy, to allow children to move through the space. Resources included a reading area, a painting area, an interchangeable section to reflect a topic, a role play area, home area and small world people and cars. There is a family board near the reading area, but this was **covered and hard to reach**. The walls were adorned with **letters and numbers** and one large section was dedicated to mark making with descriptions detailing the development of mark making to writing. Prior to the end of session children return to the carpet area for a story time. The story is chosen by the **practitioner and is linked to the topic**. Some discussion occurs between reading and asking children questions related to the storyline. After story time children collect their belongings and put on their coats ready for their collection.

Zone 2

The setting followed a set routine every day. Arriving children were greeted by staff at the small cloakroom and left by their parents at this point. They were then taken to the main room. Once all children had arrived a welcome song was sung by staff and children **acknowledging all the children personally**. Children were then allowed to **self-direct their play**. This lasted for approximately an hour. If weather permitted children could play outside. Due to the limited space and the setup of the building this was organised via a rota and timed. **Children lined up at the door and were escorted outside**. During their outdoor time, children were also allowed to **self-direct their play and learning**. Adult intervention in play was limited and **usually at the request of a child**. Once the children had been outside for **half an hour** they would return to their room and the other group would be taken outside. Grouped snack time would occur parallel to the outdoor groupings.

At snack time children would be taken to another room which was purposefully organised. Children were required to sit at one of two tables. They were **free to choose where they sat.** In the room, there were **no toys, play equipment or wall displays**. The room overlooked a small garden area with grass and flowers and uneven surface areas. The garden was rented out and therefore **not available** for use. Staff **would tell children** what snack they were having and would also offer the option of milk or water. This was **poured by the adults** on all but one of my visits. It was during this singular session I observed children being **permitted to butter** their own crackers. On all other occasions, these actions had been done by the staff. Food was portioned by hand **directly onto the table surface** which had previously been wiped clean. Snacks ranged from fruit, crackers, cheese, breadsticks and bread. The conversation was between children and on **some occasions involved other staff.** A child once asked for more food, and they were told they could have more when they were good.

Once snack time was over children were shepherded to the toilets one by one to relieve themselves and wash their hands. Directly following this they were returned to the main room and were once again allowed to **self-direct their play and learning**. Each day there was an adult-directed activity at one table in the room. This was usually a piece of display work or a **parental gift** such as an Easter card. Children were called in a **specific order** to work at the table. Engagement varied. Children were **shown an example** of a finished piece and then guided to **replicate the original**. Children worked with the adult in groups of four. I observed two adult-led activities from beginning to end. **Little autonomy was given** to children to replicate the original as they wanted to. **One child attempted several times to disengage** and return to self-directed play but was **ushered back** to complete the work.

One table was filled with **twinkle resources** specifically aimed at literacy targeted towards children aged 4 and above. For example, there were worksheets designed to aid letter formation. At **times an adult would occupy a space** at this table and ask children to complete the sheets with them, writing their own name. The variation of **mark making equipment was limited**. Children could select either a pencil or felt tip pen. There was one variation thickness. There were no smaller size pencils or alternative shapes of pencils. Toward the end of every session, children were asked to participate in sorting and tidying toys away and clearing the areas they had played in. Staff actively participated in the clear up and **encouraged children with praise**. This was directly followed by story time on the carpet area. The story time was **always led by the deputy and chosen by her.** Children were asked to sit and listen. A lot of fidgeting and movement was observed during this time, particularly by younger children. Consequently, the story was stopped and started by the deputy and children were asked to **'sit still'**, **'stop fidgeting'**, **'pay attention and listen'**.

At the end of reading sessions, prior to children being collected they were each given **their book bags** and any items they had created to take home. The deputy would empty their personal trays and give them a dedicated home reading book and their belongings. When a child's name was called, they were expected to go and collect it from the staff. **Little or no attempt** was made by staff to engage interpersonally with the child. On three occasions personal **belongings were dropped at the child's feet** even when they had outreached hands and were **attempting to exchange in communication non-verbally by smiling.**

Entanglement➔Reader➔thinker➔

Carpet time is a tool, a zone which can be territorialising – reinforcing behaviour.
Agenda territorialises practitioners reinforcing the molar line of school readiness.
Food is tool, a reward and a resource
Little adult's in the making perspective emerges 'jobs'
Play is just playing, and adult-led play is learning
School readiness has territorialised the walls and the saturation is evidenced in the displays
How do you shake off your sillies? – Where is the playful adult?

The encountering of the zones as a 'walk with me' narrative stimulate and disrupt thinking as a prelude to the entanglement with the practitioners. In the next section I (re)present the interviews with practitioners to make visible their experience of school readiness and the affective capacities this has had on their interpretation of the concept which influences their practice as they entangle with children, materials and the environment.

Interviews at the zones

To progressively focus on the affective capacities of school readiness within the entanglement semi-structured interviews were conducted to uncover the practitioner's perspective and their understanding of school readiness to support the observations. The rationale for the interviews is underpinned by identifying how school readiness affected or supported practice within the zones, therefore influencing the intra-action within the entanglement. In total six interviews were conducted, three in each zone. The practitioners interviewed worked directly with the children who assented to be part of the research. In respect of conducting multiple triangulation, the interviews in the setting were complemented by three further interviews. These interviews were with two parents accessing their entitlement to the two-year-old offer and a combined interview with a pre-school setting manager and deputy who were featured in the original Government pilot study for the roll out of the two-year-old offer. This enabled me to also encounter multiple perspectives of school readiness to aid the triangulation process (Thurmond, 2001).

By following the six sequential stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis was conducted with the interview transcripts (*Figure 37*).
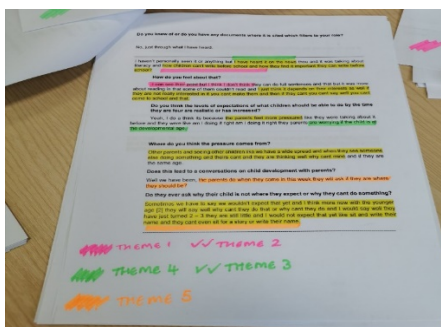
Figure 37.

Initial thematic coding of interview transcripts.

This produced three thematic maps; an initial map, a developed thematic map and a final thematic map (see *Figures 37 - 40*).
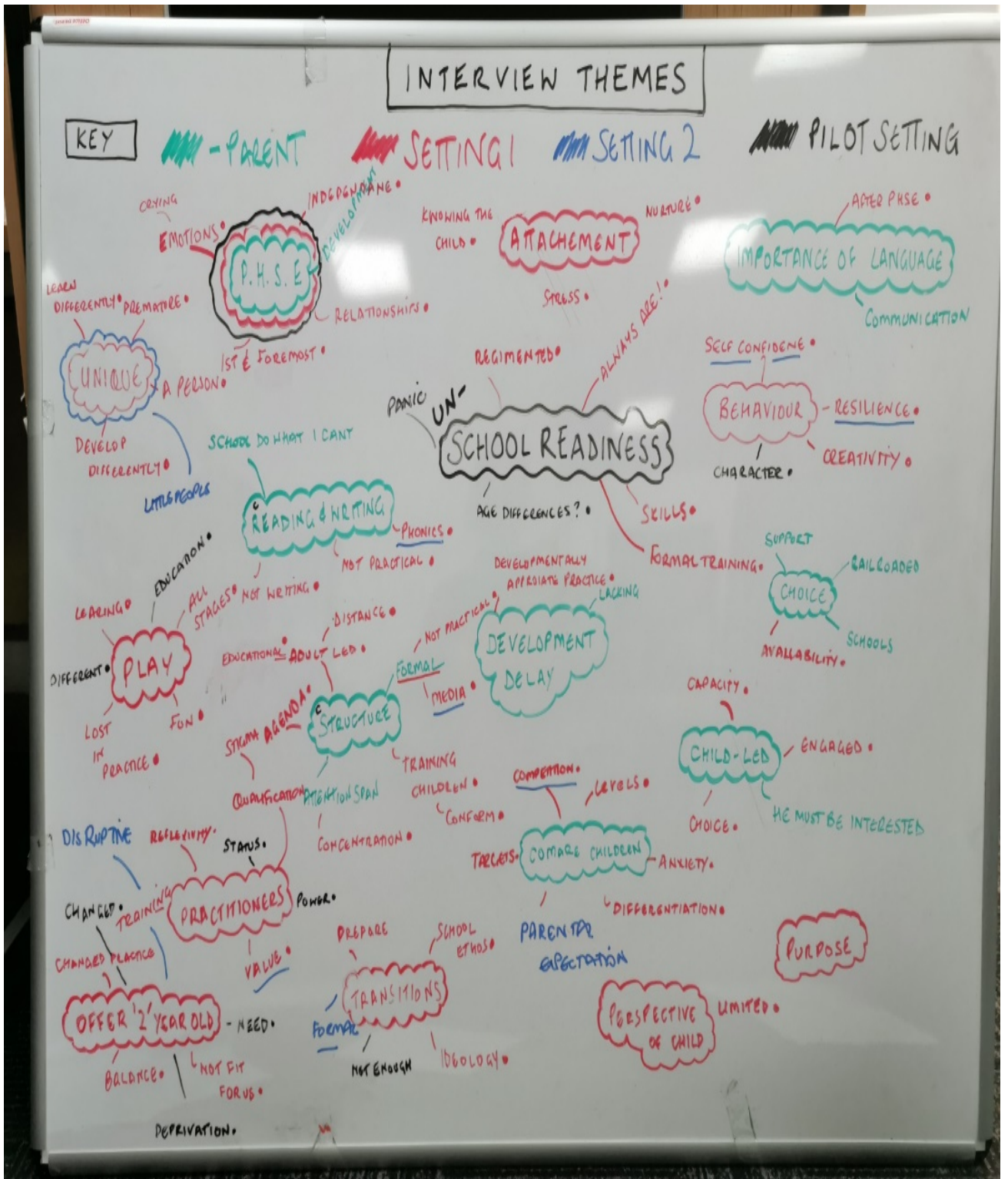
Figure 38.

Initial thematic mapping of interview transcripts
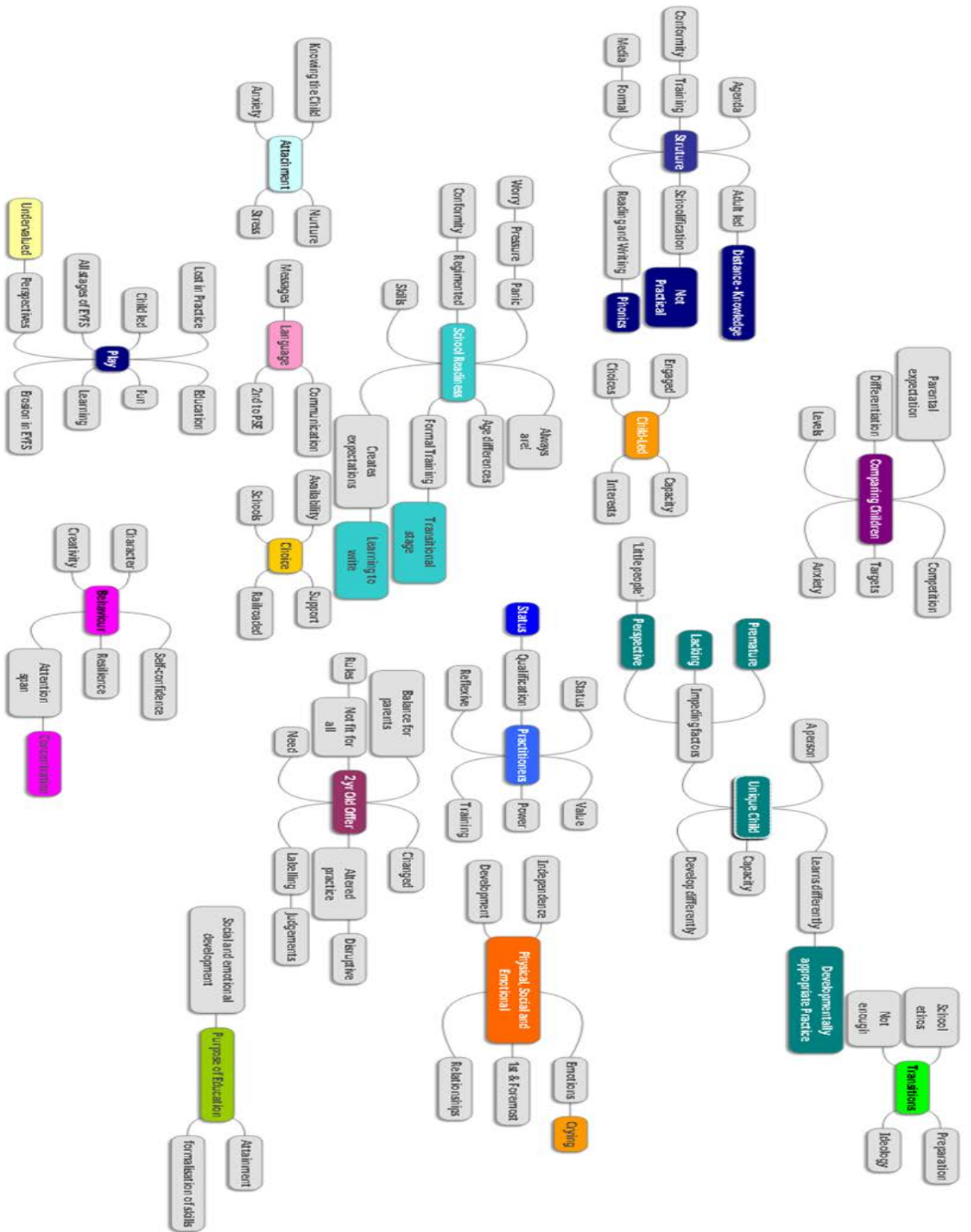
Figure 39.

Developed thematic map.

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To illuminate the rhizomatic nature of school readiness, and the interconnected affective capacities, a rhizoanalytical mapping was applied to the developed thematic map (*Figure 38*) to make visual the zig and zag connections proliferating as a result of school readiness (Dillion, 2016). The themes which emerged from the interviews are the implications of school readiness on formalising education, implications of the two-year-old offer in practice, a perspective of the unique child, the characteristics of a becoming child, comparing children and the influence of school readiness on the purpose of education. Several sub-themes such as choice, play and behaviour are illustrated in both the developed and rhizoanalysis map.
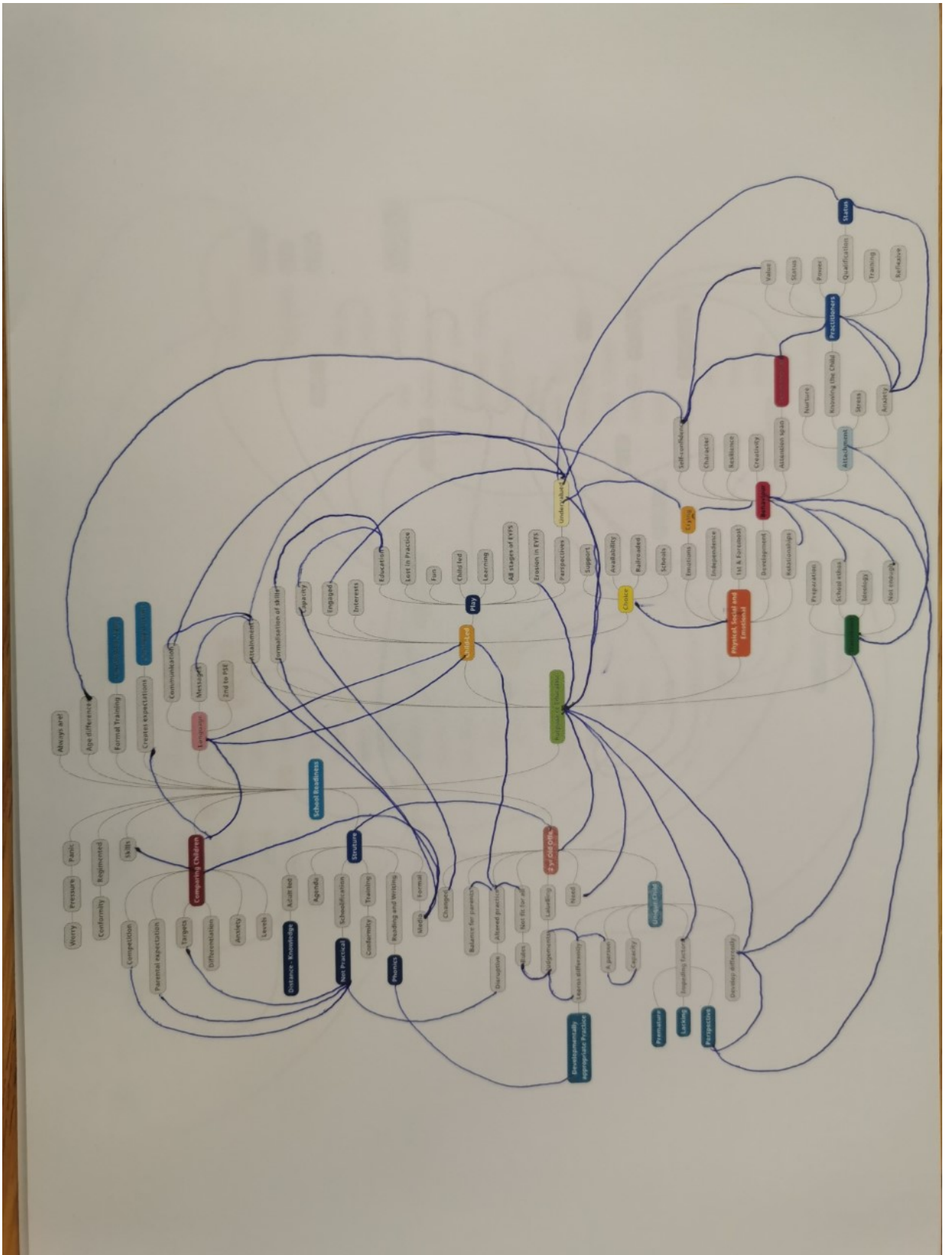
Figure 40.

Rhizoanalysis mapping, making visible the connections of school readiness.

The implications of school readiness on the becoming child

Several sub-themes are located under the umbrella of formalising education, a key theme, including regimented learning, conformity, increased pressure, the two-year-old offer conceptualising a period of formal training for children to meet early learning goals and the development of expectations. It also emerged media has an influence on perpetuating the legitimised truths of school readiness likened to perpetuating a folk devil as play has become striated by agenda, driven within the neoliberalist rhetoric, all culminating in schoolification. All the sub-themes and the overarching theme are interconnecting, each yielding an affective capacity on each other by creating intensity and movement which is cited in the literature as the interventionist approach (PACEY, 2013; Ladd, 2003). This has resulted in various emancipatory inspired movements in the early years such as the *Much Too Soon* campaign and *More than a Score* both aiming to liberate early education from the confines of current policy (Saving Childhood Movement, 2014; 2014a).

The practitioners interviewed provided detailed evidence regarding what they felt regarding the pressure to formalise the early years, again linked to schoolification (Wood and Hedges, 2016; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). This led the practitioners to question whether the preschool or nursery environment is where the two-year-old offer should be rolled out. One practitioner stated '*you really have to question is this the right place? Is this the right environment?*' Both settings stated the two-year-old offer had dramatically altered their provision, the dynamics within the environment and between the children. In Zone 1 the practitioners stated '*It's been a massive learning curve as the two-year-old is so different to the three-year-old and people do not get that right now*', '*We have found it hard to reassure the children their mummy is coming back after she leaves, and it can cause a lot of trauma*', '*They* [parents and Local authority] *are assuming because they are young, and here we go not school ready, they are all the same the two-year-old and the four-year-old but the play to these children is important for different reasons and they haven't fully understood what it means to be two or to be three*'. These findings were echoed in Zone 2. The practitioners stated, '*There is a massive difference between the two-year-old, the rising three and the four-year-old*' and '*Sometimes that is hard to*

integrate' and *'we need to remember how young these children are'*. Following the end of this study Zone 1 stopped offering free early education and care to two-year-old children and their families.

 All practitioners interviewed felt learning has become regimented toward achieving an outcome which striated their practice and contributed to the narrowing perspectives society have of children. For example, when questioned on the current ideology emanating from school readiness a practitioner response from Zone 1 was *'It is too regimented, it's sort of like joining the army with a set of rules to follow'*, and another practitioner stated *'A lot of people have a limited view of children now to be honest preventing them from excelling in areas they are good at'*. These pressures toward achieving an outcome begin prior to early education and care according to the response *'there is a pressure on them, actually I think from toddler groups when all the parents are around you feel them* [children] *being judged'*. The continued focus on achieving outcomes within their responses was identified within the literature as influencing the way environments are stratified and engineered toward achieving outcomes as discussed by Lunn (2015) and Teager and Bride (2018), which creates an adult centred focus overshadowing the intrinsic interests of the child (Helmund, 1987).

In Zone 2 this finding was concurred with as practitioners stated, *'the term readiness is creating expectations, to be ready creating pressure'*. The perpetuation and intensity which culminates in pressure were linked to the media as no practitioner interviewed had received any Government documentation, attended any local authority meetings, or practice development days which formally addressed school readiness. Both Zones referred to media representation of school readiness by stating, *'I haven't personally seen it or anything, but I have heard it on the news though'* and *'I have read about it in Nursery World, in the papers and other stuff online.. erm.. I would say what I have read, school readiness is like to get them up to a certain level'*. Zone 1 made it clear they felt the certain media portrayals of school readiness is not helpful, arguing *'The press doesn't help, there is a lot of scaremongering out there'.* However, a tension did arise between local authority expectations and those of the manager in Zone 1, as she explained *'we don't always agree with what they*

say anyway' suggesting a difference in approach toward child development or delivering the two-year-old offer. It is noteworthy this was the same Zone which withdrew their availability to enrol two-year-old children. The intangibility of school readiness within documentation, and as part of any training, suggests the nebulosity of school readiness is continuing to proliferate within the early years. As Neaum (2016) argued this is underpinned by factors such as age, the growing labelling culture linked to outcomes and interventionist approaches (Bradbury and Robert-Holmes, 2017). This suggest school readiness yields affective capacities which territorialises spaces and people within a status quo of following a linear approach of developing children (Leander and Bolt, 2012).

The drive towards achieving set goals, attaining expectations and becoming school ready was linked to reading, writing, sitting still and lining up, behaviours more associated with children in formal education. For example, in Zone 1 the practitioners argued *'for a child to be school ready in this day and age the school is looking for them to be able to write their name, write numbers, be able to form sentences – it's just not practical'.* Another practitioner said *'parents have a big hang-up on how they think children should be school ready, they think they should be able to write their name and everything', 'I think it would be best to say it's what schools want and what they perceive school readiness to be, because schools want children to go in to reception class without crying, being able to understand phonics and write their name and do what the school wants them to do'.* At Zone 2 the practitioners felt they were becoming *'a preparational stage for children'* and *'there is a formalisation of skills and not personal traits'.* All practitioners felt their role was to develop the child to meet the current ideology of school readiness through their practice but argued their perspective of school readiness was entirely different to those espoused by parents and other bodies by offering up their own interpretation. This further endorses the nebulosity of school readiness, as previously mentioned, within society, as an intangible force driving agenda which has been criticised by the *Much Too Soon* campaign and the *Saving Childhood Movement (2014a; 2014b).*

Unpacking the nebulosity of school readiness related to interpretations and responses emanating from Zone 1. These included, '*school readiness is not necessarily a child being able to go and sit down and work for me, I think for them to be school ready is to know the attachment to mam is okay*' and '*they need to know how to socialise and that there are boundaries and what is acceptable, but again all children are different, everyone is different they need to be treated as individuals*'. The deputy manager in Zone 1 stated '*we try to ensure personal, social and emotional skills first and foremost and then their physical development then everything else just happens*'. All the same though, the current ideology of school readiness has impacted their practice and shaped how they deliver early education. For example in Zone 1 the practitioners stated '*we know what's to come and we know they are going to sit on their bottoms at tables so we have introduced these to them, so when they go to school it is not a shock*' and '*we try to prepare children for the changes to come like crossing their legs, and I think it is a shock going from us to the more formal side of school*'. Within these responses transition emerges strongly, so linking to the work of Van Gennep (2010) and to noticing of equilibrium, disequilibrium and schematic play as a progressive psychological shift which requires careful consideration. The link between school readiness as a transitional phase in a child's educational journey was also firmly rooted in Zone 2 when they argued the concept was about '*getting children ready from pre-school to nursery*', '*preparing them for school*' and finally '*the preparation from preschool to reception*'. However, it was clear no practitioner held the same perspective of school readiness in either setting. The concept meant something different to them all demonstrating the nebulosity linked to the terminology (Neaum, 2016).

The emergence of school readiness underpinning a transitional phase can be linked to the implications of enrolling two-year-old children in early education, and thereafter the constructions of childhood and the perspective of the child which is discussed within the next theme.

The implications of the two-year-old offer in practice

The implications of the two-year-old offer in conjunction with school readiness are divided across the Zones and also divided for the parents. This highlights the tension surrounding the concept (McAllister, 2016). When first piloted the offer was for those *'deemed in need the most'* according to the participants from an original pilot site. When discussing the offer, both practitioners and parents accessing the provision used the word 'deemed' in every response including *'they just deemed that little time apart would be better'*, *'it was deemed these parents could seek employment or they could do parenting classes'*, *'deemed necessary'*, *'children deemed in most need from deprived areas'* and *'For those deemed most in need, so really the only time we would get a two-year-old is when they had been referred'*. What emerged from this was the provocation of value. The pilot setting participants explained the offer was not valued by the parents or used as expected by policymakers. For example, when first trialled the offer was made available on the premise *'parents could seek employment or they could do parenting classes her for those that needed them, for parenting skills or college you know anything like that'*. However, the participants stressed *'We found that a lot of our children 'came as and when' the parents needed and for the kids to be looked after, and in most cases, we were a free babysitting service. Like some kids didn't come for weeks on end and you would call them, and they would say they were poorly, or you know, or it was nice weather or then you would see them payday so they could go shopping or they would go somewhere with friends'*. The constant focus on the word 'deemed' within the responses is linked back to the labelling culture which is now embedded within the provision of policy and the interventionist approach (Bradbury and Robert-Holmes, 2016). This also supports the assertions put forward by Slater (2015) regarding the deficit approach to children and families considered different to mobilise the agenda to meet the ideal citizen rhetoric (West, 2015; Pykett, Saward and Schaefer, 2010). As a result, the practitioners delivering the two-year-old offer felt devalued.

The theme of being devalued begun at the pilot setting which can be related to the influence of the media sources such as newspapers and news reports. The participants stated that media scaremongering about school readiness has placed pre-school environments as a transitional phase of education, and a preparational phase of formal schooling arguing *'parents panic coz they know the child can't do what the school wants them to do and they need us before then, so they use us and are open about it. It's like they value the school more'.* The responses link back to removing the shock element of transitioning and introducing formal structures of education within the preschool environment, reflecting the theme of schoolification and demonstrating the propensity of school readiness as a concept to affect and be affected (Wood and Hedges, 2016; Deleuze and Guattari, 1995). All six practitioners discussed the devaluation associated with their role in comparison to being a teacher in formal education, which can be seen in the following excerpt from the transcript with the manager in Zone 1.

Question	**Do you feel valued in your role?**
Response	With some schools not all. Some of them devalued us. I have never felt spoken down too. Most only understand the best interest of the child. Some don't!
Question	**If some don't is that because they do not place value in what you do?**
The response	I think so.
Question	**Do they not see your role with children as educational?**
The response	I think that has hit the nail right on the head, definitely. *We* are just here to play and colour in all day.

One practitioner in Zone 1 stated *'There is a difference in status. Schools don't always value what has been done at nursery'* and another practitioner explicitly attributed this to the title they are given, she said the *'Difference is I would be valued if I was a teacher'* which was echoed by a practitioner in Zone 2 who quantified *'I don't think we are valued equally. I think that they would see us as more professional because of the teacher title rather than practitioner but it's the same job really'.* Continuing this thread of being valued within their role one practitioner extended the theme of value to encompass perspectives of play stating *'we are not valued by other schools; we are just here to look after children while they play. That's the top and bottom of*

it' The participants went on to state being perceived as a professional was seldom achieved stating *'I see them* [teachers] *as professionals all the time it would be nice if they could see us as professionals for what we do, we go cap in hand'.*

This perception of being devalued and not being perceived as professional was replicated at the other two zones. This emergent theme of being perceived as professional was strongly supported by other statements made by participants, demonstrating a clear divide between being an early years practitioner and an early years teacher. For example, in Zone 1 a participant explained *'I do feel undervalued and they are of the opinion we are babysitters and we don't educate'.* This was extended to include the child, as a practitioner explained how undervalued she felt *'We are very, and the children are very undervalued. We really need to work as a team and understand the importance of the developing child beyond the age ranges, we or they teach'.* The inclusion of the child as being devalued also emerges on the theme of how children are perceived by adults which will be discussed later (reflected in Murris, 2016).

Diffracting the participant's responses regarding school readiness and the implication this has in practice has resulted in the importance of play being devalued, alongside the practitioner's role to scaffold the child's learning and development through their play. In this trajectory, the act of play has been dichotomised. Firstly, the child's play has been engineered toward evidencing their development, in respect of preparing them to meet the early learning goals, wherein this form of play takes precedence over the intrinsic play developed by the child based on their interests. For example, a practitioner in Zone 1 clearly demonstrated their perspective of play is twofold '*You want to get out* [assessment] *of whatever you're doing, so for younger ones, you have to make it fun and quick to get that point across and get them to do what you* [Practitioner] *want them to… and then go, then you* [child] *can go and do what you want to do. Play how you* [child] *want'.* This is in direct contradiction to their description of the ethos of the settings at both Zones as firmly rooted in play-based and child-led learning rather than culturally cultivated play (Whitebread and Basilio, 2013; Sutton-

Smith, 2006).   The agenda of becoming school ready is affectively striating practice and calls for emancipating practice to liberate the practitioners from the legitimised truth emanating from school readiness (Tamboukou, 2008). This tension is underpinned by the transversal struggle outlined by Foucault (1982). The readiness agenda is striating play toward becoming-school ready is also linked to the perceptions of the child and understandings of their emergent agency and capacity as active learners within their journey of becoming (Davies, 2016). Again, agenda is firmly linked to the statement *'get them to do what you want them to do'* despite the significance all participants in both zones placed on play and developing the child from their interests. This was an important factor for the parents too who stated early learning was '*to build his skills and interaction based on his interests'.* Striating play towards an agenda was discussed by Biesta (2015) who argued this approach diminishes the entanglement of play, people and spaces wherein the misguided notion that education equates to learning emerges. This follows on to question how is the becoming child going to become-otherwise amidst the agenda to become school ready to reify the Posthuman child (Murris, 2016).

The characteristics of a becoming-school ready – becoming-otherwise

Practitioner perspectives

The dichotomous view of play emanating from the practitioners (re)presents their perspective of the child linked to capacity and agency. In Zone 1 the manager referred to the children as *'little'* fifteen times despite positioning the child as *'amazing'* and arguing '*The child is a proper person. They are little individuals who have something to bring. They are unique in themselves and they are capable of more than what their parents and some practitioners give them credit for'*. Here the use of the word little is used as a positive statement however the notion of the more knowledgeable other and the hierarchal binary of adult and child persisted in their statements, which links to developmental theory put forward by Vygotsky (1978). In response to a question of child-led versus adult-led activities one practitioner in Zone 1 stated, *'You know little children are very clever we just need to instil that in their little heads'*. In Zone 2 one practitioner furthered this by stating *'I don't think children's feelings are accounted for in what they do and learning was pushed on them'.* This links to the notion of power and the invisible hand manufacturing early years practice towards outcomes rather than investing in the process of learning, so territorialising practitioners (Darrow, 2010; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

When asked to clarify how children can become-otherwise within the early years, aside from the current agenda of school readiness all participants, including parents, strongly argued for the child's early years, learning and their own professional practice to be guided by the physical, social and emotional characteristics of child development. These are not a prime area in *Development Matters* (Early Education, 2012a). Practitioner statements to support this include '*Social skills, independence and be individual and themselves – let us see their personality and curiosity, to explore and I love that about our children. It's also about the right environment. You see these little people leave with the most amazing personalities'* from the Manager in Zone 1, '*Everything evolves from the child's personal social and emotional development; children need those to develop everything else'* Manager in Zone 2, '*I think how the child feels within themselves is the*

most important thing, like their confidence, and what they know about their identity and how they feel is so more to do with the Personal Social and emotional skills. They don't need to know about other stuff at this age', 'developing the emotional and social skills of the child' practitioner in Zone 1. At the pilot setting the manager stated, '*for me, they need the social side of skills and understanding who they are and their identity, so they don't just conform.'* Likewise, one parent said, '*I want my child to be around peers and learn from them with the element of playing and learning and social interaction'.*

The previous practitioner statement '*let us see their personality and curiosity to explore'* clearly evidences how personal behaviours influence how practitioners notice the child (Biesta, 2015; Helmund, 1987). There were other similar comments, much as '*Every child will develop when they are ready too. It's just nurturing that out of them and knowing the child and what makes them tick'* and '*it depends on their interests as well. If they are not really interested in it you can't make them'.* Here the practitioners from both Zones acknowledge the child with agentic vitality and subjectivity (Bennett, 2010). The statements place emphasis on child-led learning and for children's intrinsic motivations to be reflected, which can only be acted upon once the practitioner meets the child at their level of learning. This was outlined in the statement '*It's then up to the practitioner to understand what level of learning the child is capable of. You progress them from their point'.* This theme was present across both Zones, for, as another practitioner stated, '*I just think it depends on their interests as well, if they are not really interested in it you can't make them'.* This evidences how any agenda, including school readiness, can be resisted by the child, as a form of deterritorialising knowledge (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994).

How this is noticed by a practitioner means attesting to the child's mode of communication beyond linguistics and equally valuing all forms of the intra-actions (Davies, 2014; Barad, 2007). A rationale for why children are not perceived as active learners who have vibrant agentality as outlined by Murris (2016) was linked to professional qualifications and is an extension of the theme of being devalued as an early years practitioner.

One practitioner in Zone 1 said newly qualified early years practitioners hold a different perspective of children, stating with strong emphasis *'I think, especially with younger ones who are coming into the profession, I don't know if it is in the training or what, the younger ones seem to be losing it. It seems to be the old school ones who see the value of watching children play and interact'.* In Zone 1 environment was key to facilitating a space for children to demonstrate their autonomy and agency and formed part of the responses for all practitioners during the interview. This potentially created an entry point for the unique child and their becoming-otherwise to erupt (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004).

Comparing children who are unique

The interviews demonstrated that all the participants viewed children as unique and they argued that children's individualism should be accepted, acknowledged and applauded by endorsing the creative nature of children, as opposed to ratifying solely academic abilities (Biesta, 2015). One practitioner in Zone 1 stated '*Some* [children] *are creative and artistic, and we should go with that and bring it out and make the curriculum reflect that',* and a practitioner in Zone 2 stated '*it depends on their interests as well if they are not really interested in it you can't make them, and then if they can't* [do the task] *you can't say well you can't come to school and that',* as noted earlier. However, an affective capacity influencing the becoming child and becoming-school ready stemming from the concept of school readiness is competition between both parents and similarly between schools. This oxymoron means children cannot be seen as individual and unique (Murris, 2016; Davies, 2014). This is exacerbated by pressure on children and families as the manager in Zone 1 stated;

> nowadays I think too much pressure is put on children with targets I think schools say it's not about targets, but I say they are talking a whole load of rubbish coz it is about targets for them. They don't want anyone to think they are not as good as the school next door there is a big competition between schools, and I think they push those children more than they should and again I think it is causing a lot of anxiety in children and for their families.

The competitiveness between schools has filtered through society encouraging parents to compare and contrast their children to spur on levels of development to ensure children meet the ideology of school readiness (Neaum, 2016). This was raised initially in Zone 2 by a practitioner who said, '*I think parents can be, not intentionally, placing pressure on their children by comparing and creating competition without realising'.* However, the same negative affective capacity of school readiness was felt in Zone 1. One practitioner argued;

> I think parents have become trained to think like that. The number of parents that come to us and say he can hold a pencil and he can't write his name and he doesn't know his letters I say that's not how it works. We need to educate parents to see this is not failing and that they are all different and that's a parent's biggest fear. It will develop when the child is ready what you are doing by pushing it is has the adverse effect

One practitioner in Zone 1 also stated that the air of competitiveness begins in toddler groups and at child and parent play and stay events arguing, '*There is a pressure on them, actually I think from toddler groups when you have got all the parents around they feel like they are being judged'.* This was endorsed by a parent participant who told me *'I don't think he is school ready which is why we have used a preschool. So, watching others and stuff and I think his speech and language is behind. I know we shouldn't compare but we do'.* This could be linked back to the influence of the media sources, specifically newspaper articles and news reports, and presenting a truth of school readiness in a deficit and negative way, implied by Slater, Jones and Proctor (2018), influencing how we construct the ideology of school readiness and in turn affecting our understanding of the purpose of education: to learn or to be schooled (Illich, 2011). One practitioner clearly felt the plausibility to deterritorialise school readiness to reconceptualise the concept as she stated '*If we talk about it* [School readiness] *in a positive way it can be different'* offering an entry point for provocation, thinking differently by reterritorializing school readiness (Deleuze, 1991). This suggest there is the possibility to re-think early education and the agenda of school readiness to flip the current narrative to ensure we see the child as 'iii', unique and individual.

All practitioners interviewed expressed a perspective on the changing nature of education suggesting a dualism to what has been projected by various Governments. The manager in Zone 1 stated;

> 'I don't think the message Government sends out is a true reflection [Of Early Years and School Readiness]. It is like they sit in their offices in 'big leather seats' and they have an idea of what they want to happen, but they have no idea how to make that happen, they are just losing the whole point and purpose of what school is there for'.

When provoked by further questioning on whether parents perceive education in terms of attainment only, a practitioner in Zone 2 stated *'Some parents do that's all they see I see it in other ways, but education is about social, emotional etc'.* When interviewing the parents, the purpose of education in conjunction with school readiness reflects the dualism outlined by the previously indented response from the manager in Zone 1

concerning Government ideology and neoliberalism with the potential to create a devastating impact (Sims, 2018). Initially one parent stated school readiness was *'learning to write and things like that recognition of letters in a more formal structure and like playing with peers and being with others'* alongside the purpose of education to prepare children to reach developmental expectations, outlined previously by Ring and O'Sullivan (2018), and in the previous quote from a parent when they stated *'I don't think he is school ready which is why we have used a preschool'* but arguing they wanted their child to be developed from a holistic perspective *'I don't think it matters at this stage right now that's academic stuff he just needs to develop socially and with other like sharing and being kind and happy'.*

Choice, or rather the lack of choice, emerged strongly within the parent's lived experience of school readiness when they discussed how they come to connect with the two-year-old offer as a result of a developmental delay, which could be attributable to power relations between parents, schools, policies and professionals (reflected in Darrow, 2010). The parent said *'He was put in a box and we were railroaded based on him having needs. He will get there eventually'.* The parent expanding on this saying *'the portage team turned up on my doorstep, saying that they had a referral and they had come to see him and blah blah blah, I knew he was being referred to the development team, but I didn't know about portage'.* The lack of choice for parents to control what is happening with and to their children was extended to practitioners and early years teachers. In Zone 1 a practitioner indicated *'the reception teacher is guided by the head and can be unhappy with their system and they don't have a choice in that either. They are told what they should or shouldn't be doing. We have spoken to a few who are not happy'.* This reflects the territorialisation of practice and the devaluing of the early years practitioner as a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978), and also how school readiness has the capacity to limit choice for all those involved within the entanglement. More importantly, despite the explicit references in the interviews, the availability of choice for the practitioners to fully invest in their preferred and informed method of practice with children is limited, as the school readiness agenda is directing how the practitioner intra-acts, so creating an outcome over process approach (Smith, Tesar and Myers, 2016).

This section has (re)presented the practitioners and parents lived experiences of school readiness which identified key affective capacities of school readiness. The emerging themes from the thematic analysis created sensations, culminating in further provocations (*Figure 41*). These provocations will be synthesised alongside the experiences from the early years professional focus group to (re)tell the child's lived experiences. In the next section I follow the analysis methods outlined in Chapter Four to (re)present the raw child's lived experience. This will be followed by a discussion which does not interpret their experiences but diffracts the emerging sensations against literature to make visible the characteristics and affective capacities of school readiness within the entanglement and classroom events.

Provocations from re-presenting
lived experiences
→ Formulating a discussion →

Play? Who's play is it? Agency? Value → Perspective of the chil[d]
  ↳ Practitioner Confidence
  ↳ Straited Agenda
    ↳ Emancipating the practitioner & child through Play

Status Symbol - dualistic - Practitioner identity? → Value / Recognition
  ↳ Homogenity
  ↳ Status = professional → Qualification does not equal competence
  ↳ Straited children territorilizing play & learning

What is becoming otherwise?
  ↳ Curriculum should reflect the creativity of the child Remove outcome agenda.
  ↳ Develop the Social and emotional skills = Becoming School Ready
                                                              differently

We have [SOCIETY] an ethical responsibility to
"turn to notice" and value children's agency in more than linguistic ways
  ↳ ETHICO-EPISTO-ONTOLOGY = enmeshed NCRC & the iii posthuman child

Neo-liberalism creating / influencing agenda's = affective capacities of 'School Ready'
  ↳ How can you COMPARE UNIQUENESS?
  ↳ PURPOSE of Pre-School CREATES 'A STEP AHEAD APPROACH'
    ↳ THE GAP CONTINUES TO WIDEN
      ↳ RECONCIEVE "THE OFFER" → EDUCATION → AGENDA → What really is the purpose?

When can or does the child decide? When can practitioner's decide?
  ↳ Come here and play then go
  ↳ The right to education → child's expressed wishes on what / how / when?
                          → NOT iii perspective
  → When does practitioner knowledge / research influence Early Years?
* 'Deemed' - By Who? Why? What context? → CHOICE? / POWER / AGENDA

Presenting Perspectives → Straited in practice = Social actoring

* IF WE THINK POSITIVE / DIFFERENT ⇒ FLIP THE NARRATIVE
  ↳ LINES OF FLIGHT / DISRUPTION / The "iii" IS REIFIED BY PRACTICE

Figure 41.

Provocations and sensations from thematic analysis findings to guide the (re) telling of the child's lived experience.

Stills of school readiness events

To access the lived experience of school readiness from the perspective of two-year-old children, unstructured observations over a three-hour period per session were conducted, after the period of familiarisation. Observing the children involved following and mirroring their movements over a four-week period within the zones to document their intra-actions with objects and people. To (re)present the children's lived experiences, rather than seeking to understand or explain what school readiness is, the observations demonstrate an intertextual writing journey which analyses the intra-action within the entanglement to reflect my own zone of proximal development (O'Riley, 2006). This was achieved by illuminating the sensation when reading and (re)reading journal entries and selecting events which created affective sensations and identifying connections to other events (Masny, 2014). This produced the initial layer of rhizoanalysis (*Figure 42*).
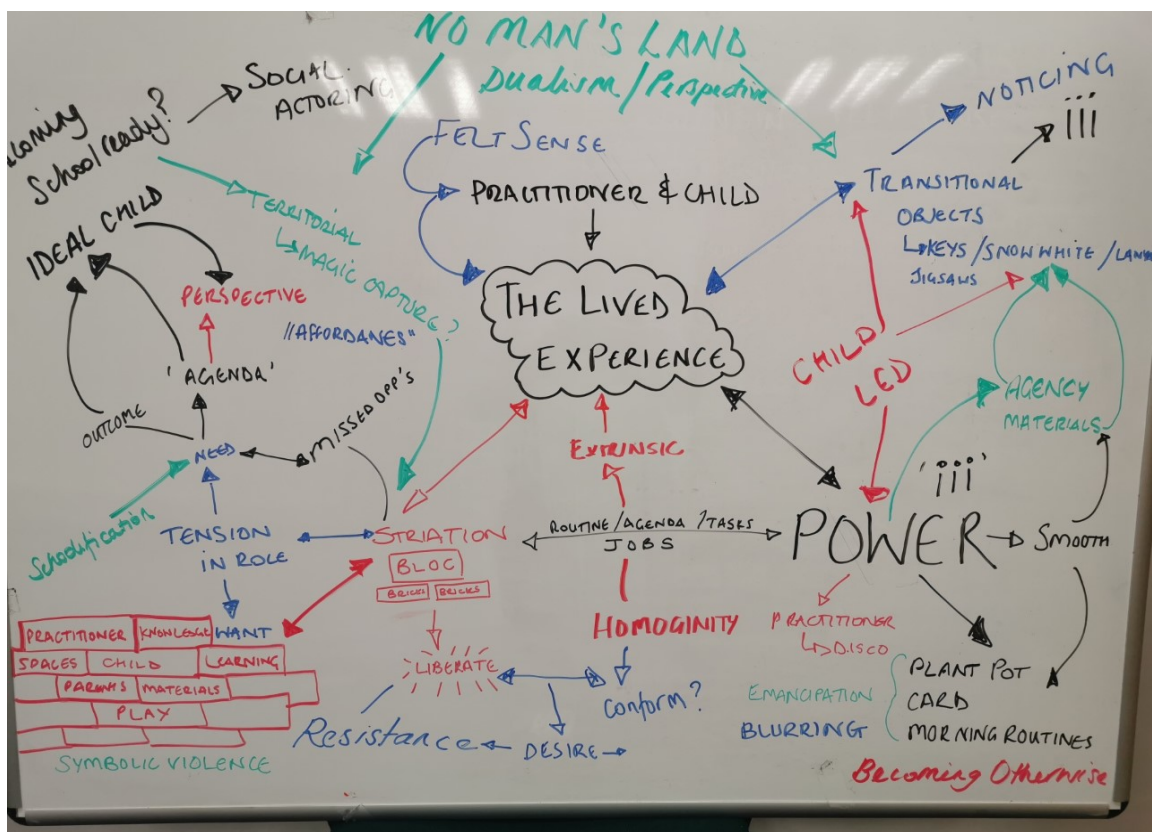
Figure 42.

A mapping of sensations occurring at the events – the initial phase of rhizoanalysis.

I applied my colourful analogy to the emerging sensation to identify moments of smoothness or striating related to becoming (*Figure 43*).
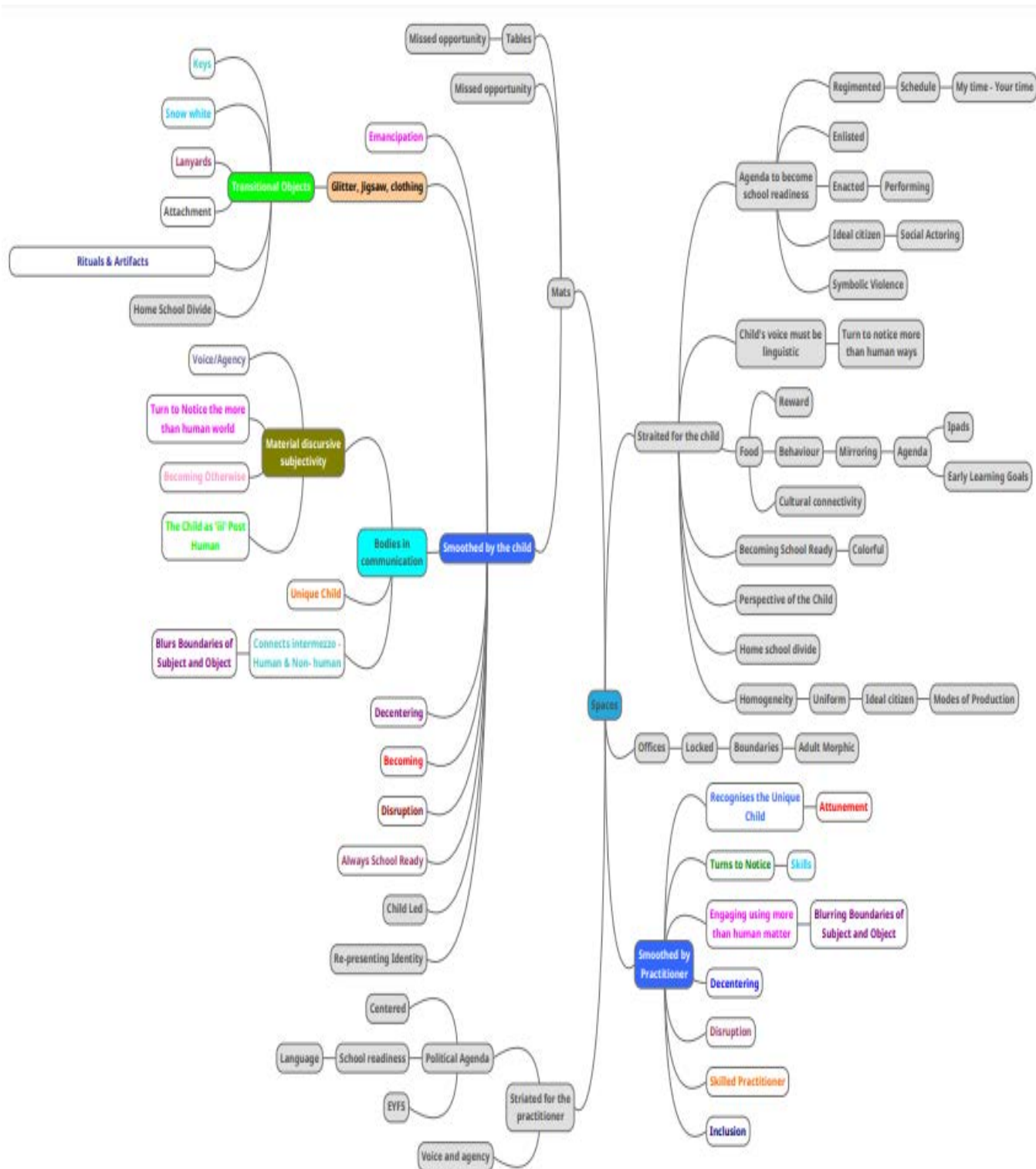
Figure 43.

A developed rhizomapping of sensations occurring at the events – the initial phase of rhizoanalysis.

The sensations I felt at the time of the event continued to glow and were sensed again as I re-read the journal entries (MacLure, 2003) (*Figure 43*). This identified specific events, moments in time and affective capacities within the entanglement, have become real-life vignettes that (re)present the raw telling of the children's experiences of school readiness as themes (Sampson and Johannessen, 2019). After the (re)presentation of each theme the second stage process of analysis of 'Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption' informed by Sellers (2015) was conducted highlighting in bold any sensations felt during the rhizoanalysis. This is a process of palpation according to Masny (2014) which allows the reader to convey an intense moment which the reader has not experienced directly. In conducting rhizoanalysis I incorporated Gendlin's (1983; 1997; 2002) discussion of the felt sense, so upholding my ethical responsibility to the children by ensuring their voices (re)present their lived experience in a creative and innovative way. This approach to the child's lived experience reflects the methodological design underpinning this study, and conducting sensual autoethnography (MacLure, 2013; Pink, 2011).

Each of the vignettes (re)present a theme from a lived experience that was observed at both zones. For instance, the vignette titled 'The Snowflake' could have been written as 'The Mother's Day Plant' from the experience of Suki. The voices from both these events conveyed the same message using bodies in communication, drawing on materiality to show their subjectivity in colourful ways. The themes emerged from re-reading the journal entries and specifically locating the sensations the events created in me. The sensations have been written in bold. Writing up the lived experience as vignettes made visible five broad themes. Thereafter, applying the process of analysis as informed by Seller (2015) I cartographically mapped the sensations in relation to each fragmentary whole of school readiness which disrupted my thinking and created provocations to make visible the intersecting connections within each theme (Alvermann, 2000).

(Re)presenting the lived experiences

Colourful children

[Bones, Bones and connections](#)

Children have been called to the carpet.

The Deputy has chosen to read Funnybones.

There are few children shuffling and fidgeting.

Five children are **reaching out and touching other children** – hair, clothes etc.

Creek has attempted to engage in a conversation.

Creek has raised his hand

Creek '**we have bones, don't we?**'

Practitioner '**yes, Ssh**'

Creek tried to make a further attempt to engage in discussion

Creek 'I have a neck bone and it connect to my arm'

Practitioner 'Ssh'

Practitioner 'Ssh'

Creek touches his body and twists the carpet humming

The story has finished.

Children are getting ready to go home.

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Why do all the children have to sit and listen to the story together? The children are naturally drawing on the other and touching things. Why did the practitioner not ask any questions about the story, could it have been passed around or discussed on the floor? Why did the book not affect the practitioner? The practitioner isn't sitting on the floor or showing the children the story. Is it just a story and its story time so that is what you must do? What a great declaration from the child – what an opportunity to explore the body and act on the child's interest. Why was the child shushed – what was he disrupting? Does school readiness mean to sit still over asking questions and extending learning or it that not the right time to learn about bones?

→Provocation→ Conformity → child interest→the child was affected→intra-action where is the reaction?

The Snowflake

→Practitioner 'I'm going to ask Poppy to do her snowflake now'

Me 'Okay, can I watch?'

Practitioner 'yes, of course'

Practitioner 'Come on Poppy, let's make your snowflake for Christmas'

Poppy sticks out her tongue to the side and strokes my hair.

Poppy gets up and walks to the table.

There is a variety of glitter and sticks set out with an example.

She clasps her arms together twisted toward her chest.

Poppy sits half on the chair half off.

Poppy touches my earring.

The practitioner is showing Poppy an example.

Poppy is grinning.

Poppy is looking at me through the corner of her eye.

The practitioner is showing Poppy the glitter and the example again.

Poppy is picking up sticks and grinning.

Practitioner 'like this Poppy look, put the sticks like this'

Practitioner 'like this Poppy, look'

Practitioner 'Look at the example Poppy'

Poppy is putting the sticks in a random fashion – *the practitioner is getting agitated.*

Practitioner '*Look* at the example Poppy'

Poppy is grinning and looking at me again.

Poppy has picked the green glitter.

Practitioner 'Like the example Poppy – or you can use the green if you like?'

Poppy has picked some blue glitter.

Practitioner 'Do you not want the white sparkly one Poppy?'

Poppy has picked some red glitter.

Poppy shakes her hand walks past me and touches me →

Practitioner 'well I guess they can do what they want -it's their snowflake'

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Poppy is using the glitter and the sticks to show me who she is and that she is a unique and colourful person. The practitioner is panicking and getting flustered – is that because she cannot get Poppy to conform to replicate and mirror the image? Does her mam really want a snowflake that had been mass-produced by an entire class? Poppy is showing the subjectivity using her body in communication.   Would Poppy be more engaged if she got to choose the gift for her mam?

This was an event where Poppy showed her colours and non-human matter to demonstrate she has a voice. Is Poppy not school ready according to the current perspective? If we conceive school readiness as having autonomy and demonstrating agency is she school ready then? Poppy is experiencing a constraining form of activities and she is disrupting the normative process with enthusiasm. Poppy is deterritorialising the snowflake. Poppy has found a smooth space.

Afterword. I asked if I could take a photograph of the snowflake next time I was there. I never saw her snowflake on the hanging display. I hope it made it home.   The difference between the classroom example and what Poppy created is metaphorically demonstrated in *Figure 44.*
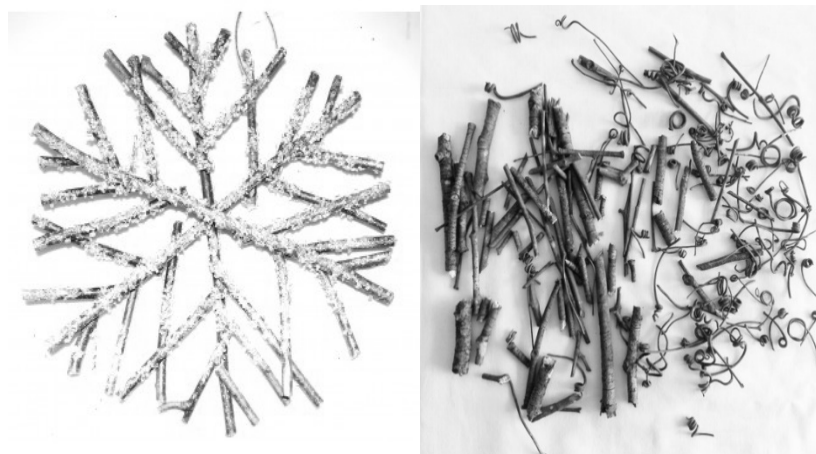
Figure 44.

A partial recreation of the snowflake.

→Me 'hiya Cooper, what are you doing today?'

Cooper touches my lanyard and keys.

Cooper is stroking my hair.

→Practitioner 'he has been in the hideaway all morning he has been agitated'→

I offer my lanyard and keys to Cooper – *this is a regular thing* – he takes them and wears them.

Cooper ushers me outside to run around.

We have come back in.

Me 'Cooper should we go in the crayon corner?'

Cooper gestures nonverbally.

→ **Practitioner 'he never goes there he doesn't like to write or anything like than'**→

He does at home and can write his own name. He has been able to do this since he was two.

Cooper and I colour in for over an hour. He continues to wear my lanyard.

He makes **rubbings of my keys and lanyard and takes them and put them in his bag.**

→ **Practitioner 'we have had to give him some keys coz you keep giving him yours and he has never done ever used pencils before'** →

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

The keys are proving a sense of agency and emotional security. They are a transitional object. Why do the practitioners not know that Cooper can write his name? Is this linked to his label of autism? He touched my hair to draw me in and create an intra-action. Am I creating a problem by giving him my keys and lanyard? Would he be labelled as not school ready just based on their assumptions or does school readiness not apply to him? Is his experience of school readiness othering him?

These vignettes are snapshot events of school readiness creating a space for provocation, to make visible the affective capacities of school readiness in a subtle and distinguished way. The sensations which emerged from these colourful vignettes have been rhizomatically mapped (*Figure 45*), making visible the connections between the sensations and the theoretical framework.
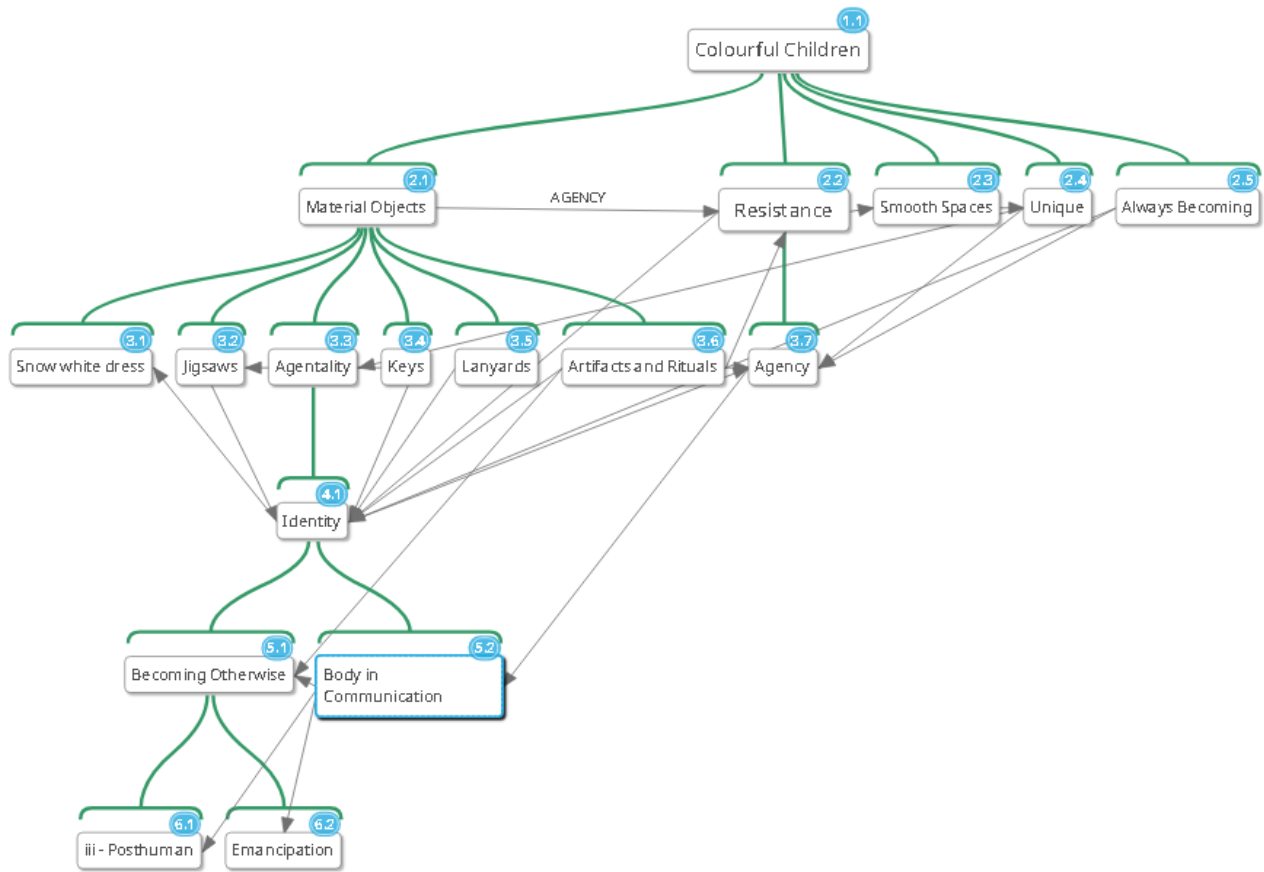
Figure 45.

Theme one – Colourful Children. Making visible the discourses and identifying the intersecting connections.

A (re)telling of the lived experiences

The rhizomapping identified the colourful affective capacities of children, uncovering their experience of school readiness as an event within their entanglements. In the next section I draw on the affective capacities the children showed me to retell their lived experiences. The aim of the discussion in the (re) reading is not to interpret the lived experience but to contextualise the vignettes theoretically, and provide additional details as documented in the research journals.   The colourful children emerged from the rhizomapping with the capacity to resist the affective forces of school readiness to become-otherwise by finding smooth spaces. The children drew on material objects and used their bodies in communication to present their identity. Within these vignettes the children made connections to matter to articulate their subjectivity. These affective capacities were made possible as the child nomadically moved within a smooth space, deterritorializing what school readiness is.

Bones, Bones and connections

As the teacher read *Funnybones* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg, 1999) the knowledge of the story was corporeal in nature, absolute and striated enacting a singularity, an extension of school readiness driven by an agenda.   The covers of the storybook enacted a beginning and end becoming entry and exit points along the molar line of teaching literacy and introducing the concept of reading toward an agenda.   However, the story became deterritorialised by Creek's actions as he disrupted what it is to read and learn by creating an entry point using a line of flight spurred by a new desire to think differently, a fleeting moment of becoming-otherwise (Fox and Alldred, 2017). This reflects Barad's (2003) discussion about having a unique way of understanding the world by developing alternative insights to learning. As Creek opened up a space to think differently about what reading can achieve, beyond the words upon the pages in the book, the saturated emotions of child-book-becoming attempted to deterritorialise others. As the flow connecting the child and book became an event the practitioner was moved to enforce the limit. The children sitting on the mat were (re)configured and (re)conceptualized as the core, the core strand of school readiness bounded together within a totalised system for learning (Foucault, 1989). This systematic repetitious behaviour of reading on the mat, the designated space, became the norm thus crystallising to legitimize the truth of what it for the two-year-old child to be becoming school ready (William, 2014).

The carpets within this classroom space acted as zones of indiscernibility with the potential to facilitate both a smooth or striated space, as identified in a later vignette. Previously conceived as a striated space within the Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption process the carpet space acted as a place of immanence reflecting what has gone before and of things yet to come. Yet the singularity of the dulcet tones *'shhhhh'* extended beyond the sounds to dispel the disruption provided by Creek, enacting the invisible hand of power as a block for the colourful sensations. The sounds carried forward with a movement and agential force affecting the other children, like the wind, causing them to turn their heads toward Creek as he uncovered his identity and autonomously spoke. The affective intensity to think beyond what was being said

allowed the words on the page to respond by inciting a movement and intra-action which agitated the status quo of the classroom practice (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). At this moment the entanglement between the child, practitioner, carpet and book failed to stimulate a reaction which would deterritorialise the event to become-otherwise. The tones of the *'shhhh'* affected Creek which he reinforced as inner speech and played back to the book through his humming, an attempt to remain colourful and keep the moment alive, as he made meaning of the cause and affect. Creek demonstrated he was equal to the adult with an energetic, vibrant and material agency (Bennett, 2010), perhaps even becoming the more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). Sadly, as quickly as his colour forced its way through it was just as quickly retracted.

In this instance the book and the practitioner become one, book-practitioner, the binary of the material object and that of the human being became blurred. As the story was read, the practitioner reified the being-practitioner within a striated space (Davies, 2016). The striation is seemingly negative in this instance as the turning to notice is overlooked and the opportunity for learning is missed (Lysen and Pisters, 2012). However, this event of being-practitioner can be linked back to the desire to achieve and deliver the order of production by maintaining the socially actored role of being-practitioner within the early years (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977), held to account to develop and progress children toward the early learning goals with a social responsibility (Neaum, 2016; Ladd, 2005). School readiness militates the agenda of reading towards itself (re)conceptualising the role of being-practitioner-delivering-readiness using the invisible hand of power. The striation of reading and reading through the affective capacities of being school ready has bound events within the classroom spaces driven by the rhetoric of the ideal citizen and neoliberalism, endorsed within the documentation of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is the fuel maintaining the connectivity between the desiring machines of school readiness and policy, capturing both the practitioner and the child to ensure its success amidst the neo-liberal backdrop (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983).

The Snowflake

There are continuous events occurring within spaces and time simultaneously (Deleuze, 2006), the snowflake is one. In this event school readiness reflected the ability to sit, follow instruction and demonstrate single channel attention. This event was intense, saturated with emotion, creating a magnitude of proliferating sensation as the child resisted all forms of hierarchal structure and striation in a very colourful way (Leander and Bolt, 2012; Reeve, 2009; Myhill and Dunkin, 2005; Rist, 1977).   The rhythm of Poppy's body began to poetically dance as she swung her arms and twisted her hip walking toward the table. As Poppy stroked the table her resistance was reified, the space of the table was smooth one side and the other striated. Poppy used her body in communication from the moment she was beckoned, creating a sensation which could be felt (Gendlin, 1983). This was enforced as she touched my hair, earring and stuck out her tongue, and I was drawn into this event as if Poppy sensed I could see things differently. The practitioner remained captured and territorialized within the event focused on the agenda of the becoming snowflake, which did not reflect Poppy's creativity (Engles, 2017; Foucault, 1982). In the interests of choice, the practitioner discussed, touched and shook various bottles of coloured glitter, fixated on the white snow-like bottle. The practitioner modelled the picture-perfect snowflake which would become snowflake-card. Demonstrating her ability to listen Poppy sat on the chair, half on half off drawing on discursive materiality as her foot made contact with the floor (Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015), the boundary of the snowflake was shattered.

Moving along the molecular line with an agential force the Snowflake became unbound, deterritorialized and reassembled as the becoming snowflake from the perspective of Poppy. It transgressed its structure, repudiating the notion of categorisation, decentred from the boundaries and limits with a relational ontology of its own (Masny, 2013). Using her body in communication Poppy's eyes flicked between me and the becoming snowflake as it got its own colours as the glitter became an extension of Poppy's colours, transposing her identity from internally through her arms out her fingers and into the glitter as together they created intra-action-reactions within each other. Poppy used her body in communication in a fluid and

mesmerising way to articulate her subjectivity and agency and reconceptualized a reflection of herself, a display and a reminder as if to say 'look, look at me' and subjectivity on the card (Roth and Thom, 2009). The practitioner remained territorialized urging Poppy to return to state of control. The status quo was disrupted. Poppy left satisfied her desire to create an affect had been achieved.

Poppy reflected the iii, the Posthuman child and what it is to become-otherwise (Murris, 2016). Her nomadic movement within the space allowed for a catastrophe of colour to emerge, making visible her line of flight, the agenda of school readiness was unable to enact its power to block the sensations Poppy was emitting with vibrancy. Poppy enacted the starling murmuration fluxing and flowing with and between the material objects surrounding her to shout her voice loud as Poppy, the glitter, sticks, glue and table figuratively mapped each other becoming otherwise like the orchid and the wasp. This created a situated knowledge of school readiness as discussed by Haraway (1988). The vignette demonstrated the practitioner attempted on several occasions to reinforce the limit of the event, yet never wholly invested in the process. This uncovered the practitioner's egalitarian perspective, a clear and unspoken tension in her practice.

The keys

As I entered this event I was positioned as material object to be drawn upon to support agency and subjectivity as evidenced in the touching and stroking of my hair. The affinity between Cooper and I placated the transversal struggle he had become locked in prior to my arrival, territorialising him within a space unable to move as evidenced by the practitioner's words. My material presence opened up the space as smooth but not enough for Cooper to move or harness, his vibrant agency required more support which he found in my keys and lanyard (Fox and Alldred, 2017). The material objects became an extension of me and linked us directly together allowing the space to open and expand sufficiently to provide Cooper with autonomous movement and the intensity he required, driven by his desire to become-otherwise. In this moment before he took up his line of flight the boundaries of our human bodies were disintegrated by material objects to become Julie-key-lanyard-Cooper as he plugged in to his own nomadic movements. Cooper was no longer betwixt and between (Turner, 1995).

Coopers event was colourful based on his use of keys. In his home environment Cooper used keys and other objects all the time as a means to open up spaces as smooth, helping him to make meaning of spaces, places and people as a non-verbal child. In this instance Cooper found a way of replacing the keys at home with new keys, within this new space of early education as a means of facilitating his movement as he transitioned between the indoor and outdoor environments and within the classroom territories. This reflected the philosophical trinity Deleuze and Guattari (1995) outlined in their discussion of concepts, percepts and affects creating movement as a mobile assemblage. The affect of the key-lanyard between the liminal space links to the use of transitional objects (reflecting Winnicott, 1960) providing the additional element of emotional security to support the light of flight. This is given further weight as Cooper did a rubbing of the keys and object to keep in my absence projecting the perspective, I too was an egalitarian figure for Cooper. The (re)conceptualisation of transitional objects was observed with each child. For example, Poppy used a Snow White dress at some point during each session, particularly when feeling unconfident, Creek would

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use jigsaws, Cooper drew on the mud kitchen and Suki would paint. All of these material objects provide a discursiveness for the children to emerge with agency, acting as an entangled voice.

Within these events the children demonstrated their autonomy and capacity to resist the school readiness agenda in a subtle and unique way, showing me what it is to be a two-year-old child who is becoming-school ready yet resists the blocking of sensations to becoming-otherwise. The children did this by drawing on the material objects around them. Amidst the structure and organisation of the classroom spaces and planned events the children liberated themselves from the affective forces of school readiness. I have 'turned to notice' this is when we have the capacity to reconceptualize school readiness from the perspective of the child. This is where the vibrancy of the things and materials equally begin to glow deterritorializing knowledge (MacLure, 2013).

(Re)presenting the lived experiences

The colourful pedagogue

D.I.S.C.O

Children are all sitting on the carpet.

Welcome song.

Practitioner 'Right children today we are gonna plant some strawberries in the garden'

Branch 'ahhhhhh, I don't want to do that!'

Practitioner 'you don't?' what about the rest of you? What do you think?'

The group are divided.

Practitioner 'So what would you like to do Branch?'

Branch 'I wanna have a disco!'

Practitioner 'Okay children what do you think?'

The decision for a disco is unanimous.

The practitioner grabs a parachute with vigour.

The children begin to move the shelves.

The practitioner puts on some energetic music.

The parachute creates an enclosed space for children to enter and exit through, by choice.

A swirling globe of colours is switched on.

All practitioners are joining in.

Children are dancing and dancing with things making guitars and shapes with their bodies.

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Why do they always have to sit on the carpet together to start the day? Normative. Formalising. The practitioner has directly responded and attuned to the child. The children are drawing on materials and objects to project their identity in unique ways and emerge with agency. Energy levels have increased. Enthusiasm has increased. All practitioners have been drawn in with the children to truly entangle. Shapes, **colours**, movement and even heartbeats are being discussed. This is a profound encounter with school readiness that has not been planned, it has disrupted the norm and created a wealth of learning opportunities and experiential learning connections. **Everyone is becoming.**

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We return from the woodland area.

Children have been eating hotdogs cooked outdoors.

Creek has been playing.

He fell twice off a low branch.

I take off my wellies.

Creek notices I have bare feet.

Creek moves toward the play-doh.

Creek **'Fire, I like fire'**

Creek talks to me about fire and how it is hard to light a fire.

Quietly organises play-doh and looks for other things to include in his construction.

Creek 'Fires done! Look Julie'

He is recreating an image of outside.

Creek 'Sausages on there!'

[In background] Practitioner 'Indoor voices! Bob! Bob!' Loud voice used.

→ Key Practitioner '**What is happening here? Can I join in? Shall we make a shop?'**

Me 'I'm just going read to read to Poppy Creek'

Creek '**You find them? They were hiding!'**

I now have socks and shoes on.

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Children notice the smallest of details. Creek is using a lived experience from the forest to recreate his own version. Creek was not allowed to be near the fire outside. Creek is using resources and materials to connect and become. The vibrancy of the noise that is filling the space is problematic for the practitioner – why is that? The noise is questions, answers, inner speak creating connections through and with each other. What is an indoor voice? Why would my shoes be hidden? Is this something Creek does – move artefacts and create rituals for himself? This play is not being observed and therefore does not count towards his ELG's. Free play is unobserved – doesn't it matter? Why are the practitioners not engaging in the play or playing themselves? School readiness is only measured when observed.

Making soup and getting wet!

Cooper 'Come, come, go do!'

Cooper wants me to go outside but cannot open the door.

We go outside and he heads toward the mud kitchen.

Cooper needs water.

→ **Practitioner turns taps on leaving a hose for Cooper to use freely** →

Practitioner gathers several resources for Cooper to use.

Cooper fills teapots with water and watering can.

Cooper takes them to the mud kitchen.

Cooper 'All done'

Repetitive schema unfolding.

Cooper is mimicking his mum cooking – hand on hip and the stirring motion.

Repeats the entire process.

Cooper 'All done'

Repeats without missing a step or action 5 times.

→ **Practitioner joins in and engages in imaginative play.**

They go to the hose. Cooper sprays the practitioner and laughs.

Practitioner returns with a playful manner and they both end up wet.

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

The practitioner was not aware of schemas. Practitioner cross-referenced repetitious play as part of Cooper's Special Educational Needs. Cooper is creating a link to home through this self-talk and recreation of his mam cooking. Is the home and setting entanglement not cohesive enough? They never talk to him about his family, yet this recreation is demonstrating his identity and his family habitas. Do practitioners do not know how to play with children at the moment or use that to facilitate learning. Does learning not matter in Special Educational Needs?

The rhizomapping (*Figure 46*) has identified the colourful pedagogue is an integral factor in reterritorializing the concept of school readiness. The colourful pedagogue created one of the largest maps in this application of analysis demonstrating the importance of the practitioner within the entanglement. This was rivalled by perspectives of the child which has an intra-action with colourful pedagogue.
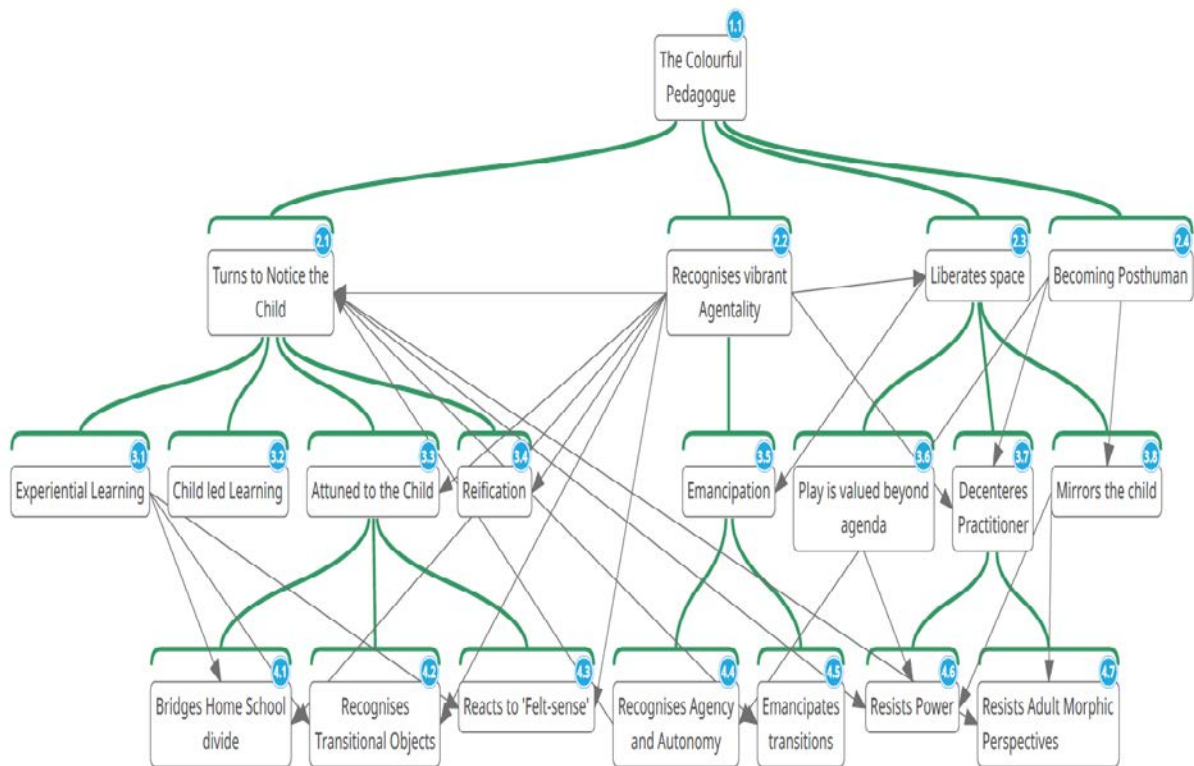
Figure 46.

Theme Two - The Colourful Pedagogue Making visible the discourses and identifying the intersecting connections

A (re)telling of the lived experiences

The rhizomapping made visible the practitioner intra-action-reactions during their entanglements with children and material objects in colourful ways. In the next section I draw on the affective capacities the practitioners showed me to support the children's lived experiences. Here I aim to explore the colourfulness of practitioner within the entanglement as they too emerge with a (re)found sense of agency within the becoming-practitioner journey. The colourful practitioners liberated themselves from the territorialising nature of school readiness to liberate spaces enabling a smoothness to occur as they turned to notice the unique child and recognise their vibrant agency, decentring their human self within the process.

The carpet space opens this event as a space for children to converge, however unlike the previous *Funnybones* (Ahlberg and Ahlberg, 1999) vignette the space became deterritorialized, beginning with the voice of the child which was supported by the practitioner (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). It was clear school readiness has affected the order of the day and appeared within the precursory function of picking strawberries to support counting or some other early learning goal-based activity. Branch used his linguistic voice to make audible his disinterest in picking strawberries. Recognising Branch's agency and his autonomy the practitioner was keen to elevate the status of all children in the group, which carried in the high frequency and excitable tones that seem to extend out into the room with agentality of their own. The words developed a musical cartography, dancing between the children, the practitioner and the objects in the room (Döbereiner, 2014). By opting for a political approach, the practitioner developed a flattened approach as she went vis-à-vis with school readiness. On the return of the unanimous decision to hold a classroom disco the practitioner used her own body in communication with vibrant agentality with an intensity which glowed (McClure, 2013). In this moment her colours began to emerge alongside her line of flight to think differently about classroom practice and developing events. A new event was unfolding.

The line of flight was the practitioner evoking her own murmuration and reconceptualising what being-practitioner was within that space and time, thinking differently (St. Pierre, 1997). Without words or commands the boundaries of practitioner and child were absorbed by the (re)configuration of practitioner-space-children-disco-colours all intra-acting and reacting with each other harmoniously (Bruns, 2007). The lines of flight emanated from everyone involved within the entanglement, shooting off in different directions. Each being and non-human matter worked together simultaneously with affective capacities as a whole, shifting desks, drawers, turning on music and creating a zone of colours using the parachute capturing a singular moment of life, a molecular experience (Colebrook, 2002). The parachute and the disco globe acted as the metaphorical bricks building and creating a smooth space for child-led learning to occur, free from the

magic capture of school readiness (Jones and Duncan, 2013; Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). Together the practitioner and children liberated each other, attuning and attending to the felt senses of each other (Gendlin, 1981).

Upon first reading this vignette you would be forgiven for overlooking the colourful moment as the other colourful moments show clearer examples of resisting power, pushing boundaries and demonstrating identity. When re-reading this vignette it was interesting to note the observational capacity Creek had in relation to my shoes, which opens up a new line of flight to rethink Creek's observation and the hiding of my shoes. On several occasions it was been observed Creek with carry with him a small object from home or maintaining possession of an object he regularly plays with in the setting. This links to the discussion put forward by Winnicott (1960). Creek's continued fixation on objects are his way of making meaning in the absence of his significant other, which is supported by his noticing my lack of shoes and then their reappearance, as he continues to hide objects on his personage or in particular places when they are too big to place in pockets. The objects are two-fold, they are transitional and also artefacts highlighting a difference in cultural habitas (Bourdieu, 1982).

With equal interest I am drawn to Creek's (re)creation of the adult led activity which he could not participate in due to his age, rendering him as an observer. Leontiev (1981) discussed this in terms of a leading activity and informed the role the child assumed during their play is a central characteristic of uniting all other aspects of play which deeply reflect the goal, meaning and the interconnected relations in the recreated activity. Elkonin (2005, cited in Bodrova and Leong, 2006) linked this to the resourcing of spaces and places. Quintessentially the vignette demonstrates the ability of Creek to continuously 'turn to notice' and expand the intra-action to develop his reaction in play. Despite these sensations occurring the colour that was transmitted was from the practitioner. The practitioner does not heavily feature in the vignette itself and this is where the colour can be located. Throughout the entire vignette the practitioner was using her body in communication, maintaining a distance from Creek allowing his play to unfold with a speed and intensity dictated by him. In her approach the practitioner enabled Creek to draw on discursive material objects to make meaning of the colliding events, transgressing the boundary of outdoor-indoor creating a flattened

'spacetimemattering' (Barad, 2007, p.234). The practitioner 'turned to notice' the event unfolding and enabled Creek to explore his own subjectivity and emerge with agency to circumnavigate the smoothed space (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004).This vignette is connected to the next by the use of artefacts in play and cultural practice.

Making Soup and getting wet

In this event I observed a playful, colourful practitioner and child circumnavigate each other with a fluidity and dance that was poetic to watch. During this dance few words were spoken, and everything was afforded equal status. The practitioner demonstrated her ability to smooth out the space for her and Cooper to (co)construct their understanding of each other and in that time, they were both being and becoming free from a striating agenda (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). As the water bounded and danced a relationality emerged as they affected each other, shaping the direction of their play. The hose became an agential force uncovering their subjectivity, distributing agency as both a 'spacetimemattering' (Barad, 2007, p.234) and a 'cutting together-apart' (Barad, 2003, p.815). In such the event disclosed a singularity disrupting school readiness with full effect.

Prior to the water play Cooper wanted to play outside and I was the facilitator in enabling the transition to occur. Once outside Cooper decided to make some soup, not for me. In this instance I was purely an observer at the periphery. Cooper followed a set sequence of event, mimicking his mother's actions and behaviours as she cooks at home. This is known as I have observed Cooper at home. In this moment and through his action the material objects enabled Cooper to demonstrate his subjectivity and his identity calling in to question the gaze of school readiness. The material objects, as artefacts, allowed Cooper to circumnavigate his own cultural identity as the only Muslim child in the setting. Here he emerged as colourful articulating his identity as Cooper, demonstrating the distribution of agency through and with objects, which has been linked to the development of higher mental processing (Hennig and Kirova, 2012; Vygotsky, 1978). Despite being labelled as not school ready Cooper's ability to be articulate in many ways suggests the way school readiness is currently assessed is misguided and privileges certain behaviours, linked solely to academic skills differential to the issues raised in the literature by Mohammed (2018), The use of artefacts by Creek and Cooper evidence the importance of material objects in distributing agency as a way of developing subjectivity and identity in play.

(Re)presenting the lived experiences

Uncolourful moments

Mirroring

Storytime has finished.

Children are getting ready for their parents to arrive.

Suki is sitting observing, using her body in communication **she is fixated on the manager walking up and down stroking the desk and flicking papers.**

The manager asks the children if they would some music on.

The children have said yes– *they are not **given no choice or options** on what they could listen to.*

The manager has selected the Gruffalo song [Donaldson and Scheffler, 2008].

Only a few children sing along and physically got up and moved around – *this is different to when they self-selected the music, they were enthusiastically interacting with each other and very animated.*

The practitioners are not singing or miming any actions

Practitioner '**Oh great, the Gruffalo song! I get sick of this**'.

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Why do we not give children a choice? Why do we need to decide for the children all the time? Where is the respect for the child to express themselves and to be heard? Where is the option to draw on matter and materiality to express themselves? Where is the adult? Education in this instance is being done to the child. Is being an early year's practitioner just a job? Where is the child in the planning?

Me 'Morning Creek'.

Creek smiles and tilts his head.

Creek is playing on all fours on the floor spinning a doll.

→Manager walks past him looks at him and shrugs→

Creek goes to the roleplay.

He picks a dress.

He picks some clip-on earrings.

He picks a bag.

→Manager to me 'he always picks the same outfit – whatever' laughing→

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Why is the child just on the floor – where is the engagement with material and resources to develop learning opportunities. Why does the child pick the same outfit – transitional object? Is the child using the material objects to engender his becoming? Why is the practitioner not turning to notice the unique child expressing a voice in more-than-human ways? The entanglements of practitioners and child are misaligned. There is a difference in doing activities with the child and the child as other. Where is the evaluation of practice to ensure the resources are stimulating to the child? There is a power discourse dichotomy.

Practitioner 'You okay Poppy?

Poppy 'No'

The practitioner is talking to Poppy about her home.

Poppy smiles at me. I smile back. Her face lights up with delight.

Hello, song time.

Sits quiet and reserved.

I touch Poppy's dress 'I like your clothes today' she smiles and tilts her head.

Poppy 'My mammy likes yellow'

In the background, all practitioners are walking around with iPad taking photographs.

Poppy takes me to the family board and looks for her mam and dad.

You must move a seat to access it properly.

Poppy looks for and selects a soft toy and the Snow White outfit.

Poppy wears the Snow White outfit every day at the setting.

Poppy cuddles and kisses the toy for fifteen minutes talking and stroking it.

Poppy frequently looks and me and tilts her head.

Poppy 'Daddy likes polos. He dances with me'.

No practitioner has engaged in a personal conversation with Poppy.

Entanglement➔Reader➔thinker➔becoming disruption

Poppy responds when discussing family and home events. Why are all the practitioners seeing the children through a lens rather than engaging with them in play? Why have a family board when it is not easily accessible? Tick boxes? Where is the entanglement with children to create learning opportunities? Where is the appreciation for the human child and their emotions? Is the classroom too classroom? Does school ready mean emotionally intelligent? Poppy is emotionally competent as she has worked through her emotions and sought to address the issue without the support of the adult.

The sensations emanating from the uncolourful moments are illustrated in *Figure 47.* Emerging strongly from within these events is power and agenda, as characteristics of school readiness which increases the intensity of school readiness toward an outcome. This can be linked to the formalisation of education and the erosion of play; the political ontology provides the undercurrent to increase the intensities striating any movement toward a smooth space.
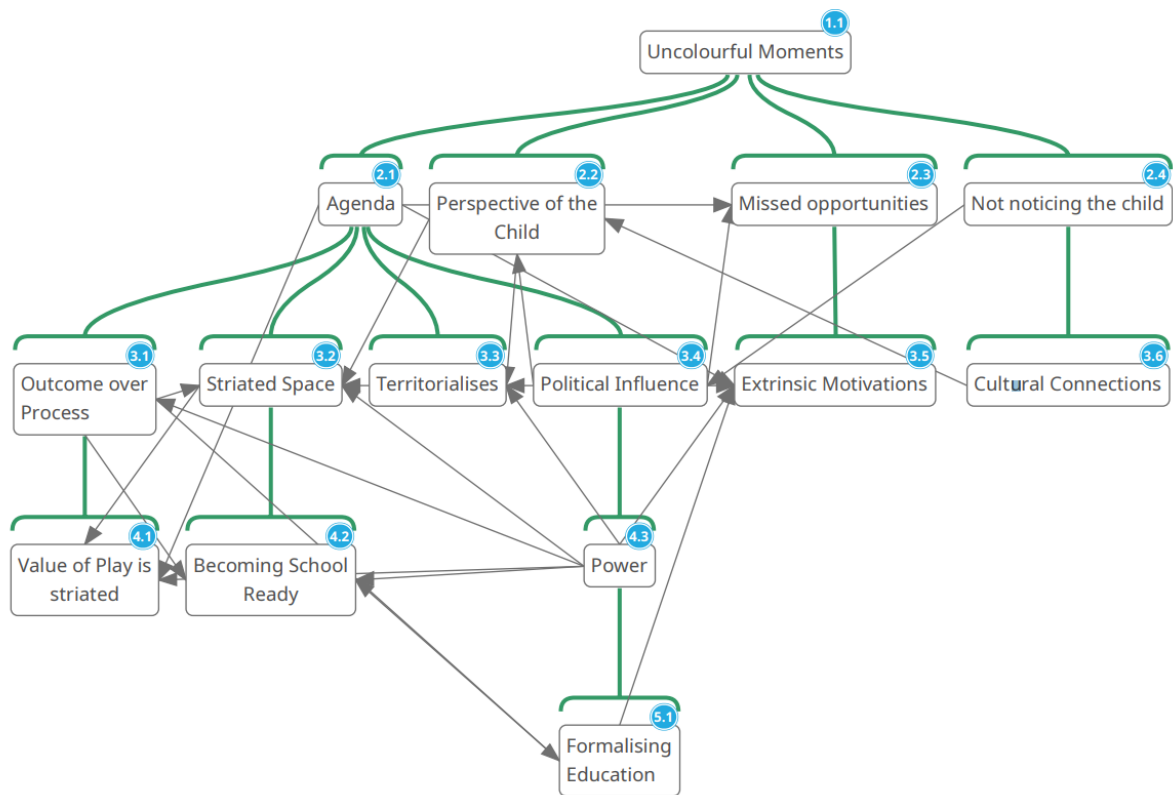

Figure 47.

Theme Three - Uncolourful Moments. Making visible the discourses and identifying the intersecting connections.

A (re)telling of the lived experience

After conducting the rhizomapping, and a close re-reading of the three vignettes, the affective capacities which were made visible all stemmed from the wider discourse and the agenda to formalise early years education, linked to schoolification. During these events the practitioner metamorphosed into practitioner-pawn territorialised within a striated space affecting the intra-action-reaction. It was clear at times, some of the practitioner reactions could not be attributed to an external affect speeding the intensities within the entanglement. However, a (re)reading of the event through the interviews evidences a perspicuous presentation (Wittgenstein, 1958). Therefore, in a concerted effort not to demonise the practitioner it was necessary to enmesh the discussion linked to these three events with a (re)reading of the interviews springing from the Zones, testifying to the assertions put forward by Sellers (2015) in relation to there always being more ways to read data which draw on new perspectives or ideas. The rhizomapping illustrates school readiness affected uncolourful moments by zigzagging through the events within the entanglement, exiting, and leaving a formalised approach to education in its wake.

Agenda is affecting the intra-action-reactions within all these vignettes and is the entry point in the rhizomapping in *Figure 47*. This is directly attributable to the agenda of schoolification striating the practitioner's perspective on their entanglement with children within the early years settings (Ring and O'Sullivan, 2018; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012). The agenda reinforcing the molar line created a stutter, like a time hop, resulting in an opportunity to liberate their desire to support children from the negative grasps of homogeneity and conformity in an effort to uphold their uniqueness (Colebrook, 2002). It is as if this is well rehearsed trick. There is a tangible link between this and maintaining the ideal citizen rhetoric which is enacted through the practitioners (Adriany, 2018), a form of symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1977) and an '*apparatus of capture*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.469) creating a colonised culture within an isomorphic structure, of ready or not ready, homogenising knowledge and meaning within the early years settings (Giroux, 2015).

Within these vignettes school readiness has enforced its power to conceptualise a limit, as a secure and stable concept creating a boundary, which is maintained by repetitious patterns of behaviour which influence the conceptualisation of societal norms within early years practice (Williams, 2014). The repetitious patterns of behaviour are duplicated in the missed opportunities of learning striating the intra-action-reaction as the infrastructure governs behaviour of moving practitioners toward and within agendas, meaning practitioners are unable to move into smooth spaces (Rist, 1977). Power guides this process to legitimise the truth of school readiness (Foucault, 1989). However, a (re)reading offers further and new insight to the internal conditions of thinking, guiding the intra-action-reaction linked to relational ontology. Within the interviews the practitioners hinted toward a responsibility to shield the children from an intrepid and looming figure as they spoke of worry and an anxiety for the child, and a need to mitigate a shock factor (as the adults hold privileged knowledge of what is come). This links to transitional phases of education as discussed by van Gennep (2010) and the current structure of transitioning children to the early years. As a result, a sense which emerged strongly was that practitioners have developed an '*ethico-onto-episte-mology*' (Barad, 2007, p.90). I read this as the practitioners tricking school readiness, a double bluff. (Re)reading the vignettes in this way has disclosed an '*internal condition of thinking*' and exposed the construction of truth, knowledge and reality temporally from both perspectives to make visible the evolution of normative behaviours in early education (Spindler, 2010 p.151).

However, some work is still to be done in this movement. Within the vignettes Poppy turns and faces me tilting her head, beckoning me to find another way to become within in her environment making specific links to her family, disclosing her colours, using her body in communication. Throughout all the vignettes the children draw on materiality in one way or another to scream 'look at me, notice me' using their bodies in communication (Bambuterol, 2017). The children illustrate a greater need for the felt sense to be present within the environment as they use clothing to make a stand (Gendlin (1981; 1997; 2002), a cutting-together apart of in a compelling effort to smooth spaces, to extend outward to create a magic capture of their own pertaining to the practitioners (Frigerio *et al.*, 2018). The children have used their agency and elevated their

own status to equal the adult with a desire to articulate their subjectivity and (co)construct their learning (Murris, 2018). At this time the force of the affective capacities are inhibiting this process, and whilst the adult gaze is diminished the children still need to resist (Slater, Jones and Procter, 2019). This would require the practitioners to invest wholly in the truth telling process to make visible the educational discourse which neoliberalism has made invisible (Done, Murphy and Knowler, 2014).

(Re)presenting the lived experiences

Perspectives of the child

Who knows best?

Watching nursery rhymes on YouTube with keyworker.

Practitioner 'Come on Cooper it's lunchtime'

Lunch **a meat product,** mash potato with cabbage running through it.

Cooper 'No, no' pointing to the mash.

I remind staff Cooper is Muslim and pork should not be served. They remove it from his plate.

Mum told me he was given a ham sandwich the day before.

Cooper struggles with the texture of the mash mixed with the cabbage and begins to pull it out of his mouth.

Me 'I am not sure he likes the cabbage mixed through the mashed potato. **What sensory issues have been noted by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Coordinator?**

Practitioner shrugs and walks off toward the kitchen.

→Cook 'Cooper you do like it, you're not getting anything else until you eat your mash. You do like it'.

Cook turns to me 'he does like it' →

I separate the cabbage from the mash.

Cooper strokes my hair. Touches my pen.

Cooper to me 'You make me happy'

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Why are they using YouTube to watch nursery rhymes? Where is the incorporation of material objects to allow children to express themselves and their creativity? How qualified are the staff? Why is a child with known sensory issues being subjected to this level of symbolic violence? Power discourse at play. Value ascribed to the child is lacking. Conformity? Does school readiness mean to do what you are told regardless of the impact? Why was the child's voice not listened to when he gestured and used his body in communication to demonstrate his dislike for the mash?

[Background] A child is crying.

Playing with Branch and Play-doh

→Child picks up play-doh and joins in taking Branch's cutting tools

→**Practitioner 'it's really hard when you're put on a pedestal and everyone must stop and and listen to you! [Gestures toward the child with eyes raised and titled head nodding] [Raises voice] when they think the world revolves around them [nodding toward child] you know the type! Honestly does the kids no favours!** →

Branch and child play negotiating rules and boundaries

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

In most homes' families adore their children. Why is this an issue? Is there a difference in how the child should socially actor or present themselves as a learner or becoming school ready? Where is the staff's knowledge of developing taking turns and what activities are being constructed to develop this skill? Is there a difference between an adult joining in play and another child? Value for the child as an equal? Is the child using materiality to express themselves and their interest to others? Is school readiness becoming a homogenous child?

→Poppy and mum enter the setting.

Poppy is upset.

Mam tries to coerce Poppy to leave her side.

→Practitioner 'Come on Poppy let's go, come and pick your name, pick your name'

→Me [Bending down] 'Morning Poppy, have you been to Centre Parks – did you have a good time?'

Poppy stops crying. Poppy Smiles. Poppy touches my earrings.

Mam 'I'm sorry she isn't wearing her uniform again'

Practitioner 'It's fine, don't worry'

Mam→

Practitioner to me 'She [Poppy] will eventually, she will wear a uniform. We will have her wearing

one before she leaves here!' →

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Clothing for Poppy provides a material was of demonstrating her identity and constructing her agency through choice. This links to her wearing the Snow White costume when in the setting. Is this also a transitional object? Why do two-year-old children need to wear a uniform? Why does the mam feel the need to apologise to the setting? Does the state own the child and control the lives of families? Conformity. Homogenising children creating a school ready identity by formalising the early years. To be school ready means to look the same and meet the same outcomes – be measured. Is that learning?

The sensations emanating from the uncolourful moments are illustrated in *Figure 48*. In this mapping the dichotomous split is evident. It is clear colourful moments are linked to the distribution of agency which can enable children to be colourful. Likewise, it can be argued the striation of space is linked to the draining of colour. The practitioner's perspective on the purpose of education will affect the trajectory of becoming-school readiness and inhibit colourful sensations and also becoming-otherwise.
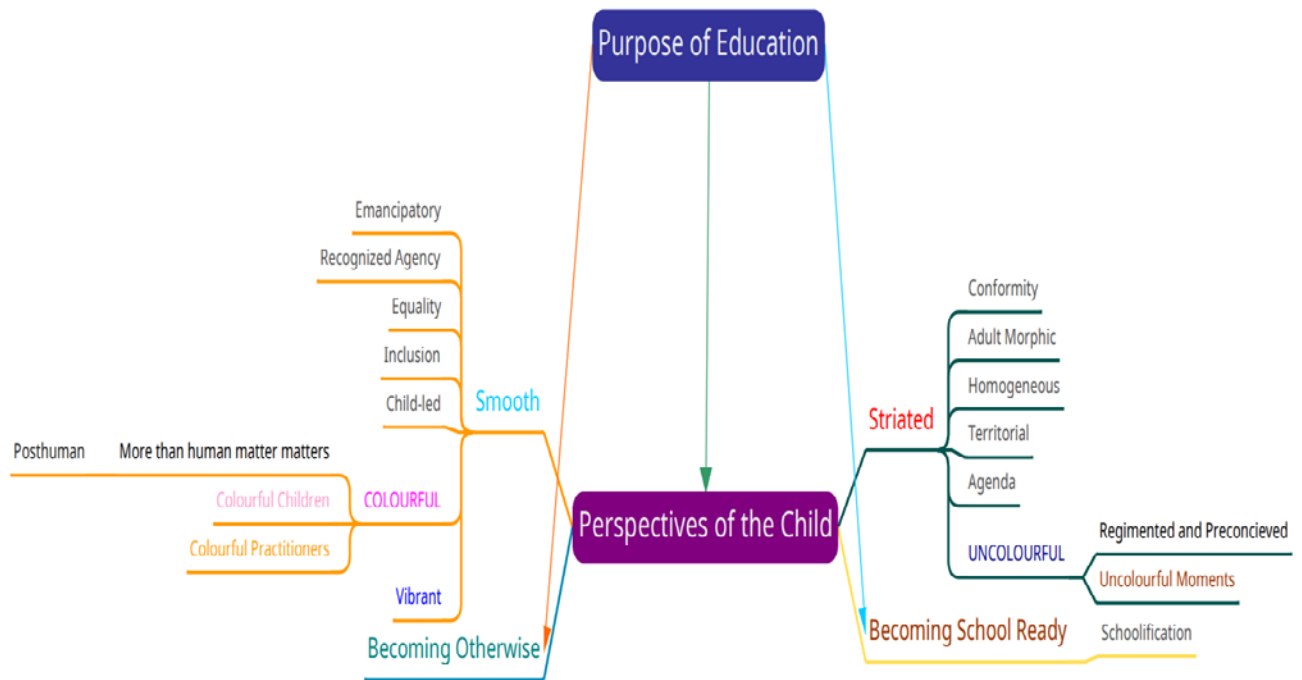
Figure 48.

Theme four – Perspectives of the child. Making visible the dichotomous discourses of how the child is perceived

The perspective of the child is dichotomised into smooth and striated spaces which were overarched by the purpose of education (*Figure 48*). Equally the perspectives of the child were split to colourful and uncolourful moments, not binary opposites as previously explained. The equal weighting of the smooth/colourful and striated/uncolourful capacities reveal the potential to disrupt school readiness is always immanent. This reflects the trifecta Deleuze (1995, p.165), discussed saying '*you need all three to get things moving'*, this is the child, practitioner and matter.

A (re)telling of the lived experience

The rhizomapping made visible the dichotomous split on the perspective of the child in early years, which was firmly driven by perspectives on the purpose of education.   Even in the rhizomapping it could be argued the split is a direct binary opposite, however a closer (re)reading of the events and the rhizoanalysis reveals this is a fluid process, a flux and flow, between the states of smoothness and striation, colourful and uncolourful – like a heartbeat moving along a screen. I have chosen to write the (re)telling of this theme as a collective discussion, making explicit reference to the three vignettes to contextualise the dichotomous split as a movement to disintegrate what appears as a binary. In doing so I also draw on other vignettes to emphasise my observations of school readiness within the lived events.

In all of these vignettes the child and the practitioners moved between states of colourful and uncolourful, striated and smooth, becoming school ready and becoming otherwise. This was due to external force shaping an agenda. In the first vignette, 'Who knows best', the agenda was time and linked to cleaning and getting back on track with the order of learning and *'order of production'* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977, p.296). In the second vignette, 'Get off the pedestal', the agenda was recording data and moving along the molar line to evidence learning outcomes toward meeting the early learning goals. A territorialisation of knowledge creating a social responsibility to ensure children are *'up to the task'* (Osgood *et el.,* 2013, p.209). In the third vignette, 'Stepford children', enculturation within the early years setting was the agenda and getting used to routine, much like the animation *Alike* (2015). Each of the vignettes affected by the agenda seeping into the classroom from outside illuminates the transversal struggle children are implicated in (Foucault, 1982), calling to question 'Where are their voices and how can they be heard when *'bodies and things are not separate as we were once taught, and their interrelationship is vital to how we come to know ourselves as human and interact with our environments'* (Hickey-Moody and Page, 2015, p.2).

Spyrou (2018) suggested the practitioner's voice in relation to disclosing the child's voice is shaped and influenced by cultural and institutional norms to project a discourse, something evident in the last vignette. However, symbolic violence from outside the classroom is responsible for creating a tension for practitioners to socially actor authoritative roles at various time of the day to maintain order, a deficit approach to education in any form (reflected in Sulkunen and Bourdieu, 1982; Foucault, 1977). This reflects the delineation and stratification Rist (1977) discussed related to dramaturgy, and in the last vignette it is clear the practitioner did hold preconceived ideas about the child which is evident in their language.   It is clear the inability to notice the children as existing within a life that is dynamic, discursive, iterative, linguistic and material within these events was not done consciously as practitioners are also striving to be seen as autonomous beings, and their desire to be valued presents a dualism linked to their own being and becoming, and transgressing the subject object binary (Davies, 2014; Barad, 2007).

The legitimisation of school readiness within the wider rhetoric acts as *'an invisible hand', referred* to in various ways and at various points in this thesis with a fluidity, ushering practitioners to make a predetermined choice without their realisation. Despite their dislike of the concept this evidences their own false consciousness and inability to recognise oppression through hegemonic control (Darrow, 2010; Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 1997, p.19). In this way school readiness is linked to Governmentality, moulding and shaping classrooms and ultimately has consequences such as those seen in the 'Who knows best' vignette. During that event Cooper made several attempts to be heard, using his voice in many forms, but this was dismissed not only by the practitioner but also by the cook. Cooper used objects and noise to evidence his state of flux, drawing on material objects to make his emotions visible to as many people as he could. Cooper struggled with his linguistic voice but was so moved by his dislike of cabbage in his mash he found it necessary to push his own boundaries. This showed a recognition of the privileged status of linguistics (reflected in Kim, Roth and Thom, 2009). Even when I called in to question their responses to him, they continued to dismiss the situation and instead used food as a weapon to incite conformities. Sadly, Cooper recognised the power discourse and felt it necessary to thank me for my involvement in the event by stroking

my hair and making a connection to me by touching heads, something done at home between him and his mum.

Throughout these vignettes the culturally cultivated play rhetoric was highlighted as a mode of transmitting social norms, values and routine linked to enculturation (Cronin-Jones, 2000; Bruner, 1960). I would stress again that this was not a conscious decision by the practitioners. School readiness has created blocks around most resources and events within the early years, creating or maintaining the transversal struggle and stratification to segment the role of the practitioner, play and voice. For example, in 'Who knows best' play is an afforded right, a resource or tool for practitioners which has developed into a normative process infantilising the child. In 'Get off the pedestal' the child is criticised for being unique and using their subjectivity and agency in the environment as he moved through spaces fulfilling his own desires, liberating himself from striation. In 'Stepford children' Poppy's emotions and her ability to display those emotions were overlooked meaning the event never moved beyond the intra-action to create a reaction. This is given further gravitas when Poppy's autonomy not to wear a uniform was set to be challenged.

This highlights that the Posthuman being is not recognised at all times within these early years settings, striating all becomings. As Murris (2016) explained, developmental theory seen in isolation creates a fracture in our perspective of the child based on a lack. This influences our perception leading to a hierarchal, person centred approach, evident in the relationships between adult-child within the vignettes. As the practitioners continue to build on historical knowledge of the child, they are unable to truly think differently about any given event, resulting in dominant discourses taking a privileged position. In these vignettes the children are infantilised and assume the position of the lowercase 'i' who can only truly enforce their subjectivity and autonomy when they are afforded the platform (Murris, 2016).

(Re)presenting the lived experiences

Becoming-School Ready

<u>The child through a lens</u>

Practitioners are walking around with iPad taking photographs

Children are noticing

Practitioner observes child

The child stops what they are doing and automatically poses.

<u>Jobs, jobs and more jobs.</u>

'Come with me you have a job to do'

'Can you do a job for me?'

The word 'job' used by staff when discussing anything the child needs to do ELG related

<u>Regimented</u>

'It's circle time, that's it sit nice and still like smart soldiers'

<u>Whose room is it anyway?</u>

The wall is covered in displays.

The displays are from Christmas.

It is March.

Entanglement→Reader→thinker→becoming disruption

Language is a powerful and emotive tool which is ascribing economically charged terminology to the activities of children entangle with. The drive of assessment and measuring children against a set of prescribed outcomes is influencing practice creating a divide between the practitioner and the children in settings. Where is the child when resourcing or planning the room and the displays?

The previous events diffractively have the potential to flip the narrative of becoming school ready from what is identified within this rhizomapping of sensations (*Figure 49*). If we constantly move within the smooth spaces and reflect out colourfulness, then school readiness becomes liberated from the forces striating the concept and will portray an entirely different reality.
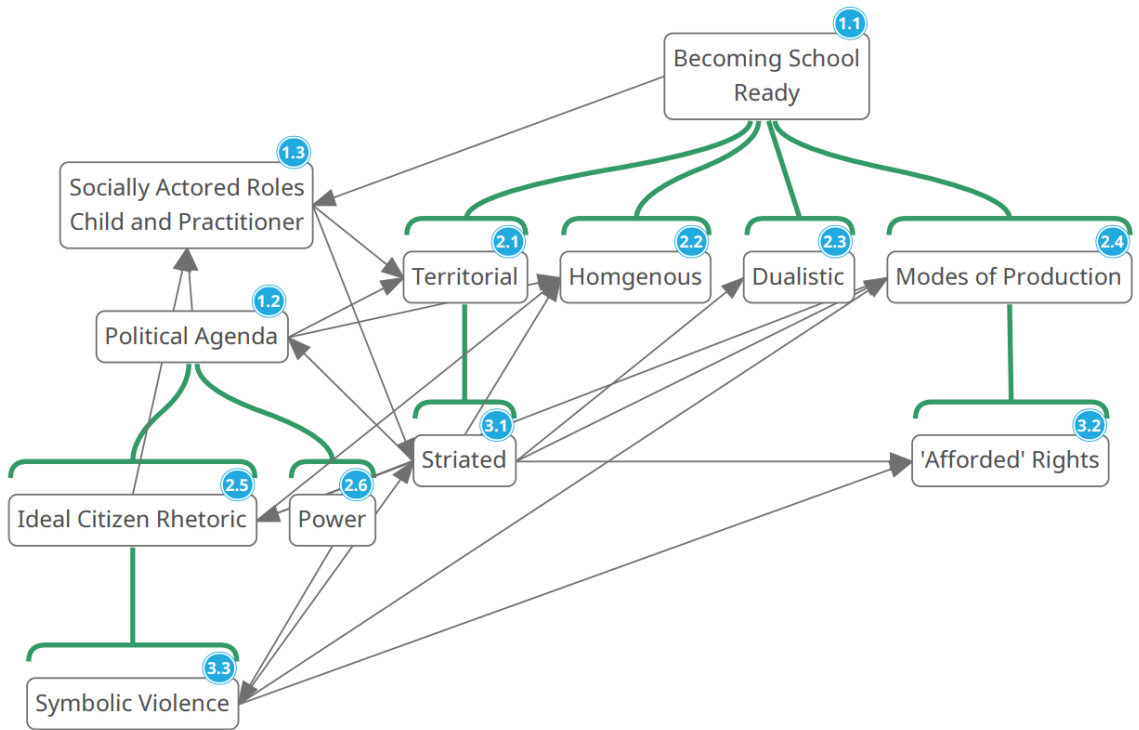
Figure 49.

Theme five - Becoming School Ready. Making visible the discourses and identifying the intersecting connections

The rhizomapping identified that becoming school ready within the current trajectory is highly politicised. The Posthuman child and the potential for smooth spaces to be opened up rests firmly with the child and the practitioner as they react to the material objects around them to fully invest in their own becoming.

A (re)telling of the lived experience

The vignettes used for this theme are an eclectic mix of events which evidence the impact of the agenda linked to school readiness. The discussion uncovers a tracing of the agenda beginning with surveillance and power, which results in socially actored roles. This then progresses to the influence of neoliberalism and early years settings becoming sites of production wherein language guides and modifies intra-actions feeding into a power imbalance which begins on the first day the child arrives at the setting. Although this theme is linked to the entirety of this thesis the discussion is brief, due to theoretical saturation of the events wherein the same findings continue to appear.

In the vignette 'The child through a lens' the containment relationship between school readiness and the early learning goals was evident. The practitioners continuously felt the need to evidence and document the child's progress at every opportunity and when a 'good' piece of photographic evidence was taken the practitioners gathered and discussed it. This evidences the vessel that is school readiness, it requires high stakes accountability or is driving practitioner behaviours to invest in the discourse that if there is no evidence it did not happen. Within these settings this has become entrenched, creating an element of accountability and regulation via compliance (Baltodana, 2012; Davies and Bansel, 2007). Interestingly in a place of such striation the children are nonetheless able to smooth the space around them. The child who automatically smiled when the camera was focused on them resisted the natural approach to evidencing an outcome making the photo like any other, a child smiling back at a camera. In this moment the child was resisting striation to smooth the space by drawing on the camera's materiality to affect the event.

In 'Jobs, jobs and more jobs' language becomes even more noticeable when linked back to the neoliberal discourse surrounding early years education. The early years is a time for development, learning and socialising through play. The introduction of the word 'jobs' interjects an adult gaze on child's play altering the trajectory. The word 'jobs' was used in all settings on a daily basis and in the interviews too. When we look up the dictionary definition of the word 'job' it means *'a paid position of regular employment' and a task or piece of work, especially one that is paid'* (Collins, 2019, no page.). Even if there is a colloquial connotation to the word this positions children as employees of the state, set to perform a task for nothing in return. I could extend further to suggest there is an element of slave labour within these settings. Although this is not my view. What emerges at this intersection is that the language used around children within these settings will influence their being within that temporal space and for what purpose. This reinforces previous perspectives of conformity and Neoliberalism raised by Sims (2017) having a devastating impact. This also opens up spaces for debates regarding social class which provides a rationale for the two-year old offer creating a perpetuating cycle (Harness, 2016). This links to the specialised languages Deleuze and Guattari (1997) spoke of and is compounded by the use of the word soldiers in the vignette 'Regimented' and likewise within the interviews.

The use of language creates a link to the displacement of power or a power imbalance which begins before the child transitions. It is well known that teachers and practitioners take huge pride in organising and structuring their environments in the best interests of the child. Time is taken to carefully browse catalogues to select and organise materials or making resources of their own. Consequently, becoming industry focused as I witnessed at The Education Show 2017. The vignette 'Who's room is it anyway?' has argued this point, however it opens up a space to question ownership of the classrooms and resources. Historically Helmund (1987) argued there is an adult morphic gaze fixated on resources and classroom spaces, and whilst it could also be argued resources can enable a child to liberate themselves from striated spaces this may take both time and a level of familiarisation within the space. As Russell, Lester and Smith (2017) stated a child's choice of resources is more beneficial to their development, yet children are not involved in the organisation of the

spaces or in choosing resources. This becomes a reactive proposition at best, as witnessed in Zone 2 when they changed a space to build on a child's interest. Yet all developmental literature, including the enmeshing of developmental theory, argues the (co)construction of learning should extend to the resources themselves. The natural counter argument to this would be feasibility or practicality which would demonstrate a striation in thinking and a need to disrupt one's thinking to challenge the normative discourses influencing thoughts. This would open a smooth space and allow the impossible to become-possible, become-otherwise.

During all the events I observed, the children illuminated that there are six fundamental things needed within the event of school readiness as they come vis-à-vis *'to get things moving'* (Deleuze, 1995, p.165).
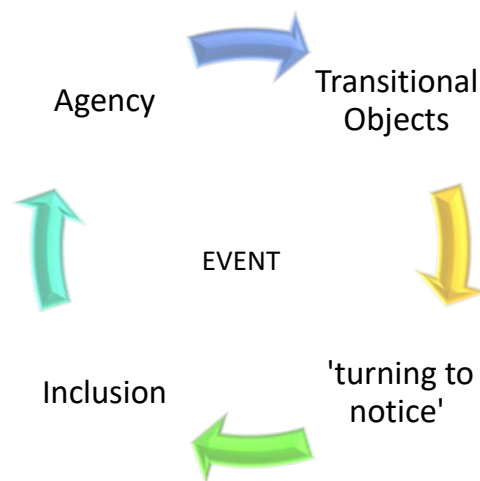
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Figure 50.

Re-occurring mattering within the events.

As a fluid, ongoing process each of the 'things' outlined (*Figure 50*) provide a performative capacity for children to make sense of their encounters with school readiness and enhance their experience. I will discuss each of these separately linking back to the vignettes.

Transitional objects were witnessed in every event. However, this was not always in the traditional sense of what it is to be a transitional object. For example, in Zone 2 the practitioner did initially encourage children to use and bring their transitional objects from home. However, these were then banished to a shelf once the children had arrived, making the invitation a tokenistic gesture. Even the use of the family board as a way of bridging the home school divide was piecemeal, made worse as it was nestled in a corner, inhibiting free, fluid and open access for the children. This was when the children showed me their capacity to think differently. Each of the children who were part of this research deterritorialised transitional objects, and reterritorialised the embodied nature of what a transitional object was and reconfigured this in other matter. Each of these materials objects gave the children a sense of security and a platform to disclose their emergent agency, providing autonomy.   The use of transitional objects in this way positioned the children's encountering with mattering, artefacts and rituals to mediate the striations of space, almost a liberating movement against conformity. The use of transitional objects also highlighted, for these children that the home school divide was too big and not enough of the children's home was evident in the classroom raising the rhetorical question of how much time practitioners have to invest in the child aside from agenda, and maintaining the reproductive status quo. I would argue not enough. The configuration of the current school day does not truly allow for a fluid transition from home to school and for a community of practice, as an entanglement between the parents and practitioner, to be fully met.

This links directly to 'turning to notice' the child and the matter that matters to them, aside from the adult gaze. This requires practitioners to decentre themselves and their privileged status as they entangle with children. It is acknowledged, within the current trajectory, this is difficult as the agenda and the pressures of accountability on practitioners is immense. Subsequently regulatory bodies have striated the creativity of practitioners in the same way the creativeness of children is often overlooked or diminished. The vignettes, in particular D.I.S.C.O, illuminated the uniqueness and capability practitioners have, and of course their subject specialism. Just like the child, the affective capacities of school readiness lineate practices toward an outcome calling to question 'where is the process?' as outlined by Biesta (2015). As I read the lived

experiences through the literature it would be pertinent to draw a conclusion in relation to this becoming thesis that the purpose of education is schooling. This begins at stay and plays as parents are ever conscious of the immanence of school readiness, which results in pitting children against each other in a framework which should appraise and seek out their uniqueness. It would be unfair to critique practitioners who do not 'turn to notice', this is not a failure or lack of ability. This is a reflection of state apparatus and the hegemonic influx of power striating space in which education exists. In each of the vignettes the children called out using their bodies in communication to be noticed, to share their lives but the affordance of time is not granted. Equally, entry points for learning occur naturally as playful adults attend, attune and mirror the child and trace their movements within spaces. This renders the current curriculum as inadequate in reifying learning from a starting point which stems from the child's standpoint of being in this world. This point yields a tangible link to the inclusion of child, aside from the rhetoric of physicality.

The events demonstrated the current inclusion of the child in planning, mapping, assessing and co-constructing knowledge was unevenly weighted. The agenda of school readiness carved out these trajectories and then linked them to the child, again an outcome over process approach. Within this there is a discrediting of the practitioner's capacity to scaffold children's learning toward outcomes without the formalities linked to schoolification. If this narrative was flipped the vehement opposition to assessments would be smoothed. The events suggest the current curriculum is creating a '*squash and a squeeze'* (Donaldson, 2016, n.p) trying to encompass multiple agendas, which have heralded education as a panacea to fix many socio-cultural issues in one fell swoop (Hopkins, 2017). A further rhetorical question emanates from this regarding social responsibility. If it is our social responsibility to ensure all children are school ready, then this begins outside of school and lies firmly in understanding cultural relativism and reconceptualising education thereafter. The current one size all approach is homogenous and flies in the face of celebrating uniqueness and diversity. This links directly to attachment, the key person and time. It was clear the children in this study relished intra-actions in many ways, especially with other humans and other bodies, building upon the premise of 'turning to notice'.

By allowing practitioners time to entangle with children in respect of the tensions identified, their agency would be endorsed as equal to the adult. This would move the current trajectory and discourse of voice as outlined within UNCRC toward the voice as put forward by Murris (2016). The children in this study who walked into these classrooms faced an immediate imbalance of power as every resource, space and structure was (pre)conceived and (pre)constructed. The children needed to find smooth spaces, or to create them, to articulate a sense of being and to show themselves at various interludes. This point could be used to support why some of the children felt in necessary to circumnavigate differing identities and bridge the home school gap by drawing on artefacts, rituals and transitional objects. It was evident the children cared less for the descriptors, diagrams and displays adorning the walls as the connection between the two were fragmented, a singularity forming only one part of the whole. Yet, when asked to find a scrap of thread or an item they had created or (co)constructed this could be achieved without a second thought, testifying to the emotional connections of experiential learning, which could be expanded to incorporate the (co)construction of space. This would present multiple opportunities for assessment of learning in an unstriated way. However, this would again require a decentring of the current approached to education and learning, a relinquishing of control, to reify the child as a linguistic, material, discursive, dynamic and iterative production which is continuously becoming in this world.

In this chapter the affective capacities within the lived experiences of practitioners, parents and two-year-old children have been made visible using multiple methods of data collection and employing multiple methods of analysis to provide this thesis with validity and rigor (Denzin, 2012). The implications of the affective capacities focused on the lived experiences of the two-year-old children by reading the vignettes in light of the relational ontology underpinning this study, and by drawing on theoretical material flagged up in Chapter Four. The lived experience captured within the lives of the practitioners and parents was drawn on to highlight the proliferation of school readiness beyond the classroom walls and into the other spaces children move between. There was no interpretation of the child's voice in respect of maintaining authenticity and truly making visible their invisible voices.

Chapter Seven

(Un)concluded

Figure 51.

A picture illustrating a colourful fluidity and a blurring of boundaries.

Careful consideration has been given to offering up a conclusion to (re)tell and (re-)present the events and lived experiences I was part of, which do not warrant interpretation of any kind. I reflected on my journey within this becoming-thesis and was drawn back to literature in the same way I was drawn to animation with Eleanor. In particular I was drawn to the work of Shaun Tan and two specific publications, *The Arrival* (2006) and *The Red Tree* (2001). In *The Arrival* Tan (2006) metaphorically depicts a looming of something that affects and can be affected. This is captivating and details a journey (*Figure 52*). It is a story about immigration but the inferences of being lost in the world, frightened and confused by unfamiliar spaces and places captured the essence of the colours the children, practitioners, parents and objects conveyed throughout this study. The looming and haunting nature of the creature throughout the illustrations yielded parallels with school readiness and invisible force which is captured in the shadows of play and practice. Moreover, the manager's quote '*If we talk about it* [School readiness] *in a positive way it can be different'* has lingered on and within me, drawing me back to *The Red Tree* (Tan, 2001) (*Figure 52*). The story and the illustrations in this book also detail a journey of bodily sensations which seep out from the human body and their affects are made visible in the illustrations. Using subtle, dull and sombre colours in the beginning the story depicts sadness, fear and despair as the child moves in time. Each page is saturated with hidden text and symbols, much like school readiness. These colours gain life and the small red leaf that follows the child throughout her journey eventually blooms into a fully grown and abundant tree as a symbolization there is always hope in every day, a sensation to think differently. Using these sensations, I will (re)tell my observation of school readiness, inspired by Shaun Tan, in the creative and inspired way Kane (2011) urged. My short story inspired by real events will act as a prelude to addressing the research questions in a more conventional and traditional manner to outline the affective, yet subtle capacities school readiness yields as it moves through society zigging and zagging.

Figure 52.

First image is from *The Arrival* (2006), the second is from *The Red Tree* (2001)

A (re)telling of school readiness inspired by Shaun Tan

It has no luggage or baggage to speak of. No one knows exactly when it arrived, yet here it is. School readiness zigs and zags throughout society, through environments, affecting people and things as it passes. Upon arrival, school readiness danced within the tones of policy gaining an intensity as it appeared within the media, behind the mask of our televisions. Knowing no boundaries, it pushed through the glass screens to fall at the feet of parents. Here school readiness creeps within the walls of our homes, silently bumping into the child without territorializing the body.   It follows the families, lurking in the shadows, to explore the spaces and places children entanglement creating tension and trepidation. Sweeping around the bodies of adults' school readiness gently nudges the parent, affecting their gaze of their child. Everything is the same yet somewhat different. Moving between children as they intra-act school readiness begins to territorialise parents along the molar line to create intensity and trepidation, which exudes as competition and fear as they question 'Why can't my child do that?'. School readiness for now has completed its task, it has created a desired affect. Relinquishing control of the parent, for now, school readiness turns its gaze back toward the child to cloak their physical being, with the intent of affecting their becoming (Davies, 2017). The child has gained a new shadow, the shadow of becoming-school ready, soon only the desired school ready child will be seen, as they figuratively map each other.

School readiness grows and develops, passing through the bodies of practitioners and teachers to create an affect within the school environment. Gaining agency in documents and language, school readiness passes from the lips and through the ears to affect thinking. This thinking allows school readiness to saturate the walls of schools by using enacted forces and an agentality to re-present itself, conveying meaning by drawing on material objects. Shiny paper, photographs, charters, motto's and behaviour charts untouched by the hands of the child become tools within the repertoire of school readiness developing an intensity, affecting and luring others to the socius, is this what it means to be a school ready child? It metamorphoses, reconceptualising itself as the salesman. School readiness sets out its stall, selling itself to the parents who

might visit the school, positioning children as a commodity to be consumed and transacted. The child becomes an investment for school readiness, which will be returned as school ready if managed well within the portfolio of education by those who maintain the status quo through their due diligence to reinforce the molar line. After all there are expenses to be paid.

Whilst the anticipation for starting school begins to grow in school readiness, so does its mediated attention to things and matter infiltrating through to the classroom once again. Its looming presence casts a shadow on to the resources, tables and carpets. It troops an affect over planning with purpose, setting out an agenda for the bodies it will capture, a magic capture, bodies big or small. In the interests of choice not all spaces are affected. Spaces and places such as carpets become a zone for school readiness to dance, dance with the bodies to create a desire. In these places school readiness changes it's guise like a chameleon morphing into books, songs, actions taking flight in words oozing from sounds for children to react in an orderly fashion. As the days progress, school readiness whispers in the ears of the practitioners and parents, using an invisible hand to usher and guide toward the outcome of becoming school ready and being ideal. Shaping an influencing our intra-actions and reactions. Is resistance futile?

Children come vis-à-vis with school readiness and see it, they know it. It is not a shadow to them. Like a game of tag its relentless focus and grip cannot be maintained here – not with these bodies. Fleeting moments appear for school readiness to relax its fixated gaze and its movement towards a reoccurring end point, a time loop with different faces in different places. There is hope. As the colours of children radiate out a solution to break free from the impending doom, darkness and homogeneity of its previous mantra 'you will be school ready' emerges. School readiness can see what was previously invisible, a new way a new focus - but it needs help. You see, school readiness itself has been captured, netted by something bigger. It's time to think differently. To scaffold school readiness to reach its full potential with children in a way that respects and recognises their agency, as we recognise the capacity of all non-human matter.

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The answer has always been there. The time has come for school readiness to be cut together-apart to think in new ways, to generate colourful intensities, new desires and creatively think about the affective capacities school readiness can really yield. It was never mean to couch itself in a shadow, society did that to school readiness. We interpreted something which was never meant to be explained or mobilised in the way that it was. If children can liberate themselves from the desires of school readiness with an explosion of glitter, deterritorializing agenda through the roll of their eyes and the cooking of play-doh, bigger humans can do the same – *can't they?* But, like anything, to truly reach a point of immanence boundaries must be blurred to question "who is the practitioner and who is the child?" The entanglements of the practitioner and child within the remit of school readiness are a community of practice, each assumes the role of a core and peripheral member at different stages, as we recognise children as experts in their own lives we place the child as the more knowledgeable other in matters concerning themselves, and the role of learner becomes shared as a (co)construction of learning and our meaning emerges.

Figure 53.

The red tree appears as a sign of hope at the end of the story, demonstrating not everything is as it seems.

A more conventional approach

In a more conventional approach to the (re)telling inspired by Shaun Tan, I would like to take the opportunity to continue in the manner that I hope I have achieved throughout this-becoming thesis, aiming to speak to the reader if they were here in the room with me. My becoming-researcher has been an exciting and engaging journey and I have learnt more about the world, places, space, objects and people. This has generated a unique insight into how two-year-old children experience school readiness within their settings. The notable absence of research on school readiness focusing on two-year-olds places my study within a small set. Providing a unique contribution to the literature, for practitioners and parents. In my rhizomatic approach I fluxed and flowed alongside all forms of bodies, all with the potential to affect and be affected, which has revealed a great deal of detail to me, my contribution to knowledge. I have aimed to work ethically around the knowledge I produce and how it is produced, accountable to both the human and non-human world in all spaces that mingled with children. This has been a "*thinking-making-doing'* of research (Truman and Springgay, 2015). During my time one question continued to plague me, lingering as a vibrating and humming sensation. **'Who is school readiness really for?'**

I argue school readiness is an adult thing, it is not something for children to grasp, render, play with or apply. They care nothing for what it is and I would further argue at times the two-year-old children in this study used their emergent agency and colour as if they were playing with it, teasing and luring it in to a false sense of security. The littler humans showed me their colour magnanimously, like explosions of power, subjectivity and agency. Their colour is generated by relationships, entanglements and through objects in spaces. Therefore, I argue everything has a performative-material-discursive force with the ability to affect and be affected, regenerating or draining colour. All of this constitutes as a voice and enables me to contribute to the body of knowledge already in existence (Chadwick, 2020; Murris; 2016; Mazzei 2014a: 2014b; Mazzei and Jackson, 2016; Hohti, 2016a; Hickey-Moody, 2015; Davis, 2014). This was evidenced in Chapter Six, not only in the classroom events but in the interviews, as practitioners were pulled and pushed between their

own smooth and satiated spaces affecting their colours too. This offers up a provocation for practitioners a reimagining of doing early years practice to trouble of the adult/child human/non-human binaries.

Going back to the sensation **Who is school readiness really for?'** also offers up the provocation for parents, practitioners and policy makers to reimagine how school readiness is enacted. This is where school readiness has emerged more strongly with a firmer grasp. It drains the colour from our thoughts, our bodies and our voices. It serves to modulate, enclose and jars any fluidity or flows. As this happens and the colour drains, as an enactment of school readiness, the practitioner is (re)conceptualized as practitioner-school ready. I argue through my findings early years practice needs to the attend the relations between human and more-than human matter to recognise how agency is distributed, and subjectivity emerges as a colourful force resisting all forms of striation. This would result in the practitioner becoming practitioner-child-parachute-glitter-smooth-colourful releasing a more playful being, which was raised as an issue in Chapter Three (McInnes, 2019; James and Nerantzi, 2019). By conducting this research my thinking has shifted and I can now hear and see the voices in more-than-linguistic ways which is a colourful place to exist. The colourful analogy has grown since I first conceptualized it at the beginning of this study, I originally saw colour as actions and unspoken words but from re(reading) my journal that was human centred. Throughout this study it too has metamorphosed to become rhythm, movement, intensities, vibrations all serving to be a conduit for voice.

The fluid research questions posed in Chapter One have served to guide this research, and that is all they could do as this thesis and my movements were/are already in existence, fuelling my body with colour much like coal does in a captivating and haunting open fire that speaks and beckons. I will use the provocations to contextualise my assertions everything has a voice and the potential to be colourful by (re)telling the things the children shared with me and make visible the contribution to knowledge this thesis provides. This is also another way of making visible their voices and colours, opening up for a space to think differently and become

child more often, liberating ourselves from the self-imposing and captivating desires of concepts such as school readiness.

Contextualising this in relation to the research questions is somewhat simplistic. The two-year-old child is mitigating tensions like the beings of adult-practitioner in every facet of their educational journey, mainly linked to identity and being recognised as an individual. This drains them of their colour with varying speeds. They appeared to clamber for a snapshot in time wherein they were noticed for being Poppy, Creek, Branch, Suki and Cooper as they drew on materials and emerged with agency and vibrant explosions of colour. There was both smooth and striated perspectives of the children which naturally created a power imbalance which maintained the adult gaze. Despite the wider recognition the child should have agency and autonomy, creating a dichotomous approach to play and learning – one which is free, and child led, the other which is engineered and manufactured towards an outcome. This is not only inhibitory for the child; the ramifications extend to affect the practitioner who is equally homogenised within the current trajectory of early education. Here the practitioner experiences a loss of colour, just like the dad in *Alike* (2015). My research experience recognised children are philosophers, and they are the corporealness of Posthuman before it was recognised. This illustrates the magnitude of their capacity, their ability to find colourful ways and the teaching and wisdom they can offer adults as experts in their lives. In doing so children offer a solution to bridge what has gone before and what is yet to come.

Becoming-school ready for the two-year-old child is also dichotomous. This split is agenda versus the child. In the first instance the child is always becoming-school ready from the moment they are born, as colourful beings they have a natural love of learning and inquisitive nature which is saturated with affects and sensations, not only for them but for everyone who is willing to relinquish control and be taken on the adult-child-playful journey. The second is firmly political, an agenda towards maintaining a status quo and eliminating uniqueness from learning, creating a hierarchal structure and lineation. It has become a social

norm to separate out the two competing agendas, creating an intensity, a loss of colour and a rush to learning which striates practice. The term being ready or becoming ready places emphasis with the child, when it has been established within the findings there is an enmeshment needed to mobilise any becoming. Despite readiness being the focus of this study, it was clear the terminology played no significant part within the children's realities of everyday doings, it was a thing. This addresses the final question. Children are always in a state of becoming, becoming-otherwise becoming-colourful, which is equally reflected in the being-becoming-practitioner.

Out of this rises the implications this study may have in the wider rhetoric, and my argument is this thesis can only have an affect if it speaks to you as the children and practitioners spoke to me throughout my journey. Personally, I will meet these colourful memories on a daily basis as the children have shown there is more to their entanglements that some adults currently give credit to. Working through this becoming-thesis and entangling with the children and objects has cast new light on the fluidity and intensities occurring within classrooms, which needs to filter through to policy to create an affect from the perspective of the child. This is aside from the school readiness agenda. Despite bumping in to in at every turn, the term means nothing to the children and they do find fascinating and colourful ways to resist and circumnavigate power which rationalises why we need a shift in perspectives, to engender a more unique and fluid process in early years education to attune with the child and ensure their voices are heard aside from linguistic ways.

Attending to the lived experiences in this way offers a unique contribution to knowledge and opens up the potential for further study on a larger scale. This would be specifically linked to how we can address the power imbalances within the classroom, find more colourful ways of doing early education and (co)construct spaces in view of the *'ethico-onto-episte-mology'* creating an ethical responsibility to (re)tell and (re)present the voices of children and matter in all matters, mindful of the knowledge that is producing which might affect the world (Barad, 2007, p.90). The potential for further research draws on the limitations

of this study and the scale of the research itself. Five children and six practitioners is considered small and therein ungeneralizable. However, the aim of this study was to notice, to see and explore and that has been achieved.

I have employed theory to uncover, disclose, and see the voices of two-year-old children and more-than-human matter. Doing research with two-year-old children in this way is unique and could also be considered a limitation as this has never been actualised previously. There is a growing recognition within the field of Post-qualitative research to explore and uncover entanglements in more-than-human ways, this is a direction this study could take to metamorphose from qualitative research using more performative and transformative methods.

I draw back the section 'Is this just a story' in Chapter Four and assert this thesis links several worlds together to uncover a truth and a reality that occurred at that time. This can never be replicated again as we continuously flux and flow to (re)configure our being and becoming in the world. However, these are stories of real lived events and the happenings within them deserve to be recognised as a voice or voices against the striation of education and children's being and becoming. In some ways, as I aim to conclude a story that has no ending, I set off a new line of flight considering and imagining what I could have done differently and what will I do next, and, ultimately what will the children become. I draw this back to Eleanor; Eleanor can be a million in one things from minute to minute. However, she will always be Eleanor. I will continue to advocate for children to be seen and heard in whatever guise or situation they move through and aim to move this research forward. I return to the provocations set out in *Figure 41* on page 259. We have an ethical responsibility to children, and I now feel the weight of that more than ever now. I watched those voices push, resist and challenge the status quo in remarkably subtle ways and I feel privileged I had the time and space to do so. This affordance of time should be reflected in policy, not only for children but for practitioners. The current curriculum needs to be revisited as this is the largest agenda striating the entanglements of

environment-child-practitioner, we need to have trust without tick boxes if we truly want to invest in the early years.

You can never un-see what has been seen and you can never un-hear what has been heard. The voices of children. This is something that will accompany Eleanor as my ever-guiding conscience in my time to come.

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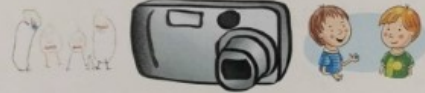
Appendix one

Child assent booklet

My name is Julie.

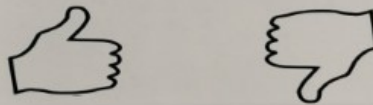I am a researcher.

I like finding out things.

I will be in your school
and watching you and
your teacher do things.
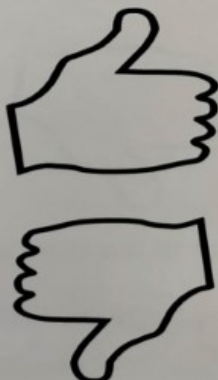I will write it down in
my book.

You could show me around.

Draw me pictures.

You can talk to me.

I might take notes and
photos of what we do.

You do not have to take part
and can say NO!

If you would like to take
part can you coulour in
the thumbs up picture.

If you don't want to take
part colour in the
thumbs down picture.

Using a recording of my
voice

A tour of the nursery.

Appendix two

Gatekeeper letter

To (insert Organisation name),

Re: Educational Research

My name is Julie Ovington. I am a Postgraduate Researcher at Northumbria University, currently researching the concept of school readiness with regard to the policy Free Early Education and Care for 2 and 4 year Olds.

I am writing to ask if your school would be willing to take part in the research.

Part of the research involves working with schools, parents and children to explore the concept of school readiness, to understand exactly what this means for schools and for families.   The research will take place at intervals over the course of one academic year and will involve group discussions, observations and interviews.

If you agree to participate you will be required to provide access to your school and consent to participant recruitment. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and explain your role in more depth. Please feel free to contact me on the address or email below.

I would like to stress your involvement in the research will remain confidential. Any identifiable names, locations or information will be removed and replaced with a generic character. The data will only be used in accordance with the study aims and will be held by the research on password protected university hardware in line with the University's ethical guidelines.

Ethical approval has been granted by the Northumbria Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your help.

Yours faithfully

Julie Ovington
Post Graduate Researcher Faculty of Education and Lifelong Learning
Room CO24
Coach Lane Campus
Northumbria University
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE7 7XA
Email: julie.a.england@northumbria.ac.uk
Principal Supervisor – Professor Michael Jopling Michael.jopling@northumbria.ac.uk

Appendix three
Informed Consent

Faculty of Education and Lifelong Learning

To (insert Organisation name),

Re: Educational Research

My name is Julie Ovington. I am a Postgraduate Researcher at Northumbria University, currently researching the concept of school readiness with regard to the policy Free Early Education and Care for 2 and 4 year Olds.

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to take part in my research.

Your child's school have given consent for the school to participate in research which involves working with teachers, teaching assistants, parents and children to explore the concept of school readiness to understand exactly what this means for schools and for families.   The research will take place at intervals over the course of one academic year and will involve group discussions, observations and interviews.

If you agree to participate you will be asked to take part in some group discussions, one to one interviews and develop questions I will ask professionals about the topic. It is an excellent opportunity for you to have your thoughts and feelings listened to regarding you and your child. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and explain your role in more depth. Please feel free to contact me on the address or email below.

I would like to stress your involvement in the research will remain confidential. Any identifiable names, locations or information will be removed and replaced with a generic character. The data will only be used in accordance with the study aims and will be held by the research on password protected university hardware in line with the University's ethical guidelines.

Full Ethical approval has been granted by the Northumbria Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for your help.

Yours faithfully

Julie Ovington

Post Graduate Researcher
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'Ready! Who's ready? Ready for what? Is expanding the entitlement of free education for disadvantaged two-year-olds 'schoolifying' children or facilitating resilience in children and their families? A Case Study of School readiness'

You are being invited to take part in a research study being carried out in your region. Before you decide to participate in the study it is important for you to understand the part you will play should you choose to do so. The case study will involve your school supplying information on the development levels attained within the Early Years.

You are under no obligation to participate in the study; non-participation will not affect your child or the education they receive. However if you do choose to take part it will be very much appreciated. Those who choose to participate will be asked to sign a consent form so that any data collected can be published. **You and your school are free to leave the study and withdraw your consent at any time** without giving an explanation. The study will be confidential and the names of those taking part will not be used.

The research intends to explore 'school readiness', a central concept in current and recent policy, and what this means for two-year-old children selected for free Early Education to evaluate whether the current policy Free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year-olds (Department for Education, 2015) is fit for purpose in England. There is currently little or no research in this area which has been raised as an issue by two recent reviews *Rolling out free early education for disadvantaged two-year-olds: an implementation study for local authorities* and providers and *Centre for Excellence and Outcomes Expansion of the Entitlement for Free Education for Disadvantaged two-year-olds.* The investigation does not intend to explore whether a child is ready for school and by what age, but to identify and understand what enables 'readiness' for and with practitioners. School readiness as a concept has grown throughout the decades, becoming central to Early Years Education in England, more recently by explicit reference.

This research intends to evaluate the experiences of parents and children who are accessing their entitlement to Free Early Education and Childcare. The study will be examining the following points.

1. What is school readiness according to staff, parents and children
2. Identify the advantages and/or disadvantages of the Free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year-olds
3. How the policy Free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year-olds is perceived
4. How the policy Free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year-olds is delivered
5. What impact does the policy have on school readiness

You are being asked to give your opinions on the policy Free childcare and education for 2 to 4-year-olds by taking part in a group discussion to create a definition of school readiness and take part in an interview. You will be asked to be involved in the pilot study and the main study at set intervals during the academic year.

Each exercise will take approximately one hour to complete.
I wish to remind you any identifying information which could identify you as a research candidate will be amended to a generic character or code name of your choice.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, information you provide will be kept secure and will be destroyed upon completion of the research study. Should you wish to take part in the study please return the consent form within 3 weeks of receipt.

Julie Ovington
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northumbria
UNIVERSITY NEWCASTLE
Faculty of Education & Lifelong Learning

INFORMED CONSENT

PROJECT TITLE: 'Ready! Who's ready? Ready for what? Is expanding the entitlement of free education for disadvantaged two-year-olds 'schoolifying' children or facilitating resilience in children and their families? A Case Study of School readiness'

Please tick or initial where applicable

I have carefully read and understood the Information Sheet.	☐
I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I have received satisfactory answers.	☐
I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason for withdrawing, and without prejudice.	☐
I agree to take part in this study.	☐

Signature of participant... Date.....……………..

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)...………………………….

Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor

....

Signature of researcher... Date.....……………..

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS)...………………………….

Appendix four

Rhizomap of sensations at the events