Play in an English Reception Classroom: How Children Navigate Classroom Rules During their Self-initiated Play.

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Doctor of Philosophy

I, Shabana Bi Roscoe, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

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Abstract

In the recent past, a number of concerns have been raised, by educators and researchers alike, about the nature of the provision of child-initiated play in English reception classrooms, owing to the pressure from present and successive governments on educators to prepare young children for statutory schooling. These concerns provide the background to this research and the broad external context in which it is situated. Emerging from these broad concerns, this study examines how five young children navigated a classroom's rules during their self-initiated play, over the course of the 2012-13 school year.

In employing a broadly ethnographic methodology, the main research methods used to appreciate the minutiae of the children's experiences and endeavours were participant observation and informal discussions; these were supplemented with child-led tours, interviews, and both participant children's and their peers' observations and interpretations.

The research shows how the children deployed a range of 'tactics' to realise their play interests, which were based on their understandings of *how* each of the educators enforced classroom rules, and *where* they were located during each instance. It also shows the ways in which the children actively applied several classroom rules, and encouraged their peers to act in accordance with these.

The research highlights that whilst it was the case that some of these rules 'constrained' the children's play, it was owing to the various 'conditions' (*relative freedom*, *choice* and *autonomy*; and *extended* free play sessions) of the teacher's play provision that they were also able to follow and realise their needs, interests and overall motivations. Concerns are raised about how the various assessment-related developments that have taken place since the fieldwork was conducted may be – in the present times – impacting on teachers' play provisions, and accordingly opportunities for children to exercise agency in their play.

Impact Statement

This research furthers our understanding of how children make sense of classroom rules in the context of their self-initiated play, and the extent to which they can and do exercise agency. Specifically, the findings contribute to two main fields: the body of empirical studies that has considered young children's navigations of rules in EYE contexts; and, the research literature on how the various 'conditions' of reception teachers play provisions may enable or constrain children's play experiences, endeavours and agency.

With regard to the former, whilst children's navigations of their setting's rules have been considered, it is apparent that in the studies which considered young children's endeavours, a) the children's perspectives are noticeably absent, and b) whilst several of these studies have presented 'strategies' and instances of when the children 'exercised' these, they do not offer various other details or aspects of the children's navigations. The present study contributes to this body of work. First, it presents five young children's views, experiences and navigations of the classroom's various rules – from their perspectives. It foregrounds what the children's understandings of the rules were and how they viewed the reasons for these, and it offers the reasons and overall motivations behind their agential endeavours. Secondly, it offers an insight into the various ways in which the young children navigated each of the rules, and the factors that they took into account when doing so. When trying to realise their play-related needs, interests and overall motivations, for instance, this research shows how the children used a number of tactics – e.g. 'hiding self', 'adjusting pace', 'saving' and 'performance'; and how these were based on which educators were present, the children's knowledge of how each of these educator's enforced the rule(s), and where they were located in the classroom.

In relation to the latter, whilst several key works in recent decades have looked at reception teachers' play provisions, experiences and perspectives: with the exception of two works, the children's perspectives with regard to any aspect of their classroom experiences are noticeably absent. This research contributes to this research literature. First, in considering how the children experienced and agentially navigated their classroom's rules over the course of one school year, it narrows a 'gap' in this literature; secondly, it shows how the 'conditions' of a teacher's play provision can enable children to follow and realise their play (and learning) interests, and exercise agency.

The fieldwork for this research was conducted at a time when a number of concerns were being raised about the impact the 'school readiness' approach was having on the provision of play in reception classes – and accordingly, children's play experiences. Indeed, this research highlights that a) the children encountered many disruptions to their play episodes, and these increased in the last term, b) in this term, there were fewer instances of the children agentially engaging with what they had learned in the former, and c) the various pressures and demands significantly reduced the time the educators had to participate in the children's play.

Contents

List of figures and maps

Acronyms and abbreviations

BE	Behaviour expectation
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BSA	British Sociological Association
C1	Carpet one
C2	Carpet two
DISC	Discussions
ELGs	Early learning goals
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
EY	Early years
EYE	Early years education
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage
EYFSP	Early Years Foundation Stage Profile
EYPP	Early Years Pupil Premium
FN	Fieldnotes
GLD	Good Level of Development
HoFS	Head of Foundation Stage
INT	Interview
KS1	Key Stage One
KS2	Key Stage Two
LA	Local authority
OBS	Observation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PD	Play dough
PNS	Primary National Strategy
PP	Pupil Premium
PSC	Phonics Screening Check
RA	Reading area
RBA	Reception Baseline assessment
SATs	Standard Assessment Tests
SRA	Social research Association
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Y1   Year one

Y2   Year two

Y6   Year six

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CHAPTER 1:

Introduction

This thesis examines how five young children, in one English reception class, navigated the rules that they encountered during their self-initiated play. The research was conducted across the school year of 2012-13. In this introduction, first I present the rationale and purpose of this research, and then I provide an overview of how the thesis is structured. To begin with, I offer a brief account of the context in which the research took place.

1.1 Rationale and purpose

When the fieldwork for this research was conducted, a number of concerns were being raised about the possible impact that the 'school readiness' approach was having on reception teachers' play provisions – and accordingly, the children's play experiences (Brooker, 2010a; Wood, 2010a; Wood, 2010b; Bingham & Whitebread, 2012). Here, there were two overall concerns. Firstly, it had been identified in the literature that the time children had to play was being decreased in favour of more formal learning (Rogers, 2010; Bingham & Whitebread, 2012); and second, when children were able to play, the experiences that were offered were often bound by the need to demonstrate learning outcomes – and were therefore, a 'sanitised' version of play, not play itself (Rogers, 2010, p.161; Wood, 2010b). A number of assessments and procedures, which were linked to the school readiness approach, were cited as the reasons for this. Namely, the top-down pressure(s) from the end of year six (Y6) Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) and the end of year two (Y2) tests; the *Early Years Foundation Stage Profile* (EYFSP), which teachers were required to complete in the final term of the school year; and, perhaps mainly, Ofsted's (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) whole-school inspections, which looked at how much progress children made year on year from reception through end of Y6. In the year that this research's fieldwork took place, the *Phonics Screening Check* (PSC) had also been introduced for the end of year one (Y1). All of these, together, it was argued, were putting pressure on reception teachers to increase formal learning in literacy and numeracy, and to use play as a 'pedagogical device' to ensure children were meeting certain outcomes (Rogers, 2010, p.161; Wood, 2010a; Wood, 2010b; Bingham & Whitebread, 2012). With regard to the latter, the concern here was not that children were being offered play experiences that were potentially instructive, rather that there was an over-emphasis

on these at the cost of those that were meaningful child led play experiences (all of these points are discussed in further detail in Chapter 2).

During the fieldwork, these worries continued to be raised; and indeed, in the period since, these appear to have increased owing to further – and proposed – changes. During the year, for instance, there were concerns that the PSC was encouraging teachers to place more emphasis on formal learning in literacy. In the following year (2013), the literacy and numeracy target thresholds were 'substantially raised' (Roberts-Holmes, 2015, p.304) which, it was argued, brought more pressure. More recently, concerns have been raised about the soon-to-be statutory *Reception Baseline Assessment* (RBA); this, it has been said, is likely to add to the demands that teachers have to navigate, as Local Authorities (LAs) may use this data to set 'higher' predictions for the children's end-of-year attainment in literacy and numeracy (Robert-Holmes and Bradbury, 2016, p.607).

The above concerns provide the background to this research's focus and the external context in which it is situated. Emerging from this context, the focus of my study is on how reception children navigate the various rules which pertain to and encompass play provision. It is, to my knowledge, an aspect of English reception play provision that has not yet been considered. Certainly, whilst several key works in recent decades have looked at reception teachers' provisions, experiences and perspectives; and, considered how certain rules may have affected the children's play: upon close observation it is possible to note that with the exception of two works (see 2.3), the children's perspectives on the rules – or indeed any other aspect of their classroom experiences – are noticeably absent. Furthermore, in the current body of empirical work that has looked at or considered young children's navigations of rules in early years education (EYE) settings, it is possible to note that a) in general, the children's own perspectives, reasons and motivations are noticeably absent, and b) these present instances of when children acted in certain ways – either to exemplify how a strategy was exercised or to illustrate the overall themes that were noted – and do not show how individual children may navigate rules during certain situations and/or over the course of the year (see Chapter 3).

My aim in undertaking this study is twofold. First, it is to contribute to this body of empirical work, in showing how individual children may – alone or together with their peers – agentially navigate various rules over the period of one school year; the factors that they may take into account when 'acting'; and, why they may choose to act in the ways that they do. Secondly, it is to contribute to the field of EYE and the discussion around reception play provision. Here, it is to show how the rules of a classroom – both play-specific and others – may shape, enable and/or

constrain children's play experiences, endeavours and agency; and in general, how various other structures – i.e. the 'conditions' of the play provision, educators' enforcement of rules and their authority[1], and various pressures and demands connected to the school-readiness approach[2] – may also influence or impact on these. Below I present this research's overarching and sub-questions.

1.1.2 Overarching question and sub-questions

The overarching question that this study seeks to address is:

How do children navigate classroom rules during their self-initiated play in a reception class?

This overarching question is disaggregated into the following, interrelated sub-questions:

1. What are the children's understandings of the reasons for the rules? What are their perspectives on these reasons, and/or these rules?

2. How do the children agentially navigate the rules? What factors do they take into account when doing so?

3. What are the reasons and/or motivations behind the children's endeavours?

4. How do the rules shape, enable and/or constrain the children's play-related experiences and endeavours? What are their perspectives on this?

5. Do the children's activities result in the maintenance, transformation and/or removal of the rules?

6. In general, how do various structural factors pertaining to the larger structure of primary education shape, enable and/or constrain the children's play experiences and endeavours?

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[1] Roles are seen as structures in this study (see 4.3.3.4).

[2] I.e. the EYFSP, SATs, Ofsted inspections and the PSC.

1.2 Thesis structure

Including this introductory chapter, this thesis comprises eleven chapters. In *Chapter 2* I discuss the points that were raised above in more detail. I consider the present and successive governments' efforts to prepare children for school, and then present some of the concerns that have been raised about how these may be impacting on or shaping reception teachers' play provisions. In *Chapter 3* I review what is noted in the current body of work that has looked at or considered children's navigations of rules in education contexts. Here, I highlight that children's resistances – either over or covert – is a common theme that runs across the majority of the works; and that, aside from a small number of studies, in the majority of those that have looked at young children's endeavours, their own accounts noticeably absent. At the end of each section, I also explain where and how my study might make a contribution.

In *Chapter 4*, first I clarify the critical realist metatheoretical underpinning of this research. Here, I discuss the ontological and epistemological positions that are taken – namely, realism and relativism respectively; and, then explain why, as is suggested in critical realism, I exercised rational judgement in deciding which conceptualisation(s) and theory would best aid the analysis of the data gathered. I then present the concepts that frame the present research – namely, that of children as 'beings and becomings', agency, and structure; and present the conceptual and theoretical insights which together comprise the 'tools' that aid my interpretations and explanations of the children's experiences. In *Chapter 5*, first I explain why I took a broadly ethnographic approach, and then I offer a detailed account of the research process. This involves outlining the steps that were taken when gaining access to the school and classroom; the ethics process – from before the study took place through to the analysis and presentation of the data; the methods that were employed and why, together with the various gains and hindrances that were experienced as a result of their usage; and lastly, how the data was analysed.

In *Chapters 6-10* I present the children's experiences and endeavours in connection with the classroom's rules. In Chapters *6-8* I discuss the children's endeavours in connection with the play-specific rules; in *Chapter 9*, their application(s) of the classroom's five behaviour expectations (BEs); and in *Chapter 10*, their navigation of the requirement to participate in adult-led activities (and administrative tasks) during the free play sessions. In *Chapter 11*, I consider this research's main findings in connection with the overarching and sub-research questions. I also reflect on various aspects of the research process; raise several concerns that emerged from the discussion; and suggest directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2:

Concerns about play provision

In Chapter 1, the overarching question that I endeavour to investigate was presented together with the sub-questions, and a summary of the chapters that make up this thesis was offered. The purpose of this chapter is to offer an account of the background within which this research's focus is situated. I consider the present and successive governments' efforts to prepare children for school, and then present some of the concerns that have been raised about how these may be impacting on or shaping reception teachers' play provision.

In recent years there has been mounting concern about the provision of child-initiated play in reception. The main concern here seems to be that teachers are offering children an educational version of play in place of 'authentic' or child-initiated play experiences (Lindon, 2013, p.10); and in part, when children are able to engage in their own initiated play, there is either little adult involvement or their play is disrupted – or both (Rogers & Evans, 2008; Wood, 2010a). When looking at the various factors that have been cited as the reasons for this, it appears that, overall, these are connected to the 'school readiness' approach that frames English EYE provision (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012, p.12). In the first two sections, I discuss these matters in some detail. In 2.1, I look at how the present and successive governments' efforts to prepare children for school have led to the introduction of a number of initiatives, assessments and procedures; what appears to be the main reason behind this drive for school readiness; and, some of the concerns that have been voiced with regard to the effects that these are having on teachers' practice and children's play experiences in reception. In 2.2, I present and discuss how this drive and the accompanied assessments and procedures are argued to be affecting teachers' provision of play – and accordingly, children's play experiences; and, why this is of concern. In the last section (2.3), I situate my study's focus, and define some of the terms that I use throughout the thesis.

2.1 School readiness

In the 2006 *Starting School II* report, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) identified that 'France and English-speaking countries'[3] had adopted a

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[3] Whilst the United Kingdom is referred to as one of these English-speaking countries, it is predominantly data collected from England that is examined (OECD, 2006, p.425).

"readiness for school" approach in EYE provision, which tended to place emphasis on the acquisition of 'more focused skills and school-like learning areas, *e.g.* mathematical development, language and literacy skills' (OECD, 2006, p.13, 63). This approach typically involved: the 'addressing' of 'knowledge and skills' that children were anticipated to acquire at the 'end of each year' (*Ibid*., p.128); the testing and assessment of progress; and, the predominance of 'teacher-initiated and large group activities' (*Ibid*., p.136).

Indeed, one could suggest that the OECD's evaluation is close to the truth. For one, the phrase is mentioned early on in the statutory framework, namely '[the EYFS]…promotes teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness'…' (Department for Education (DfE), 2012, p.2; DfE, 2017, p.5)[4]. Likewise, in recent years there has been a strong drive to improve attainment in literacy and numeracy. For instance, soon after the Desirable Outcomes, which included targets that teachers had to work towards (SCAA, 1996), the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategy were introduced. In 2003 these were offered in one document, entitled the *Primary National Strategy* (DfES, 2003; DfES, 2006); in 2008, they were made available in the *Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) (DCSF, 2008, p.10; see also DfE, 2012, p.5 and DfE, 2017, p.8). More recently, the target 'thresholds' in literacy and numeracy in the EYFSP (STA, 2018) – a statutory assessment that practitioners have to complete for each child at the end of the EYFS – has been raised (Roberts-Holmes, 2015, p.304). Furthermore, the early learning goals (ELGs) presented in the EYFS 'summarise the knowledge, skills and understanding' that children 'should have gained by the end of the Reception year' (DfE, 2012, p.4; DfE, 2017, p.7); and, to ascertain if children have achieved a good level of development (GLD), when completing the EYFSPs in the 'final term' teachers are required to assess each child's learning and development in each of these areas (STA, 2018, p.9). Equally, the EYFS recommends a 'gradual shift towards' more adult-led activities towards the end of reception in preparation for 'formal learning' (DfE, 2012, p.6; DfE, 2017, p.9).

In trying to determine the reason for the focus on language and school readiness, the OECD suggested it was perhaps because there was 'greater heterogeneity and social differentiation' in the 'population' of the said countries, as in 'many' of the early childhood settings observed there were 'a high proportion of children at risk of school failure' (OECD, 2006, p.136). Indeed, in recent years there has been an increased focus on narrowing the 'education gap between disadvantaged and better-off children' (Ofsted, 2016, p5). Disadvantaged children here are identified as those who live on or below the poverty line often in areas of deprivation; the 'proxy

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[4] Since the fieldwork took place between 2012-2013 when the 2012 version of the EYFS was in place, throughout the thesis I will indicate where the points are located in both documents.

indicator generally used in education' is if the children are eligible for free school meals (*Ibid*., p.11). This focus, one could suggest, appears to be manifested in the form of an interconnected approach, involving: early intervention, early identification, the practise of targeted intervention, and the ongoing monitoring of progress.

In terms of early intervention, for instance, the government offers free early education and childcare for 'the most disadvantaged' two-year-olds; and, an Early Years Pupil Premium (EYPP) for each 'disadvantaged' three to four-year-old attending pre-reception provision (Ofsted, 2016, p.5). If attending an early years setting, when children are aged between two and three years, practitioners are required to 'review their progress' (DfE, 2017, p.13). The intention here is that if children appear to exhibit the need for additional support in certain areas, practitioners can plan activities to target their development in these; if they display early signs of developmental delay or a special educational need or disability, practitioners can work in partnership with parents and other agencies to develop targeted plans for their 'future learning and development' (*Ibid*., p.13). During the transition, these children's 'progress checks' are passed on to their reception teachers. In reception, then, these may be used to inform or complement teachers' initial assessments which are part of their schools' own systems (Ofsted, 2014). Here, as an Ofsted report highlights[5], teachers can identify children's 'weaker areas' from the 'moment' they start, and plan and offer 'individualised support immediately' (2014, p.8, 17). At this stage, schools can also use Pupil Premium (PP) grant money to provide better suited, target intervention (*Ibid*.). In the Ofsted report cited here for instance, it was found that the majority of the schools hired teaching assistants with the funding to 'increase the adult ratios in reception'; and in half of these, the educators were trained to deliver 'intervention programmes' or 'activities' designed to develop children's language, problem-solving in mathematics, and social and emotional skills (*Ibid*., p.25).

In addition to assessing children's progress in the EYFSPs, teachers may monitor each child's learning throughout the school year via schools' own systems. At other levels of the school, children's progress is assessed formally via statutory assessments, and the aforementioned systems. At the end of Y1, children's reading skills are tested via the PSC. The purpose of this check is to 'confirm' if a child has 'learnt phonic decoding to an expected standard'; and at the same time, to 'identify' those who may 'need extra help' so that schools can make the necessary

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[5] To identify how settings 'located in areas with high levels of deprivation' were 'successfully narrowing the gap by the time children left primary school', the practice of pre-schools, children's centres, childminders, infant and primary schools were looked at, together with the inspection reports of 50 early years providers that were awarded an 'outstanding' (Ofsted, 2016, p.1, 27).

arrangements to support them (Walker, Sainsbury, Worth, Bamforth, & Betts, 2015, p.13). Towards the end of Y2, children sit their end of Key Stage One (KS1) SATs[6]; at the end of Y6, they sit the end of Key Stage Two (KS2) SATs. When carrying out inspections, an Ofsted requirement is that schools demonstrate the 'progress' that 'all' children make year on year, from reception through end of Y6 (Ofsted, 2018c, p.58). Particular attention is paid to the progress that disadvantaged children make at the end of key stages, and this is 'compared with that made nationally' by other children 'with similar starting points' (*Ibid*., p.59). Furthermore, from September 2020, to understand their 'starting points' upon entry to reception, children's 'language and communication' and 'early mathematics' (and perhaps self-regulation) will be assessed (RBA, 2018, p.1). It is anticipated the data from these RBAs will provide a 'key measure' of how much progress children make from this point through end of KS2 (*Ibid*., p.1).

In the recent past, concerns have been raised about the effects that the school readiness agenda and the associated assessments and procedures are having on EYE provision. Of particular concern is that these have led to the adoption of more formal teaching practices in place of play – particularly in reception, and an unrelenting pressure on schools and teachers to demonstrate children are making progress through various forms of data.

Early in the OECD document, for instance, it was highlighted a 'disadvantage inherent' in the aforementioned approach was that the 'programmes and approaches' used were 'poorly suited' to young children's 'psychology and natural learning strategies' (2006, p.13). The latter were defined as 'learning through play, interaction, activity and personal investigation' (*Ibid*., p.58). Later in the document, it was suggested countries look to the approaches taken in Norway, Sweden and Reggio Emilia where the impetus was not on 'seeing the school as a benchmark' or of 'imposing targets and skills on young children' but 'more on the child' (*Ibid*., p.206-207). In the two Scandinavian countries, for instance, there was a focus on the 'agency of the child', 'learning from relationships', and 'informal but intense research on matters of interest or concern' to the children; in Reggio Emilia, children were listened to, and their 'capacity' to 'guide' their 'own learning' was respected and utilised (*Ibid*., p.206-207). Bingham & Whitebread (2012, p.91) also sponsor the practices of Scandinavian and Central European countries, as well as 'several' approaches such as Reggio Emilia, Experiential Education in 'the Flemish part of Belgium and parts of the Netherlands', and Te Whäriki in New Zealand. The 'goals' of this 'social pedagogy', they write, are 'process-related', and the 'emphasis' is on 'learning skills and acquiring

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[6] In Mathematics, English reading, and English grammar, punctuation and spelling.

dispositions which will be useful to the child in their life-long learning' and 'not just to pass examinations' (*Ibid*., p92).

In their report, Bingham & Whitebread claim that the English government's[7] push for school readiness, which is 'in line with its attempts to 'raise standards", is 'misguided' (2012, p.4-5) for a number of reasons. First, the 'introduction of formal curricula' – i.e. teaching of phonics, literacy and numeracy sessions – which are part of the efforts to 'deliver' children to Y1 with basic reading and writing skills, disregards 'individual differences' and therefore the fact that many children may not be 'developmentally ready for this type of learning' (*Ibid*., p.4). For instance, some children may have had early experiences that affected their 'initial development' – i.e. poor nutrition, little access to health care and little cognitive stimulation; and therefore enter reception without the 'range of skills' needed to participate in the learning experiences planned (*Ibid*., p.5). Similarly, some summer-born children, and perhaps others at five or six-years-of-age, may not be 'ready' to sit for extended periods and engage in 'pen-and-pencil activities' (*Ibid*., p.13). However, because all children are 'measured against a fixed 'yardstick' of 'readiness", these children are therefore at risk of being seen as 'failures' at a young age, and of underperforming in the later years of schooling (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012, p.4).

Similar concerns about summer-born children's learning and development were raised in Sykes, Bell, & Rodeiro (2009). In a review of studies that analysed data on children's performances in England and elsewhere, together with their own analyses of attainment data taken from LAs, Sykes *et al*. (2009, p.4) wrote that, across a 'school year' 'young children' were more likely than their older peers to be 'referred' for special educational needs. However, many of these children may have been 'misdiagnosed' because their teachers may not have taken their 'relative levels of maturity into account' when assessing them (*Ibid*., p.4). Furthermore, although there was evidence to suggest that there was a greater gap in attainment between young children and their older peers in the early years (EY), but this reduced significantly over their school careers: in the context of English schools, 'fewer' summer-born[8] children 'reached the expected level of attainment' in their GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) English, mathematics and science in comparison to their older peers (*Ibid*., p.3). This, they believed, was perhaps because four to five-year-olds were not developmentally 'ready' for 'formal education', as in

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[7] At the time Coalition government (2010-2015), comprising Conservative and Liberal parties.

[8] Summer-born children are seen as those born between June and August; older peers are those born between September and May (Sykes *et al*. 2009).

countries where children were introduced to such learning experiences 'at a later age', birthdate effects appeared to be 'greatly reduced' (*Ibid*., p.4).

Second, the top-down pressure to ensure children achieve certain grades at the end of KS2 SATs, write Bingham & Whitebread (2012, p.4), is driving teachers to rely on more formal 'didactic methods of instruction', and to teach 'to these tests'. This latter point was also raised in the OECD report (2006, p.128) where it was suggested that the measuring of children's learning year on year in the 'areas' of mathematics, and language and literacy 'may lead' teachers to 'focus on the assessment content' and distract them from the 'relational and pedagogical work that young children need'. Indeed, perhaps in recognition of this, in a speech given in October 2018 regarding proposed changes to inspections (considered in due course), Ofsted's Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman stated that schools would be challenged if they were seen to be spending 'too much time' preparing children for tests 'at the expense of teaching' (Ofsted, 2018b).

Third, Bingham & Whitebread write, although the phrase is widely used and in different ways in government and academic works alike:

> 'Readiness for school' is a more finite construct and implies a *fixed standard* of physical, intellectual, and social development that enables children to meet school requirements and assimilate curriculum, typically embracing specific cognitive and linguistic skills.

> (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012, p.12)

In order to realise this, then, English early years provision is designed to teach children early, and according to a curriculum that comprises 'predetermined levels' and 'subject content' (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012, p.95, 110). That is, to make them ready for school, teachers are expected to teach young children to 'memorise content' (*Ibid*., p.146); and to ensure they are making progress, continually assess them against these 'pre-determined set of 'standards'' (*Ibid*., p.48). However, whilst some children may make progress in the short term, they warn that 'their continued progression is at risk' (*Ibid*., p.146). This is because they are not likely to have developed the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to learn later in their school careers (*Ibid*.). For instance, when EY provision is process-related – as it is in the contexts where social constructivist philosophy underpins pedagogy, children have the time to: think about and reflect on 'information' and therefore 'associate one concept with another'; follow their interests and therefore feel a sense of autonomy, and with that control, over their learning in school; and, work on and revisit tasks and therefore develop perseverance (*Ibid*., p.146; see also: Moyles, 2013;

Whitebread & Bingham, 2014; Moyles, 2015). Furthermore, and by virtue of being able to do the former, children become less reliant on adult support and more able to 'regulate their *own* social, emotional and cognitive functions' (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012, p.92). Since English EY provision is framed by a 'content-related' 'curriculum' not a 'process-related' 'pedagogy' – or one that is an amalgamation of both, they argue, children may become 'frustrated' with learning, and 'fearful' and 'nervous' of being in school in their later years (*Ibid*., p.7, 49, 146).

In March 2013, an open letter echoing many of the concerns considered above was sent to the British newspaper 'The Daily Telegraph'. The letter, which was signed by 129 notable academics and early years specialists, stated that English young children were required to do 'too much too soon' owing to the Coalition government's school readiness agenda. There was a deep concern for the health and well-being of young children as a result of early testing and early formal teaching practices, and fewer opportunities to play (SCM, 2013). In rejecting the appeal, the Education Secretary Michael Gove's response by way of a spokesperson was that the signatories were "misguided" and sponsored a 'dumbing down' of state schools (Paton, 2013).

More recently, the Ofsted (2017, p.4) *Bold Beginnings* report, which highlights the ways in which 'successful'[9] schools are preparing four to five-year-olds for 'schooling', has further added to these concerns. In the report, 'leaders' curriculum intentions' for the reception year – together with how these are 'implemented' in practice – are presented; and, several recommendations are offered (*Ibid*., p.31). In connection to the former, for instance, it is highlighted that many of the schools do not see reception as a pre school phase of early years provision but the beginning of formal schooling, and that the increased literacy and numeracy expectations in the new *Primary National Curriculum* (PNC) has both informed and validated leaders' 'aspirations' for reception children (*Ibid*., p.15). Accordingly, 'reading, writing and mathematics' are directly taught for 'sufficient' periods of time every day, and often by means of 'whole-class instruction' and 'small-group teaching' (*Ibid*., p.5-7, 16); and, many schools have developed a mathematics curriculum based on the Y1 PNC programme of study. Furthermore, the majority of head teachers do not agree with a 'prolonged settling in period' – 'even when' children arrive from various pre school settings, and make sure teachers commence teaching from the first week of term (*Ibid*., p.16).

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[9] These were schools in which all children, 'including those from disadvantaged backgrounds' achieved well. The majority had high numbers of children meeting or exceeding: end of reception GLDs, threshold of the PSC, and expected standards in KS1 tests and KS2 SATs (Ofsted, 2017, p.4, 31).

With regard to the latter, the following are some of the recommendations made for primary schools: that 'reading, including systematic synthetic phonics' are the 'core purpose of the reception year'; when children are learning to write 'they are taught correct pencil grip and how to sit correctly at a table'; and that 'sufficient time' is devoted to the daily 'teaching of reading, writing and mathematics' (Ofsted, 2017, p.7). One of the recommendations for the DfE is that the EYFSP is reviewed 'so that there is greater alignment between the ELGs at the end of the Reception Year and the national curriculum for Year 1' (*Ibid*., p.7). A focus on mathematics is also evident. For the DfE it is recommended the 'profile of early mathematics' be raised like that of early reading and phonics, and to do this 'appropriate schemes and resources' are developed (*Ibid*., p.7). For Ofsted, that there is a sharpened focus on the 'teaching of reading and numbers' during inspections (*Ibid*., p.7).

In response to the report many of the concerns considered above have been raised (TACTYC, 2017; Jarvis & Whitebread, 2018). Adding to these, it is argued that in suggesting that the teaching of reading and synthetic phonics be the core purpose of reception, and the EYFSP (and thus the ELGs) be brought into alignment with Y1, the report: 'reduces' the reception year 'to a means for schools to meet' the increased expectations of the PNC – and thereby 'ignores child development evidence'; sponsors a 'narrowing' of the early years curriculum; and, encourages an emphasis on 'didactic' teaching (TACTYC, 2017, p.4; Jarvis & Whitebread, 2018, p.15). It is also maintained that the report neglects the importance of play in children's learning and development.

According to Roberts-Holmes, assessments – both statutory and schools' own – and prospective Ofsted inspections have together both threatened teachers' 'deeply held child-centred pedagogical values', and resulted in the 'datafication' of children (2015, p.302, 313). The majority of the twenty reception teachers interviewed in Robert-Holmes, as well as the leaders of the two schools visited, felt under pressure to 'produce data for Ofsted inspections' (2015, p.306). This was for the reason that (as mentioned earlier), the inspecting body requested to see the schools' data on children's attainment in the end of Y6 SATs, and then worked backwards, looking at how children had performed each year down to reception (*Ibid*.). In practice, then, whilst one teacher said he was able to teach phonics and then spend time with the children because the head of the school endeavoured to 'protect the early years holistic pedagogy', many spoke about the data 'driving' their pedagogy, adopting more formal practices, and teaching 'to the test' (*ibid*. p.206). Equally, the raised literacy and numeracy 'thresholds' in the EYFSP led to the children being viewed in terms of their GLD level and potential levels – and accordingly, as targets 'to produce the required data' (*Ibid*., p.312). To ensure reception teachers (and therefore schools)

realised a certain percentage of children achieving 2's[10] across the board, for example, an LA advisor spoke about using children's 'current and likely performance in achieving the GLD' to categorise them according to three groups (*Ibid*., p.308). The first group was those who were likely to have 2's across the board; the second, those who were likely to have mostly 1's – and therefore 'ignored' (*Ibid*., p.308); and the third group was those who were likely to have mostly 2's – and therefore targeted 'with careful intervention' because they were 'the ones who may make it' (*ibid*. p.308). But the LA advisor did not appear to be alone in doing this, as a reception teacher also explained that in order to meet the LA's 60% GLD target for his classroom, he had similarly categorised the children and was targeting the children who would be in the third group described here (*Ibid*., p.312).

It is also argued that the requirement to demonstrate children make progress year on year has led to multiple levels of 'governance through data' and increased pressure on schools and teachers (Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016, p.607). At the levels of the school, leaders, or those who are charged with the responsibility to monitor and manage schools' overall data sets, continually observe children's progress in each classroom, each year, and across the entire school (*Ibid*.). At the level of the classroom, teachers continually monitor the progress of the children in their care 'to ensure they are moving forwards' (*Ibid*., p.604). Outside the schools, LA advisors predict how children will progress based on their RBAs, and then set 'higher' predictions of attainment and send these back to the reception teachers (*Ibid*., p.607). Furthermore, records of children's attainment are compiled as 'narratives of progress' to produce 'Ofsted stories', which are then shown to the inspectorate prior to an inspection (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017, p.952). As a corollary, schools have become self-governing as if perpetually under inspection, in spite of the fact that they may not be due on for some time (*Ibid*.).

For a number of reasons, the pressures discussed above with regard to assessment and inspection may lessen or evolve in the coming years. This is for the reasons that the EYFSP is set to become non-statutory from September 2020 when the RBA becomes statutory; and, end of KS1 testing will become non-statutory from September 2023. Furthermore, in the aforementioned speech, Ofsted's Chief Inspector acknowledged that the 'cumulative impact of performance tables and inspections' had 'increased pressure on schools leaders, teachers and indirectly on pupils to deliver perfect data above all else' (Ofsted, 2018b); and, in view of this,

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[10] 'The average total point score is a supporting measure taking into account children's performance across all 17 ELGs. 1 point is awarded for a child whose profile shows he or she is 'emerging', 2 points are awarded for 'expected' and 3 points are awarded for 'exceeding' (STA, 2018, p.59).

announced that the body was going to lose 'outcomes as a standalone judgement' (*ibid*.). In its place, they planned to 'look beyond data' and 'assess the broader quality of education' – i.e. the 'curriculum quality', 'the intent' (what schools wanted for the children), 'the implementation' (how teaching and assessment were realising the intent), and 'the impact' (what children achieved and what they went on to do) (Ofsted, 2018a, p.39; Ofsted, 2018b).

The discussion in this section has highlighted that English EY provision is largely framed by the present and successive governments' efforts to prepare young children for school and within this to raise standards. To do this, various initiatives (education and care for two-year-olds, EYPP and PP), assessments (statutory and schools' own), and procedures (LA involvement, and Ofsted inspections current and proposed) have been put in place. It has also considered some concerns that have been raised with regard to the effects that formal teaching methods, assessments and inspections may have on children's present and future learning and development, and teachers' practices. In the following section, I will look at how the school readiness agenda is argued to have affected reception play provision specifically.

2.2 Concerns about child-initiated play

Over the past decade, running parallel with the concerns discussed above – that, the opportunities for children to play in reception are gradually being reduced in favour of more formal teaching practices, which are being increased – are several others about the provision of child-initiated play. The main concern raised seems to be that children may not be receiving and therefore experiencing 'authentic' or child-initiated play experiences, but actually an educational version of play; and in part that, when children are able to play, there is either little adult involvement or their play is disrupted – or both. In this section, I consider each of these separately – though there may be some overlap owing to the interrelated nature of the issues; and briefly offer some of the reasons why, when these features of children's classroom experiences are suitably offered, it is believed their learning and development are enriched.

The EYFS advises that teachers[11] ought to offer a play-based provision that is made up of both 'adult-led and child-initiated' activities (DfE, 2012, p.6; DfE, 2017, p.9). Whilst, in the current version of the statutory framework there is no elaboration on what child-initiated play is and what it may look like in practice, the first EYFS defined it as 'when a child engages in a self chosen

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[11] Although they are referred to as 'practitioners' throughout the guidance, since the present study's focus is on the reception classroom, I shall refer to them as teachers.

pursuit' and offered several brief examples[12] of how it may materialise in the classroom (DCSF, 2008, p.7). Although it has been said that play in and of itself is absolutely child-initiated – namely, it is always instigated[13], planned and directed by children (Wood, 2010a; Moyles, 2015; Quinn, 2017); when considering the various explanations for child-initiated play specifically, it is clear that these highlight one point – that, the child is the central driver. Put simply, it is the children who make all of the decisions before and throughout the course of their play episodes, as Moyles puts it:

> In child-initiated situations the child is at the heart of the decision-making: the experiences are often child-inspired, child-directed, child-led, child-managed and child rich!

> (Moyles, 2013, p.28)

That is, it is a 'self-chosen' pursuit (Sylva, Bruner, & Genova, 1974; Lindon, 2013, p.5), which is almost always instigated by the child, and which is often driven by his/her interests at the time (Lindon, 2013; Moyles, 2013; Moyles, 2015; Chilvers, 2016). S/he chooses which resources to play with – as well as where, how and with whom (Fisher, 2008; Lindon, 2013; Moyles, 2013; Quinn, 2017), and for how long – from choosing to engage in it during the course of a session, to re-visiting it regularly over several months (Fisher, 2008; Lindon, 2013). In short, it is in the control of the child.

A concern that has been raised in recent times is that owing to the pressures deriving from the school readiness agenda, and the vague explanation for play that is offered in the EYFS: much of the child-initiated play experiences that children are offered in reception may be 'sanitised' (Rogers, 2010, p.161; Anning, 2015, p.11) versions of play – and therefore, at best, 'playful' activities or 'educational play' (Wood, 2010b; Wood, 2013, p.8, 50; Moyles, 2015). This is because, principally, these may be educationally framed; and so, are not – and cannot be – classed as play itself. For, although play does have educational value, in the sense that the process of playing enables children to work through, synthesise and make sense of learning-related concepts; and, develop skills, techniques and dispositions that are essential for learning in later life: as a process in and of itself, it is free from external trappings (Lindon, 2013; Moyles,

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[12] For instance: when a s/he chooses how to place a driver when playing with fire engine; when s/he 'subverts' the purpose of an activity by taking 'ownership' of it – e.g. by creating a puddle rather than watering a plant 'as the adult intended'; and, when s/he brings in 'something' that is of personal 'interest' (DCSF, 2008, p.7).

[13] This is not to say that adults never instigate play, as they may start an activity that the children then take over; but that, overall and ultimately, it is under the control of the children (Fisher, 2008).

2013; Wood, 2013; Moyles, 2015). Explicitly, for play to take place – and for children to see it as such, and to reap the benefits that it affords them with – it cannot be bound by education-related factors (Wood, 2010a; Moyles, 2013; Wood, 2013; Moyles, 2015).

With regard to school readiness, for instance, it is argued that since teachers have to ensure that the children in their care meet a range of specific learning outcomes by the end of reception – on the one hand; and provide evidence to both support their judgements and demonstrate each child's progress, on the other: play may be used as a 'pedagogical device' to realise these (Rogers, 2010, p.161; Anning, 2015). Namely, as an 'instrumental activity' to 'harness children's learning and development' so as to meet curricula demands, and produce 'proof' 'for the purposes of assessment, evaluation and accountability' (Rogers, 2010, p.161; Wood, 2010a, p.13; Wood, 2010b, p.13; Lindon, 2013, p.11). Another reason why teachers may use play in this way is that when children are playing it may be difficult to note exactly what they are learning since it largely 'takes place 'in the mind'', and much of what they do learn is not closely linked to the learning outcomes (Bennett *et al*. p.1997; Wood & Attfield, 2005; Fisher, 2008; Wood, 2010b; Moyles, 2013; Wood, 2013, p.10); and, on a more practical level, teachers may not have the time to observe play for extended periods (Wood & Attfield, 2005).

Many have also cited the vague and contradictory advice that is offered in the EYFS as a reason why teachers may be offering educational play activities in place of child-initiated play experiences (Moyles, 2013). Where, on the one hand, it is stated that both adult-led and child-initiated activities are to be offered; but on the other, that play is to be 'planned' and 'purposeful' – specifically:

> Each area of learning and development must be implemented through planned, purposeful play and through a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activity.

> (DfE, 2012, p.6; DfE, 2017, p.9)

This is seen as problematic on several fronts. First, it insinuates that play which is initiated by children but not bound by learning outcomes, is purposeless and therefore not worthy (Wood, 2010a, p.18; Lindon, 2013; Moyles, 2013; Wood, 2013, p.15). Second, the play that is understood to be purposeful is tied-up with adults' intentions; but, this is neither play itself, nor is it seen as play by children (Wood, 2010b, p.16; Lindon, 2013; Moyles, 2013; Wood, 2013, p.50; Anning, 2015; Moyles, 2015; Quinn, 2017). Lastly, if these are the kinds of experiences that children are offered, they will miss out on the opportunities to develop a range of skills and to

deal with a range of emotions that only engagement in true play affords (Whitebread, 2012, p.138; Lindon, 2013; Moyles, 2013; Pound, 2013; Wood, 2013; Chilvers, 2016, p.26). These are skills such as: negotiation, compromise, self-direction and self-regulation; and feelings like: control, independence and empowerment – to name a few (Whitebread, 2010; Whitebread, 2012; Moyles, 2015; Whitebread, Jameson, & Basilio, 2015; Chilvers, 2016; Bredikyte & Hakkarainen, 2017).

Although the terms 'planned' and 'purposeful' can be traced back to the Rumbold Report (HMSO, 1990, p.7, 12), and the former located in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA, 2000, p.7), many have suggested that the findings of the government funded EPPE project have partly influenced – or been used to support – the usage of these in the statutory guidance (Brooker, 2010; Wood, 2010b; Wood, 2013). In the study, which looked at the effects of pre-school education on young children's learning, a finding[14] was that 'the most effective pedagogy is both 'teaching' and providing freely chosen yet potentially instructive play activities' (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, & Elliot, 2003, p.3). It has been suggested, then, that the first part of the recommendation was explicitly advised in the first EYFS document – i.e. that a 'balance' of both activities is provided (DCSF, 2008: 7); and in its entirety in the next two documents – i.e. that a 'mix' of activities is provided, and these are to be planned and purposeful (DfE, 2012, p.6; DfE, 2017, p.9).

In practice then, it has been said, when play that is said to be child-initiated is offered within an education framing, it is limited and restricting (Fisher, 2008; Rogers & Evans, 2008; Rogers 2010; Moyles, 2013). The teacher may choose the resources that children will have access to; decide how these ought to be used and why – and even discourage children from deviating from the proposed plan(s) for the activity; and, choose the peers with whom they will play – together with where and for how long (Adams, Alexander, Drummond, & Moyles, 2004; Fisher, 2008; Rogers & Evans, 2008; Rogers, 2010; Wood, 2010b; Lindon, 2013). But these activities, many have argued, can be best described as adult-defined 'activities' not child-initiated 'experiences' (Moyles, 2013, p.27-28; Moyles, 2015), as they take the central features which are at the heart of play away from children; specifically, 'choice', 'decision-making' and control (Fisher, 2008; Rogers, 2010; Lindon, 2013, p.5-6; Moyles, 2013, p.28; Moyles, 2015; Quinn, 2017).

The kinds of benefits that children may experience from engagement in child-initiated play, which they would not fully reap from taking part in play that is framed by educational intentions, are

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[14] These were based on observations conducted in 'quality provision' where children made steady progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy (Sylva *et al*. 2003; Sylva *et al*. 2004).

understood to be immeasurable; and beneficial not only in the child's present and immediate future, but also throughout the course of his/her life (Fisher, 2008; Moyles, 2015; Whitebread *et al*. 2015). In connection with the present, for example, they would be able to think about, reflect upon and work through concepts that they may have learned in the classroom or elsewhere (Moyles, 2015); develop and practise a plethora of social and relational skills, like: negotiation, compromise, teamwork, collaboration, thinking about others' points of view, sharing, turn-taking and conflict resolution (Fisher, 2008; Ramani, 2012; Moyles, 2015); as well as various others, such as: problem-solving, developing vocabulary – and even furthering communication in the English language, fashion storylines, and test- re-test- revise- build on- and conclude- various hypotheses (Sylva *et al*. 1974; Levy, 1992; Fekonja, Umek, & Kranjc, 2005; Ramani, 2012; Moyles, 2015; Chilvers, 2016). In terms of the children's mindsets or feelings for instance, they would be able to follow their own interests; and in doing so, feel a sense of independence and autonomy, but also that of ownership over their own activities in the classroom (Broadhead, 2004; Fisher, 2008; Moyles, 2013; Whitebread *et al*. 2015). These skills and capabilities, then, are the foundation(s) for much of the later learning that children may undertake, and the dispositions that will help them better deal with the many diverse experiences that they may have (Moyles, 2015; Whitebread *et al*. 2015). By trying to learn how something works and failing, but persevering until they figure it out or give up – for example, children may learn that the failure to figure something out does not necessarily equate giving up; and the process may nurture in them a sense of resilience, and make them less afraid of attempting novel and difficult tasks in the future (Sylva *et al*. 1974; Moyles, 2015).

To summarise, the issue here is not that children are offered play experiences that are educationally framed and potentially instructive, rather that there is an over-emphasis on these at the cost of those that are actual play experiences – and therefore, as some have argued, the plans and purposes of adults' are privileged over those of the children (Wood, 2010a; Wood, 2010b; Moyles, 2013).

Alongside the argument that children may be receiving the opportunities to engage in educational play in place of child-initiated play experiences are another two concerns: that children may be missing out on the opportunities to engage in self-initiated play episodes that include the sensitive participation of educators; and, when they are able to initiate their own play, their episodes may not be sustained (Rogers & Evans, 2008; Wood, 2010a; Anning, 2015). The former is because teachers may feel pressured to prioritise the teaching and assessment of outcomes connected with literacy and numeracy – but also the ELGs overall; and therefore not have the time to carefully observe and then participate in children's play (Wood, 2010a; Bingham

& Whitebread, 2012). Certainly, this could also be due to teachers' own beliefs and apprehensions: they may believe that children need the opportunities to play free from adult imposition; they may worry that they do not know when or how to intervene – and similarly, fear their intervention may unintentionally disrupt the flow of the children's play (Anning, 2015). The latter is either owing to the amount of time that children have to play overall – i.e. the day may be tipped in favour of formal teaching in the form of whole-class and group sessions, with less time allocated for 'free choice'[15], or due to the reason(s) children have to leave their play episodes to participate in adult-led activities or undertake various tasks for the adults – or because of all of the reasons cited here (Adams *et al*. 2004; Rogers & Evans, 2008).

The importance of careful adult intervention in children's play has long been encouraged, with writers past and present emphasising the crucial role that adults – as knowledgeable others – can have in supporting children's play, and with that, their learning and development[16]. To help them 'learn' – or to practise playing, for instance, teachers can both model how to play and play with children (Wood & Attfield, 2005, p.17; [Wood], 2010a, p.20-21). This is as reception may be the first time that some children have the opportunity to play, to play with the resources offered in a Western classroom, or to play with peers; and, at the start of the year, some children may not (yet) have the capabilities to initiate, develop or maintain certain kinds of play (Bennett, Wood, & Rogers, 1997; Brooker, 2000; Wood, 2010b). Equally, as 'co-players' (Wood, 2013, p.113) there is much that teachers can do. From pushing storylines further through questioning, advice, assuming the roles of characters, and introducing new themes; to encouraging talk and conversation in the English language, introducing new vocabulary and building on what children already know[17].

Indeed, a theme that ran across several key works of the late 1980s through mid 2000s was that children's play episodes were not as beneficial as they could have been owing to the lack of adult involvement (Sestini, 1987; Sharp, 1988; Bennett & Kell, 1989; Bennett *et al*. 1997 – see also, Adams *et al*. 2004). In Bennett & Kell, for instance, it was found that the almost non-existent adult participation meant that the children's play was seldom challenging, and often dissolved into chaos; it was therefore judged to be 'limited and very limiting' (1989, p.79). In

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[15] See 2.3 for elaboration.

[16] See i.e. Smilansky, 1968; Curry & Arnaud, 1984; Adams *et al*. 2004; Wood & Attfield, 2005; Whitebread, 2012; Wood, 2013; Goouch, 2015; Bredikyte & Hakkarainen, 2017.

[17] See i.e. Smilansky, 1968; Curry & Arnaud, 1984; HMSO, 1990, p.41; Levy, 1992; Wood & Attfield, 2005; Whitebread, 2012; Wood, 2013; Bredikyte & Hakkarainen, 2017 – see also sustained shared thinking in Sylva *et al*. 2003.

Bennett *et al*. (1997, p.73) it was noted that although many teachers spoke of the social dimensions of children's role-play activities, and planned for these with the intentions that this part of the children's development would be encouraged: perhaps owing to the fact that many of the children had not yet developed the 'requisite' social and cognitive capacities needed to keep the play going, their play was rarely viewed as beneficial as was anticipated. Equally, sustained play is essentially to do with *time*. Put simply, if children do not have the time to play free from disruption, then they are not able to 'reap' the benefits that engagement – and absorption – in the process of playing affords. For instance, they may not be able to finish what they were working on, become more confident with persevering on tasks, or realise and develop their 'complex' pretence play 'narratives' (Rogers & Evans, 2006, p.49; Rogers & Evans, 2008; Moyles, 2013; Chilvers, 2016, p.32).

2.3 Situating the focus

In the above two sections, I considered the concerns that provide the background to this research and the broad external context in which it is situated. Specifically, I looked at the initiatives, assessments and procedures that the present and successive governments have introduced to prepare children for school, and the concerns that have been raised about how these may be shaping and/or impacting on teachers' provision for child-initiated play in the reception classroom. In this section, I situate this research's specific focus and define some of the terms that will be used throughout the thesis.

Certainly, as the key studies of the late 1900s through mid 2000s (mentioned above) have shown, governments' efforts to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy (and science) do shape teachers' play provision. On the one hand, this is through informing practice; and on the other, due to the pressure(s) that teachers feel to ensure – and demonstrate – children's progression in these subjects. What these studies also found was that teachers used various approaches to reconcile the need to offer children the opportunities to play with the need to further their literacy and numeracy learning through more formal teaching; and, each of these approaches offered children quite different play experiences. For instance, some teachers had adult-led activities in the morning and child-initiated in the afternoon (Cleave & Brown, 1991 – see also Cleave, Jowett, & Bate, 1982); some required children to participate in adult-led activities or to complete table-based tasks before leaving to play (Cleave *et al*. 1982; Cleave & Brown, 1991); some offered both at the same time and required children to rotate between these (Sestini, 1987; Bennett *et a*l. 1997); and others had free-choice throughout a session or the day, and children

were called from their self-initiated play to participate in adult-led activities (Cleave & Brown, 1991; Adams *et al*. 2004; Rogers & Evans, 2008).

In addition to highlighting the different lengths of time that children may have to play, and to engage in sustained play – depending on the teacher's approach: these studies also show that the degree of choice and autonomy children have when playing (or within their play) may also vary. In some, for instance, the adults selected the resources that the children were to play with (Bennett *et al*. 1997; Adams *et al*. 2004), and decided who the children's play partners would be (Sestini, 1987; Bennett *et al*. 1997). In several, the activities were educationally framed, and therefore said to be offering the children little room for manoeuvre (Sestini, 1987; Bennett *et al*. 1997; Adams *et al*. 2004).

When taking into account the above studies' findings – and partly some of the concerns that I raised in the preceding sections, two important points can be made. The first is that children's play in reception appears to be contained within, and shaped by, many 'structures'[18]. This is because it takes place in the classroom, which is a context bound by school regulation, curricula and national policy; but also, and at the same time, within various classroom-specific 'conditions' – i.e. the routine, timetable and rules. The second, and in keeping with the topic of rules, is that whilst some of the key studies discussed how certain rules[19] may have affected the children's play: with the exception of two works, the children's own experiences and perspectives in connection with the rules – or in fact, any other aspect of the classroom context – are noticeably absent. In Cleave & Brown (1991, p.65), whilst the children were asked questions, it appears these were solely intended to determine if they made a distinction between activities that were work and those that were play. In Rogers & Evans (2008), the children's responses to the offered role-play provision were observed and presented, and their perspectives on the rules that affected their role-play experiences sought. The children's activities discussed in this latter work are examined in Chapter 3.

The purpose of this research, then, is to look specifically at how individual children make sense of the various *rules* that encompass and pertain to the play provision in one reception class; as rules, as with any other structure(s) within which children's activities are situated, can shape, enable and/or constrain their play experiences, endeavours and agency (as several studies have

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[18] In Chapter 4 I discuss what structures are and how they are understood in this thesis.

[19] For instance: which resources they could or could not play with; how long they could play at each activity for; and the requirement that they leave their play episodes for adult-led activities.

observed; these are further considered in Chapter 3). At a time when the reception classroom is situated within the national drive to prepare children for school, which is likely to shape how the play provision is offered; and, concerns about the kind(s) and quality of the play offered continue to be raised.

Before bringing this chapter to a close, I define some of the terms that will be used throughout this thesis. The term 'play', whether used with 'child-initiated' or alone, refers to the play experiences or episodes where 'the child is at the heart of the decision-making' – and this is irrespective of whether adults initiate these to start with or not (Lindon, 2013; Moyles, 2013, p.28). The term 'adult-led activities' refers to the activities – 'playful' or otherwise – that are under the control of the educators (Wood, 2013, p.50). These are the activities discussed above, which are designed to help children learn certain concepts, skills or techniques and are connected with the learning outcomes.

The 'provision of play' or 'play provision' refers to the various conditions teachers create or provide for play. For instance, the time allocated for play; the resources that are available; the way(s) in which the classroom is arranged; and, the play-specific rules that are to be observed – i.e. the resources that can be accessed and when, and where the children can play. Play provision is part of what is referred to as the 'play pedagogy' or the 'pedagogy of play'. Wood (2009, p.27) defines the pedagogy of play 'broadly' as:

> …the ways in which early childhood professionals make provision for play and playful approaches to learning and teaching, how they design play/learning environments, and all the pedagogical decisions, techniques and strategies they use to support or enhance learning and teaching through play.

That is, play provision is to do with the *conditions* within which play takes place; the pedagogy of play encompasses *all* that teachers do to further children's learning and development through play.

Free play (or free choice) sessions refers to periods in classroom routines when children are able to engage in child-initiated play. The way(s) in which these sessions are offered, however, can vary – i.e. there may or may not be adult-led activities taking place at the same time, and children may or may not be able to move freely between the indoor and outdoor spaces; and indeed, within these, the degree of choice and autonomy that children are afforded depends on the play-specific and overall classroom rules that need to be followed.

In this chapter, I have contextualised this research's focus. Specifically, I have considered the present drive to prepare young children for schooling, and presented some of the concerns about how this may be shaping and/or impacting on reception play provision. Since this thesis seeks to understand how children make sense of their classroom's rules: to appreciate what has been noted in this area, in the next chapter I review empirical works that have looked at or considered children's navigations of rules in various education contexts.

CHAPTER 3:

A review of literature

In Chapter 2, I discussed the various concerns that have been raised in recent years in connection with reception play provision, and explained that these provide the background to this study and the broad external context in which it is situated. I also stated that, emerging from these concerns is the focus of my study, which is on young children's experiences of rules and how they navigate these during their self-initiated play.

A number of empirical works have looked at or considered aspects that are relevant to my study's focus. The purpose of this chapter is to review these and highlight how and where my research aims to make a contribution. In the first main section, which comprises three sub-sections, I consider studies that are variously linked to three aspects of the focus: they present and discuss *young* children's *navigations of rules* during their *play episodes* in various EYE contexts. Here, first I review studies that have looked at children's navigations of rules during their play episodes (3.1.1); next, those that show how children used – and/or navigated – rules with their peers, during their play episodes (3.1.2); and then, I review those that have shown children's navigations of rules outside of their play episodes (3.1.3).

In the main section that follows (3.2), I briefly review some of the findings of several works that have looked at older children's experiences of rules in education settings. Although the present research is not concerned with older children's endeavours and experiences, I consider these to be useful for a number of reasons. First, in many of these the children's own reasons and motivations – behind their observed endeavours – are also included, and the factors that they took into account when deciding when or how to act in their settings. These features are noticeably absent in the majority of the works that were conducted with young children, and therefore offer additional insight that the former largely do not. Secondly, and partly owing to the former, these highlight how enabling and constraining aspects of education contexts may influence children's decisions on how to act. Third, and this includes all of the works included in this review, these will partly aid the interpretation and analysis of the data I have collected for my study.

In the majority of the works reviewed in this chapter, the concept of agency is variously used; it is either referred to at some point to explain how the children's endeavours are understood, or it is

applied throughout as a way to frame these. In fact, when looking at the instances of the children's endeavours that are discussed in all of the works considered, it can be said that each one of these shows agential activity of some form. Equally, whilst these are explicitly conceptualised in this way in a select few studies, structure(s) of varying forms can also be observed. Rules, for example, are the main structures that one can note, but also many others – such as: the 'conditions' within teachers' play provisions, settings' routines and timetables, and aspects of classrooms' and schools' social orders. Indeed, the concepts of agency and structure – and the relationship between them, frame the present research (the concept of children as 'beings and becomings' also partly frames this research, see 3.3 and 4.2). As the discussion in this chapter will highlight, the former comprises the many ways in which children intentionally navigate rules; the latter encompasses the rules and other factors that may shape, enable and/or constrain their play-related (and/or other) endeavours and experiences.

To help frame this chapter, I offer a working definition of 'agency' and 'structure(s)'. Human agency (namely, conscious agency) is intentional (i.e. purposive and goal-oriented) behaviour, which is motivated by individuals' reasons; it is the 'causal power to do something, to make something happen' (Porpora, 2015, p.134-141). Structures can be physical (though these are not the focus of the present research), but also 'exist' in the form of 'relations among social positions and social constructs' (Porpora, 2015, p.98); each of these has emergent properties or powers that are causally efficacious (*Ibid.*) (see Chapter 4 for elaboration and theorising).

In this thesis, following Jordan, Cowan, & Roberts (1995, p.340), external rules are seen as: explicit rules which are adult-formulated[20] 'prescriptions or prohibitions of behaviour that are universal in application, or at least are meant to apply equally to all individuals within a particular population'. In my fieldwork class, the rules applied to all of the children.

3.1 Young children's navigations of rules in early years education contexts

As mentioned above, a number of empirical works have looked at or shown how children navigate rules in various EYE contexts. In this first main section, which is split into three parts, I review those that have looked at young children's experiences with a view to consider a) what these works show – and therefore the insight that is offered, b) if there are any similarities that run across these – and if so, why; and c) explain how my study intends to contribute to this body

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[20] The term 'adult-formulated' rules(s) is taken from Cobb-Moore, Danby, & Farrell (2009).

of work. At the start of each sub-section I explain how the works relate to the focus of my research.

3.1.1 Rule navigation during play episodes

In this first sub-section, I review works that are particularly relevant to the focus of my research, as they look at children's navigations of rules during play episodes. Two studies observe young children exercising various 'strategies' to achieve their desired play outcome. Rogers & Evans (2008, p.80), for example, looked at children's experiences of and responses to facets of role-play provisions in three English classrooms[21]; here, the children were observed exercising the strategies of 'resistance' and 'balanced compliance'. With regard to the former, children were noted refusing to comply with educators' requests when they were asked to leave their role-play to undertake adult-led activities, or expected to play in ways that they did not want to. In an excerpt provided, for example, when two children are told to assume the roles of customers in the role-play, they both vocalise their disinterest to the educator. When their complaints are disregarded, they remain in the area for up to fifteen minutes but do not engage in any play (*Ibid*., p.81). Children also appeared to adopt what the authors term 'balanced compliance', and tried to negotiate and compromise with educators. For example, when a child is asked to read to a teaching assistant as she plays outdoors, she tries 'stalling' her by suggesting she listens to another child first; another is asked to change his book during a role-play episode, and does so whilst keeping one foot immediately inside the boundary of the play area and one foot outside; and, some children make 'pacts' with their peers so that they can comply with the educators' requests, and keep hold of their memberships in the role-play at the same time (*Ibid*., p.80-81).

In Markström & Halldén (2009, p.116, 119), whilst different examples are offered, the children's endeavours grouped under the strategies of 'silence and avoidance', 'negotiation' and 'partial acceptance' appear to bear similarities to those mentioned in Rogers & Evans (2008). Here, the children exercised the strategy of 'silence and avoidance' when attempting to refuse adults' and peers' requests to take part in an activity other than the one they were engaged in at the time. To exemplify this, an excerpt shows how a child crawls underneath a table, and then moves further back when an educator asks him to join his peers for assembly (Markström & Halldén, 2009, p.116). According to (Markström & Halldén (2009), the second strategy – 'negotiation' – was a daily occurrence in the preschool classes visited; the children saw themselves as 'competent to negotiate activities' through discussion, and this was with both the adults and their peers (*Ibid*.,

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[21] A reception and Y1 mixed class; reception class; and, an early years unit (Rogers & Evans, 2008, p.40).

p.117). One example of this strategy in action is when two children reach a compromise with their teacher. Although they are aware that they are to accompany their peers to the hall for 'free play', which is what the routine 'prescribes', they ask their teacher if they can remain in the classroom to listen to music instead. After hearing their proposition the teacher agrees, providing they remain in a room of her suggestion (*Ibid*., p.117). The strategy of 'partial acceptance', they write, encompasses the ways in which the children tried to comply with the rules, routine and regulation, which they understood to be a part of the preschool that they attended, but at the same time tried to make it 'a space where they are in control' (Ibid., p.119). To exemplify this, an excerpt showing how two children negotiated a rule, which forbade children from attending the preschool when they 'had a day off', is discussed (*Ibid*., p.119). Here, two children (in attendance) engage in make-believe from inside the playground and on one side of the fence, with their peer Lisa (not in attendance) who is on the other side. When the teacher notifies the two children that break time is over, they immediately end the play and go inside (*Ibid*., p.118-119). According to Markström & Halldén (2009, p.119), this instance – and the strategy, exemplifies that children 'not only construct their own social order within the boundaries of the teacher's social order' but also, they 'construct spaces outside' it.

Whilst the above studies highlight how the children exercised the same strategies to navigate the rules that encompassed their respective classrooms' play provisions, others show how children circumvent or resist rules pertaining to play. The children in Galman's study (2015), for instance, were observed frequently resisting the same rules throughout the research period, which spanned 2012-2013. In this work, which sought to understand – 'through the lens of their games' – how preschoolers[22] resist control and regulation (as part of a larger research focus), the children repeatedly fashioned the games 'Sleeping Family' and 'Gymnastics' (*Ibid*., p.311, 318). During the former, the children would quickly cover structures that partitioned given play areas with sheets taken from the role-play, and bring resources from around the classroom; this would keep them hidden from the educators' gaze, and prevent the adults from entering because it was a confined space (*Ibid*.). In the instance presented, when inside the 'tent' the children throw the resources at each other, which is not allowed as a) these would break, and b) the children are to play with some of these on tables and/or elsewhere (*Ibid*., p.317). The teacher reminds them of this during the play episode. The latter involved Delia (the leader) and some of her friends placing cushions 'in a hidden part of the classroom' – again, it appears, to keep their activities covert; and, creating a play narrative (*Ibid*., p.138). In the excerpt offered, the children build their game near a back door, which is not visible from the educator's desk and the 'common activity

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[22] This involved 13 children between 3-5 years of age attending a preschool class located in New England, Northeastern USA.

areas'; bring the educator Joya's chair to the area – although this is not permitted; and, reject their peers' requests to join their play in spite of the classroom rule 'you can't say you can't play' (*Ibid*., p.318-319).

Despite the fact that the children were asked to dismantle their games at some point during the free play sessions, writes Galman (2015, p.321), they built these 'nearly every day'. This is not to say that the children were entirely unable to engage in these, however, as Joya regularly "allowed" them to play for some time before speaking to them (*Ibid*., p.320). In this respect, it is suggested, the rules were 'leaky' because although the educator did eventually halt the children's play – in order to maintain their 'safety' in her 'role as teacher', they were able to develop their games (*Ibid*., p.320).

In Wood (2014) and Gawlicz (2009), the children were observed circumventing rules to play with resources in ways that they were not permitted. In the Wood (2014) research[23], which was conducted in an English class (pre-reception) implementing the EYFS, several children stood on blocks whilst building a structure with the same resource. This, it is suggested, was to 'subvert' a rule that forbade them from building constructions that were 'higher then their tummy buttons' (*Ibid*., p.10-11). Despite knowing about the rule that no more than five children were permitted to use the space when there was no adult 'supervision' (*Ibid*., p.11), several children were also often seen hiding in an outdoor playhouse and occasionally looking to see if an adult had made an appearance (*Ibid*., p.7-9). According to Wood (2014, p.11), one of the reasons why the children did this may have been to 'challenge the adults' boundaries and establish their own'; the children may have been 'provoking the world by subverting the rules' so as to test 'what the world will do when it is provoked'.

In a study that looked at power relations between adults and children in two Polish preschools, in one classroom the children used construction material to create sticks to propel blocks into a goal – perhaps knowing they were not allowed to do so (Gawlicz, 2009). When the teacher asked them to halt their play and dismantle the construction, one child got down on all fours and said he was actually a dog barking outside his kennel (goals) (*Ibid*., p.219). Both classrooms had a rule that the children could only bring in toys from home to play with on Fridays. However, many children were seen resisting this rule by bringing small toys which could be easily concealed – i.e. in their 'clenched fist', 'shoe' or 'pocket' (*Ibid*., p.219). Whilst the majority of these children played with these toys in the playground – so to keep their activities covert, a few

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[23] This study looked at children's choices during 'periods of free choice and free play' and sought to 'reveal how the social dynamics of power operate within different contexts' (Wood, 2014, p.7).

overtly challenged the rule by playing with these openly inside their classrooms. A reason why the children did this, writes Gawlicz (2009, p.219), is because they 'were not quite aware of the rationale behind this much disliked regulation', as they 'revealed' this in their conversations with the researcher.

In a reanalysis of data collected from two studies that explored children's social and creative play, Arnott (2018, p.955) considers how the 3-5 year old children attending two preschools in central Scotland interpreted aspects of the 'pedagogic culture' in ways that either constrained or enabled 'their negotiation tactics and their socio-emotional self-regulation'. The 'rules and regulation which governed' the children's play are identified as one of the four 'elements'[24] of the pedagogic culture that the children 'recognized, conceptualized and applied' (*Ibid*., p.956). These, Arnott (2018, p.958) found, were understood and thus navigated in two ways: either the children interpreted these as the '*explicit pedagogy*' and/or 'as a structured element' that 'could be *ignored or circumvented*'. The former involved the strict application of rules: the children would remind their peers of given rules when playing; try to regulate their own 'emotional responses' so these were in line with a rule; and, told the researcher how some were to be followed and why. To exemplify this last point, a quote of a child explaining that children had to wait in line so each child had their turn in order, is offered (*Ibid*.).

The latter encompasses the children's circumvention(s) of – or disregard for – rules (Arnott, 2018). According to Arnott (2018, p.989), in some instances the children's circumventions showed that the rules 'appeared to be a guide' which they 'interpreted, manipulated and adapted depending upon the situation and social context'. For example, although a rule was that only one child could play with the interactive whiteboard at a time: oftentimes, whilst one child used the whiteboard, others participated in the activity by using the nearby desktop computer that powered it (*Ibid*). In these situations, it is suggested, the children were finding 'loopholes' or 'approaches to circumvent' the rules (*Ibid*., p.959). In other situations, however, the children decided to disregard the rules altogether. To exemplify this, an excerpt showing two children playing with the interactive whiteboard together is offered. Here, the children laugh at the mess they have made in the game and control separate parts of the screen. On many occasions, Arnott (2018, p.959) writes (and suggests this excerpt shows), the children's disregard of the rules 'resulted' in 'more social play than may have developed under the guidance of standard preschool regulation'.

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[24] The other three were: 'child-centred learning', 'structural hierarchies' and 'power and agency' (Arnott, 2018, p.956).

The works reviewed in this sub-section offer much insight into the ways in which young children navigate rules during their play episodes. In general, they show that the children in these studies did not simply apply rules, but navigated these in different ways depending on the rule, the situation(s) and context(s), and their own motivations. Rogers & Evans (2008) and Markström & Halldén (2009) are particularly illuminating here, as they reveal how children may keep exercising the same strategies in connection with some rules, possibly because they have found these to be successful in realising their play-related wants or needs. In the main, children's resistances – both overt and covert – is a common theme that runs across all of these works. When trying to understand why this is the case – and this is taking into account the various explanations that are offered, it appears this was primarily for reasons connected to the children's play. For instance, because they wanted to continue playing (Rogers & Evans, 2008; Markström & Halldén, 2009), play with resources in ways that were not permitted (Gawlicz, 2009; Wood, 2014; Galman, 2015), or engage in play that was not allowed (Arnott, 2018); and, partly because they wanted to see what would happen when they challenged the rules (Wood, 2014). One could also suggest that this was perhaps also because the children – for whatever reasons – saw 'resistance' as the only – or main – way in which they could realise these play-related wants or endeavours.

It is, however, difficult to say why the young children in the majority of these studies acted in the ways that they did – from their own perspectives, as their own reasons are noticeably absent. In fact, in most of these, neither are the children's understandings of – and perspectives on – the reasons for the rules offered; nor are their own explanations on any aspect of their endeavours presented[25]. This is not to say that the observations and interpretations put forward are deficient; rather that, if these were also sought and/or offered, we would be able to better appreciate the children's navigations of certain rules in their given situations and contexts. In Gawlicz (2009, p.219), for instance, as it is said that the children were not 'aware' of the 'rationale' for the rule, this can be taken as one of the possible reasons why the children brought their toys from home on Mondays through Thursday. Likewise, it appears the children in Arnott (2018) chose to wait in line because they believed it meant they would each have their turn in order. In the same study, however, it is not possible to understand why the two children decided to play with the whiteboard together on that particular day (*Ibid*., p.959). Was it, for instance, because they had

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[25] In the two studies where the children's views were sought these were in connection with their given research focuses. Rogers & Evans' (2008) focus was on how teachers offered role-play provisions and children responded to these; the children's talk, though insightful, is to do with their experiences of role-play – e.g. what they like/dislike about it, what pretend play is, and who they choose to play with. In Gawlicz (2009), the questions were concerning various aspects of the children's time in preschool – not the rules or their endeavours in connection with these.

noticed that they were hidden from the educators' view? Or, because they believed the educators rarely enforced this rule? Perhaps it was for the reasons that they disagreed with the rule, or because they enjoyed playing this particular game in pairs.

My aim in undertaking this study is to contribute to this body of work by offering further insight into young children's experiences of rules, in the context of their play episodes in one English reception class. This is by a) seeking the children's understandings on the reasons for the rules – together with their perspectives on these reasons, and/or these rules; b) observing how they navigate these rules in practice; and c) asking them why they do the former, and – where possible – the factors they take into account when doing so.

3.1.2 Rule navigation and application during play with peers

I now review several studies that have looked at or considered young children's use – and/or or navigation(s) – of classroom rules with their peers, during their play episodes. In part, these studies are relevant because they all consider *young* children's *agency* in *EYE* settings in connection with *rules* and *play* – themes that together form the present research's focus. But they are also relevant for several other reasons. First, some of the observations and findings discussed reveal how children may also manoeuvre what they see as enabling and/or constraining aspects of their given contexts, whilst navigating rules and negotiating their play (see sub-question 6 of this research); second, they show how children may use rules during their play, with peers, in ways that can be recognised as subtle circumventions or resistances of these (related to sub-question 2); lastly, in one of these the children were also asked about their views about specific rules, and on the rules overall (sub-questions 1 and 4).

In the Löfdahl & Hägglund (2006, p.180) research, which re-analysed data from a study looking at children's play in a Swedish preschool, to highlight how the 'older' children navigated a number of the classroom's rules through establishing their own 'social order' among them, the children excluded a young child called Maja. These rules were 'we are nice to each other', 'we are nice to younger children', and 'anyone can join' (*Ibid*., p.185). Here, a group of older girls fashioned various 'conditions' and 'rules' to reject Maja's attempts to join their play (*Ibid*., p.180). These were situation-specific and within the 'play-script', and immediately endorsed both by the group's members and those who occasionally joined them (*Ibid*., p.180). In an excerpt discussed, Maja waits in line to jump on the trampoline. The children's rule is that it is the turn of whoever is next in line. However, when it is Maja's turn, the children change it. Now it is the turn of the child who is pointed to last in the game of 'ole-dole-doff' (*Ibid*., p.188). Maja waits for 25

minutes before she is able to use the trampoline. In another instance, when Maja wants to join the hairdressers, the girls state that it is 'only adults' who can have their hair styled and allow a student-teacher in (*Ibid*., p.186). In a third, a member of the group states that Maja's character is to be killed, and she will not be 'allowed' to buy anything from the ice-cream stall if/when she joins – perhaps as a way to discourage her; Maja decides to leave the room (*Ibid*., p.188). In doing this, Löfdahl & Hägglund (2006, p.180-181) write, the older children had 'found means to legitimate' their 'anti-social behaviour' although this was 'not allowed according to the official rule system'. One could also suggest that the children's navigations were a circumvention of the 'anyone can join' rule, and subtle, covert resistances of the 'we are nice to each other' and 'we are nice to younger children' rules.

In Ólafsdóttir, Danby, Einarsdóttir, & Maryanne (2017, p.834) data from a wider study[26] is presented to explore 'how children experience adult-framed rules in their peer culture' and how they 'challenge' these 'in their play activities'. The children, it is suggested, used 'different strategies' to 'include or exclude' others; overall, this was in two ways (*Ibid*., p.832). The first was in the form of 'making their own rules' (*Ibid*., p.832). For instance, when a child asked why she and her peers excluded another child (Skoppa's) request to join their play, she explains it was owing to the following three rules: a) only three children could play, b) they all needed to own cats, and c) she could not be the 'big sister' (the character Skoppa often chose to play) (*Ibid*., p.832). Upon hearing these, Ólafsdóttir *et al*. (2017) explain, Skoppa informed an educator, who then reminded the children of the rule that all children were to play together; following this, Skoppa was allowed to join play but not as the big sister. In creating these rules, they write, the children demonstrated their 'competence' in navigating the rule without 'breaking' it (*Ibid*., p.833). However, this instance not only shows the 'conflicts' between the teacher's rule and the children's intentions to 'protect' their play by blocking new characters from joining; but also, that the teacher's rule 'has more value' over theirs (*Ibid*., p.833).

According to Ólafsdóttir *et al*. (2017), the second was by using the classroom's rules to include those who wanted to join their play, and exclude others. To exemplify this, a child's explanation for why she decided two children could join her play but not Skoppa – although Skoppa asked first, are offered. Here, she says it is because only four children could play in the 'house' (role-play) at one time; Skoppa's membership would take the total to five (*Ibid*., p.833). When she is asked why she did not accept Skoppa's request, she says it is because she was 'afraid' others

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[26] This is on 'children's perspectives on their activities' in 'preschool settings' in Iceland and Australia (Ólafsdóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2019, p.52). The data discussed here are largely from one Icelandic preschool, and partly another (*Ibid*.).

would step on Skoppa's 'toe', as it is a small space (*Ibid*., p.833). In doing this, Ólafsdóttir *et al*. (2017, p.834) write, the child 'manipulated' the rules to maintain 'her own social positioning in the peer group' (only four allowed), and exclude others (children play together). It also shows, however, the conflict between the two rules, which in this case 'can be interpreted' as the educators valuing 'order in their setting over chaos and inclusion' (*Ibid*., p.834).

The children in the same study were also asked various questions relating to their settings' rules (Ólafsdóttir *et al*. 2017). When speaking about how they learned these, the children's responses indicated this was in different ways. For instance, one child suggested it was gradually and through attendance; another two said it was because the adults' created and taught these, and the children learned and followed them (*Ibid*., p.831). For their play, it is suggested, they saw the benefits but also the limitations of the rules. To demonstrate this, two children's explanations are recalled. In connection with the former, it is explained that one child said rules were 'good' for play because it meant he could learn how not to hurt others (*Ibid*., p.831). In relation to limitations, one child said the rules were not good for the children's play; as, for example, if she wanted to play a running cat, she could not because running was forbidden.

The children's navigations of the settings' rules in Jordon *et al*. (1995)[27] bear some similarities to those noted in Ólafsdóttir *et al*. (2017). Here, the children also used their knowledge of the rules to support their own play agendas. In one excerpt, for example, two children twice build single towers taller than their 'heads' knowing that a classroom rule does not allow this; however, when they are in the process of building a tower for the third time and a peer suggests they make it 'higher' – in an attempt to join their play: they remind him of the rule to reject his involvement (Jordan *et al*. 1995, p.348). In another instance, two children try to keep a third from playing in the sand container with them by telling her that there is neither the space nor the resources to accommodate her. The third child, however, tries to 'override' her peers' 'rules' in two ways: first she states the classroom rule, which requires all children to 'share'; when this is not effective, she leaves to 'consult' a teacher (*Ibid*., p.349). The teacher confirms the rule and the child returns to play in the sand container. The children also cited 'rival rules' to 'support their own particular agenda' (*Ibid*., p.348). For instance, when one child tries to take a resource that another child has, he reminds him of the rule that they are to take it in turns to play with the resources; his peer responds by telling him that he is not in the same group as him. In doing this, his peer is reminding him of the rule that certain groups have access to certain resources at given times; therefore, he is allowed to use the resource, the other child is not (*Ibid*., p.348). The

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[27] The data was collected from a study which looked at 'the social world of children' in two separate kindergarten classrooms in New South Wales, Australia (Jordan *et al*. 1995, p.343).

children's use of the rules, write Jordan *et al.* (1995, p.340, 355), demonstrated both their 'knowledge' of the classroom rules, and their 'ability' to use this knowledge 'strategically' to 'attain power' between their peers and in their play.

In the Arnott (2018, p.960, 963) research (discussed in preceding sub-section), the children also used the rules in their play to 'negotiate access' and 'meet their needs', and this was by drawing on the 'dominant enforceable pedagogy'. On the one hand, this comprised the 'visible pedagogy', which were the settings' rules; the children recognised the 'supremacy' of these (*Ibid*., p.960). On the other, the 'hierarchies of authority', which were the 'authority structures' within the settings; the children 'understood' that the educators 'held the most authority in validating' the 'enforcement' of the rules (*Ibid*., p.960). This was by 'employing the rules rigidly' during their play, and then drawing on the support of an educator, who would consequently encourage their peers to act in accordance with these (*Ibid*., p.960). In the instance that is discussed as a way to exemplify this, when a child believes his peers are not sharing the blocks with him, he calls an educator 'to facilitate' (*Ibid*., 960). In drawing on this dominant enforceable pedagogy then, Arnott (2018, p.960) states, the children not only 'accepted' the 'social hierarchy' but also 'recreated and reconstructed' it whenever the educators' support was sought.

Although the studies reviewed in this sub-section have variously looked at the ways in which children may use their settings' rules with their peers, during their play episodes: these findings are both insightful and relevant to the present research's focus. For one, they all show how, through their use of the classrooms' – and their own fashioned – rules, children may subtly navigate the former by way of circumvention or resistance. In these studies, it appears the children largely did this for reasons related to their play; that is, either because they wanted to protect their play, and/or to exclude certain peers but include others. Here, the Ólafsdóttir *et al.* (2017) research is particularly insightful, as the children's explanations reveal not only how they strategically navigated their classrooms' rules, but also *their own* reasons for justifying their actions. Second, to varying degrees they each also offer some insight into how the rules – and/or educators' enforcement of these – may shape, enable and/or constrain children's play-related endeavours. To elaborate, where the children used the rules to include or exclude their peers, or to gain access to resources or their others' play, it can be said that these enabled them to realise their wants, needs or agendas; and, where the children drew on their educators' support, the resulting consequences enabled their endeavours but constrained those of their peers'. Accordingly, these enable us to see how the rules – and an aspect of their context(s) – shaped, enabled and/or constrained their play experiences and agency.

In also considering how the rules – and various other aspects of the context, in general – may shape, enable and/or constrain the children's play experiences and endeavours, my aim in the present study is to contribute to this body of work. Here, whilst Arnott's (2018, p.955) work is insightful, as it shows how the rules and regulation element of the 'pedagogic culture' – as 'structure' – enabled or constrained the children's 'socio-emotional self-regulation'; since the focus was not on other 'structural factors' or features of the children's settings, we are not able to understand how these may have also had an effect on the children's play-related endeavours. In my study, then, I intend to take these other aspects into account too. These are, for instance, the other 'conditions' of the teacher's play provision – i.e. how much time the children have to play, the space(s) in which they can play, and the resources they can or cannot access together with where they could play with these; and, each educator's enforcement of each of the rules.

3.1.3 Rule navigation outside of play

Here, I review empirical works that have looked at or considered young children's navigations of rules in general – that is, outside of their play episodes. These are relevant to the present research for two reasons. First, they show how children make sense of and respond to rules in EYE settings – and therefore offer an insight into how they may exercise agency in such contexts. Second, some of these also consider other structural aspects of EYE classrooms – and accordingly, how these may shape, enable and/or constrain children's play experiences and activities.

To 'foreground' young children 'as agents', using data collected from a larger study Ebrahim (2011, p.129) considers the 'strategies' that the children were observed using to 'gain control' at their early years settings[28]. Here, I mainly consider two of the three[29] strategies discussed, as the children's endeavours within these are relevant to the present research's focus. The strategy of 'resistance' encompasses the children's attempts to resist various aspects of their settings' rules, regulation and 'normative expectations' in order to 'make their concerns matter' (*Ibid*., p.125). These resistances were exercised at various times during the day, and in different ways. At snack times for instance, although they were not allowed to, the children often hid behind curtains to play the game 'boo man'; trialed pushing and slapping 'games'; danced; and used

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[28] This was carried out in two early childhood centres in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (attended by mixed age-group, 0-5 years); it aimed to 'explore constructions of childhood through a focus on teachers and children as the units of analysis' (Ebrahim, 2011, p.124).

[29] The third is 'collaboration', which encompasses instances when the children worked together in their play to create and maintain their 'imaginary worlds' (Ebrahim, 2011, p.126-127).

cutlery 'as items of combat' (*Ibid*., p.125). During the adult-led activities, which were 'focused on school readiness', the children resisted the educators' 'expectations' (*Ibid*., p.125). In relation to the latter, for example, because the children were required to colour the images on their worksheets in 'realistic' colours, specific colours were made available (*Ibid*., p.125). The children, however, would either 'choose their own' or exchange colours with nearby peers, so they could use colours of their own preference (*Ibid*., p.125). When asked why she did this, a child says it is because she 'likes' it and thinks 'it's pretty' (*Ibid*., p.125). The children exercised these resistances even though they were aware that these were 'a risky business', writes Ebrahim (2011, p.125). In an excerpt to illustrate this, a child plays with cubes instead of reading during 'reading time'; when he refuses to teach a peer how he has put the construction together – and she threatens to inform the educator, he immediately starts reading (*Ibid*., p.125).

The strategy of 'avoidance and ignoring' in Ebrahim (2011, p.126), encompasses the children's attempts to 'escape the control of other people'. To exemplify this, a number of instances are discussed where the children either overtly or covertly resist their educators' requests together with their settings' rules. During 'rest time', for example, it is said the children would turn their backs to educators as if to appear asleep and play with their fingers (*Ibid*., p.126); at lunch and snack times, some would 'openly' defy 'adult authority' (*Ibid*., p.126). In one excerpt, for example, a child silently continues to eat with his hands after an educator tells him to eat with a spoon; in another, after the educator places a child back in her seat and tells her to 'sit properly', the child stands up, waves the Pokémon token she has found in her 'chips' packet, and dances (*Ibid*. p.126). The children's endeavours within these strategies, Ebrahim (2011, p.126) writes, demonstrates how they, over time, became 'knowledgeable' about the settings' practices and routines, and the 'consequences if caught'; this gave them an 'idea of the types of power available to them'. They then used this knowledge to intentionally 'achieve certain outcomes' (*Ibid*., p.126).

The children in Gawlicz (2009, p.215) were also seen resisting what they were required to do during adult-led activities; this was either by openly resisting the adults' instructions, or 'failing' to carry out the given task 'properly'. To exemplify the former, three instances are discussed. In one of these, the child says he does not 'feel' like drawing a 'family member who has passed away' (*Ibid*., p.214). When the educator reminds him that he will not receive a stamp if he does not complete the activity, the child responds by closing his book and then leaving to play. In another, when an educator asks a child if he will listen to her, he answers "I don't feel like it" (*Ibid*., p.215). In response, the educator first tells him he will not receive a sheet, and then hands him one whilst 'threatening' to send him to another group if he does not do what is required (*Ibid*., p.215).

The child remains seated 'doing nothing for a while', which Gawlicz (2009, p.215) suggests can be seen as further 'resistance', and later briefly folds the paper. The latter involved the children hurriedly doing 'what they were asked to' and paying little 'attention' to the 'quality of their performance'; this was often when the activities 'lasted too long' and they wanted to play (*Ibid*., p.215). According to Gawlicz (2009, p.218), mealtimes 'proved a particularly rich source of inspiration for new forms of resistance'. During these, the children were observed rejecting the 'principle of eating nicely' in many different ways (*Ibid*., p.218). For example, they would make various 'sounds', play with their food and occasionally 'spit' (*Ibid*., p.218).

Children's overt and covert resistances during meal times are also noted in two studies that looked specifically at children's activities during these. A mealtime rule in Alcock (2007)[30] was that children remained seated until the activity was over. When they became 'restless' during one 'morning tea-time', they scraped their chairs on the floor; several spilt water from the jugs; two children threatened to pour water on the adults' heads and on the floor; and, one child 'repeatedly moved in and on his chair' despite being asked to 'sit down' several times (*Ibid*., p.284-285). Through fashioning impromptu and novel word play, the children also 'played with rules of etiquette', and this appeared to be for several reasons, namely: to keep boredom at bay, foster a sense of 'togetherness', and because they enjoyed it (*Ibid*., p.285-286). In the excerpt offered, Alcock writes that a child acknowledges a rule by saying 'please pass the…' but at the same time challenges it by adding 'wee-wees' at the end of the 'sing-chant' sentence (2007, p.284-285). When he receives no response from the teachers or his peers, he changes the last word of the sentence to 'trai-ain' (*Ibid*., p.285). This catches on and his peers repeat the beginning of the sentence 'please pass the…' whilst adding various rhyming and non-rhyming words to the end of it (*Ibid*., p.285).

In Hansen, Hansen, & Kristensen (2017)[31], the children were also observed navigating the various rules, regulation and norms that encompassed mealtimes, for instance: a child refused to tuck his chair under the table (sit close to the table); one pretended the bin was a net and threw her packaging in it (dispose of packaging appropriately); two played a game of slicing bread with a lunchbox (do not play with food); several unpacked their food before they were allowed to (wait until chosen child 'welcomes' all to eat); and, many talked, sang and shouted (required to

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[30] The data presented is taken from a larger study which explored children's experiences of 'humour and playfulness' at three early childhood centres in New Zealand (Alcock, 2007, p.283).

[31] In this paper, observations of children's activities during meal times in three Danish kindergartens are discussed to show how perspectives that emphasise children as 'future beings' and 'here-and-now' beings 'produce different mechanisms of regulation and agency' (Hansen *et al*. (2017, p.237).

whisper, or not talk at all) (*Ibid*., p.241). Here, however, it is stressed that research which considers children's spaces and child-adult relations, 'should reflexively question simplistic notions of regulation and agency' and 'deal explicitly' with the 'ambivalences that characterise' these 'concepts' in 'everyday life' (*Ibid*., p.246). In this study, then, both the educators and children's navigations are highlighted. One of the rules at one setting, for example, was that everyone was to wait silently before a designated child welcomed them all to eat. However, one educator arrives at a table as the children wait, and immediately starts whispering with them; moments later a child starts to sing loudly but is 'shushed' by the same educator (*Ibid*. p.241). Here, write Hansen *et al*. (2017, p.241), the educator navigated the rule through 'discreet negotiation' by 'neither talking nor being silent', whilst the child did so by a 'direct challenging' of it. In all three settings, although the children were encouraged to handle the cutlery without adult help, many educators sliced food and buttered children's bread/rolls for them because it created 'less mess', 'was quicker' and 'avoided discussions with the children' (*Ibid*., p.243).

In this study, the adults and children's perspectives on the rules were also sought. According to Hansen *et al*. (2017, p.242), many of the children saw the rules, and the educators' enforcement of these, in a positive light; as, it kept their peers from being loud, teasing others, and 'acting disgustingly'. These children, they write, also 'actively' applied the rules because they were able to 'relax' when the mealtimes were 'carried out in a predictable manner and in a calm atmosphere' (*Ibid*., p.242). Whilst the educators also appreciated and practised the various rules, regulation and norms; in general, they 'disliked' the 'rules and corrections' because they did not want to 'scold the children' (*Ibid*., p.245). In this sense, they found themselves to be 'caught' between using the rules to 'implement' the educational (e.g. using cutlery, and developing motor skills) and socialisation (e.g. interacting with peers and adults) 'purpose' of mealtimes, and their own preference which was to have a 'less formalised' eating space where both parties could enjoy 'just being together' (*Ibid*., p.240, 245).

In Markström and Halldén (2009, p.117-118) the strategy of 'collaboration' encompasses instances when the children would join forces to realise certain outcomes; namely, when they tried to maintain or protect their play, and when they strove to support their peers during moments of struggle with educators. The latter involves times when the educators would ask a child to do something, which was in accordance with a rule or the settings' norms and regulation. Here, some children were observed trying to 'negotiate' with the adults in an attempt 'rescue' their peers (*Ibid*., p.118). For instance, they offered to clean on behalf of their peers when they saw educators 'reprimanding' them for not cleaning after themselves (*Ibid*., p.118). In the excerpt offered, a child is able to 'rescue' his peer at the end of a mealtime (*Ibid*., p.118). Here, despite

his peer's insistence that she did not serve herself, a teacher instructs her to finish her food in line with the rule that children eat all of the food they have served themselves. First, the child confirms his peer's point in stating that she did not serve herself the large portion; when this is not effective, he changes course and explains that she has eaten a decent amount. This time he is successful.

The works reviewed in this sub-section – like those considered previously – again show the various ways in which children make sense of and navigate rules to realise certain outcomes; again, resistance is a common theme that runs across the majority of these. Aside from the Hansen *et al*. (2017) research, the children's own perspectives on the rules – and the reasons for these, and their own reasons behind the endeavours noted are noticeably absent. In Hansen *et al*. (2017), however, and upon closer examination, one can note that where the children's resistances are presented, their explanations and perspectives are not; and, for the children who did apply their rules, although their perspectives are offered their actions are summarised. Therefore, whilst it is possible for one to understand why some of the children applied the rules, the same cannot be said for those who 'resisted' these.

Another theme that stands out, and this is when taking into account all of the studies that have been reviewed to this point, is that each of these show instances of children's behaviours or activities in relation to a given rule and/or within a strategy; individual children's navigations in connection with a rule (or rules) over the course of the research period are not offered. Whilst one is able to see how the children – occasionally or often – navigated certain rules when at the settings, it is therefore not possible to gain an insight into the perhaps various ways in which individual children made sense of these. In my study, I intend to contribute to this body of work through not only looking at how individual children navigate the various rules they encounter, but also seeking and presenting their own reasons, perspectives and motivations. It is anticipated this would offer further insight by way of showing why a child may navigate a rule in the way(s) that s/he does, together with the factors that s/he might take into account before, during and/or after acting; and, if the child's endeavours change on occasion(s) or over time – and if so, why.

Some of these studies also variously show how other structural aspects of EYE contexts may shape, enable and/or constrain children's play experiences and endeavours. The children's endeavours in relation to adult-led activities (or tasks) in Gawlicz (2009) and Ebrahim (2011) – and indeed in Rogers & Evans (2008) and Markström & Halldén (2009) (discussed in 3.1.1) – show how curricula-related demands and aspects of settings' routines or timetables may impact their play experiences. As, each of these show how the children tried to navigate these

requirement(s) in various ways, and this was in connection with play, that is: to remain playing (Rogers & Evans, 2008; Markström & Halldén, 2009), to play during these (Ebrahim, 2011), or to commence or return to their play (Gawlicz, 2009). Whilst the Hansen *et al*. (2017) research is not to do with children's play specifically, it – together with Arnott (2018) (discussed in 3.1.2) – enables us to see how educators' enforcement of rules could be viewed as another aspect – viz. structure – of the context that can also have an effect on children's experiences and navigations of rules. In my study, then, these and other aspects of the classroom context will also be considered (see 3.3 and Chapter 4 for further detail).

3.2 Older children's navigations of rules in education contexts

In this section, the review turns to empirical works that have looked at or considered older children's navigations of their education settings' rules. Although the focus of my research is on young children's experiences, I consider these works to be both useful and relevant. First, this is because these offer additional insight into how children may navigate rules in education settings – and therefore, will aid my understandings and explanations of the children's endeavours in the present research. Secondly, since, in each of these, either the children's reasons and/or the factors they took into account before or when acting are also presented; these not only enable us to understand why the children decided to act in the way(s) that they did, but also which enabling and/or constraining aspects of their contexts – that they paid close attention to – may have influenced their decisions. The latter reason further supports my research interest in children's own accounts as a way to better understand their experiences and endeavours in the reception class.

In Critchlow (2007, p.iii, 1), which looked at 10-11 year-olds 'everyday lives and experiences' at 'home, school and public space'; when they were expected to work silently during lessons, some children were often seen resisting this. In one excerpt, for example, a group of children talk fifteen minutes into a lesson – although they are expected to be working; one child from the same table stands up and sings, but stops when the teacher tells her to; and several minutes later, the same child pulls a chair out from underneath a peer who then falls to the floor. On another occasion, when the form teacher is not looking, a child twice knocks on his desk without looking up to give the impression someone is at the door.

The children who were most often observed engaging in this 'unofficially sanctioned behaviour', writes Critchlow (2007, p.141), were the 'high achievers'. When two children, whom the teacher nicknamed "the two class clowns", were asked about the reasons behind their endeavours, they

revealed it was to alleviate 'boredom' and have 'fun' (*Ibid*., p.142-145). In their talk, both of them say they do this when their form teacher is in charge because she repeats the same information constantly to help those who do not 'understand', and teaches slowly; as they work on their tasks – or when they have completed these, then, they 'muck about' because they are 'bored' (*Ibid*., p.142-143). However, because a cover teacher makes their lessons 'fun' and teaches quickly, they do not do this in his company (*Ibid*., p.140). It is suggested these two children also engaged in these behaviours because they had realised their form teacher did not follow through on her threat of giving them detentions; indeed, the children recalled that, in the past she had stated she did not want to miss her 'break' time (*Ibid*., p.147). According to Critchlow (2007, p147), in the period before their SATs the children's 'power of their position increased' as they realised the teacher did not 'reprimand' them for fear of causing 'disruption' to 'learning time'. However, the 'low-achievers', it is said, did not engage in these kinds of activities for fear of jeopardising 'their school grades' (*Ibid*., p.148).

The children in this study were also seen using a 'whole class' approach to 'resist' a rule that prohibited them from playing netball and football in the playground (Critchlow 2007, p.161). To begin with, they started playing a chasing game called 'British Bulldogs', but this was soon noticed and banned (*Ibid*., p.160). They then changed its name to 'Colours' and continued to play it (*Ibid*., p.161); when the teachers realised this it was also banned. Undeterred, one break time, the children decided to 'walk-run' – involving running slowly, with the appearance of walking (*Ibid*., p.163); as 'punishment', they were sent back to their classroom (*Ibid*., p.163). Although the running sport(s) soon slowly dissipated after that: the boys were occasionally observed playing football with stones, leaves wrapped in tape, and beanbags (*Ibid*., p.164).

Whilst 'self-regulation' is explicitly mentioned in Chitty (2015, p.168), one could suggest that it is, to varying degrees, present – or a part of – most (if not all) human thought and activity; and can therefore be noted in many of the studies reviewed in this chapter. In this study[32], it is suggested that the children were enacting self-regulation throughout the school day, and this was in two ways: by actively maintaining the 'appearance of conformity', and actually conforming (Chitty, 2015, p.115). With regard to the former, although there were numerous occasions when the children were unhappy with teachers' activities or with certain rules that were in place, they refrained from outwardly showing their emotions or raising their concerns. As a result, writes Chitty, there were often times when the children appeared to experience 'considerable discomfort' and 'frustration' (2015, p.141-147). The main reason behind the children's

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[32] This research looked at how 9-11 year-olds' 'recount and account' for their 'political agency' in primary school (Chitty, 2015, p.1).

appearance of conformity was the fear of being 'punished'; and within this, some teachers 'surveillance practices' (*Ibid.*, p.143-144). For instance, some of the children said that when a teacher wrongly accused them of acting in a certain way, they did not address the issue for fear of not being 'believed' and/or consequently reprimanded (*Ibid.*, p.123), so they did as they were told. Likewise, a child says that he is actively trying not to swear because the school has recently banned 'the use of certain words' and are giving detentions to those who are heard using them (*Ibid.*, p.144).

In doing the former, then, it is suggested the children were making sure that they were doing that latter – that is, actually conforming (Chitty, 2015). This is because when they saw that certain peers were either not able or were refusing to self-regulate, they positioned them as 'deviant' (*Ibid.*, p.127). Since these peers were exercising 'autonomous agency' – namely, acting in ways that did not take into account the rules and regulation – they were recognised as 'disobedient rather than a credible social agent' (*Ibid.*, p.127). In fact, writes Chitty (2015, p.127), some children went as further to suggest that it would be better if these peers were educated away from the rest of them, as if they were 'mentally impaired' and 'in need of correcting'.

Self-regulation as conformity, or appearing to conform, can also be noted in Juchtmans (2014)[33]. Here, when the children believed their 'intentions' to be a 'good Muslim' were incompatible with some of the practices at the Catholic schools they were attending, they either tried to take part in these or thought of ways to appear as if they were taking part (*Ibid.*, p.70). With regard to the former for instance, many children said they actively took part in the schools' rituals, songs, performances, and visits to the church. With respect to the latter, in the interview extracts presented, one child speaks of lip-syncing instead of singing during ceremonies; another says he discreetly avoids making the 'sign of the cross' on his body (*Ibid.*, p.64).

The children's talk in Palmer (2015, p.137)[34] reveals how they drew on their previous experiences of teachers' decisions at certain periods during the day, and knowledge that they had gained. This was when they wanted to fill their water bottles during class; as the school rule was that children had to fill these during break times, but could do this during class if they had the teacher's permission. Here, Lisa says that she waits until 'reading' period before she asks if she can leave the class; this, Palmer (2015, p.136) suggests, shows that she was 'aware of the

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[33] This paper looks at how second-generation Muslim children of Turkish heritage 'deal with 'competing expectations' between their home and school 'cultures' (Juchtmans, 2014, p.55).

[34] This research looked at how 9-10 year-olds 'come to know about the body' at two English schools (Palmer, 2015, p.1).

points' of the 'school day' where she was 'more able' to 'negotiate' this rule. Several children also explain how they draw on their recently acquired knowledge on the physical effects of thirst, gained from a school project called 'Water of Life' (*Ibid*., p.137). One child, for instance, says he highlights his sweat when he sits by the heating, whilst others speak about acting hot and flustered (*Ibid*., p.136-137).

Critchlow (2007) and Chitty (2015) also show how children's collective agency influences educators' enforcement of rules; and how, in turn, these changes shape or inspire their subsequent navigations. In the former, this can be seen in the example of when the children resisted the rules that followed the initial playground rule; and the eventual punishment which resulted in them missing a break time. In the latter, the child's comments reveal how his efforts not to swear are influenced by the school's recent decision to give detentions. This shows that the school perhaps introduced the punishment because the children were regularly resisting the rule; and the child's, how a change in enforcement can shape or influence children's subsequent endeavours. In my research, I intend to look out for this aspect of children's navigations and experiences (viz. sub-question 5). For, and as these two studies reveal, firstly, it is another dimension of the relationship between children's activities and educators' enforcement of rules. Secondly, it can show to what extent children's endeavours may be linked to their personal 'desires' to realise their 'projects', and – as well as whether or not – these are determined by their experiences of how educators have responded in the past and therefore the consequences that may ensue in the present.

The literature reviewed in this section offers additional insight into children's navigations of their settings' rules, partly by showing that when their own reasons are sought and offered we are able to better understand why they acted in the way(s) that they did; but mainly, what factors they took into account – or drew on, when deciding how to act. With regard to the former, the children's explanations in Critchlow (2007), for example, enable us to appreciate why the two children 'resisted' their form teacher's requirement as often as they did; but also, and in relation to the latter, how their endeavours were driven by their past knowledge and experience(s) of the said teacher's activities and talk – and later, their awareness of the pressure she was under in the weeks leading to their SATs. The children's accounts in Juchtmans (2014) and Chitty (2015) are also illuminating, not only because they reveal that children may navigate rules and regulation by way of performance; but also, how the fear of adult reprimand can be a constraining force, preventing them from perhaps acting in others ways or voicing their concerns. The findings of these studies further support my intention in the present research to seek the children's own accounts as a way to better understand their experiences and endeavours.

3.3 Summary and conceptual framework

The research literature reviewed in this chapter offer much insight into how children navigate rules, during play and in general classroom life. A theme that runs across the majority of the works considered – irrespective of the age group studied – is resistance, broadly in the form of overt or covert resistances. But, these also show how children may navigate given rules in other ways – i.e. by negotiating with educators; applying these in ways that enable them to realise their play-related or other needs; and, applying or acting in accordance with them. It can also be said that each of the studies considered, to varying degrees, show how certain rules shaped the children's play-related and other endeavours and experiences; and some, how other aspects of their contexts did.

At various junctures in this chapter, I have highlighted that where the studies have also presented the children's talk, we are able to better understand their perspectives and endeavours. Whilst several of the works that have looked at young children's experiences include their perspectives on the rules or the reasons behind their activities, in the majority these are noticeably absent. Furthermore, all of these present instances of when the children, at one or more settings, acted in certain ways – either to exemplify how a strategy was exercised or to illustrate the overall themes that were noted; it is therefore not possible for one to understand how individual children may have navigated each of the rules discussed. The present study might contribute to this body of empirical works; this is by showing how individual children may navigate their reception class's rules during their self-initiated play, and foregrounding their reasons, perspectives and endeavours.

At the outset of this chapter, I mentioned that the concepts of agency and structure – and the relationship between the two, frame the present research. I apply the concept of agency, as the majority of these studies do, to frame the children's endeavours. Like adults, children have the capacity to act intentionally in the world; these intentional actions have an effect on the situations, relationships and contexts of which they are a part. To act, they draw on their past experiences and knowledge; consider their own motivations; and, think about how they may be able to realise the former within their present situations. Rules, as with any other aspect of a context's social order, require and forbid children to respectively behave in certain ways and not in other ways (Jordon *et al*. 1995); therefore, these can have an effect on children's activities by way of shaping, enabling and/or constraining these. Here, I apply the concept of structure to frame the relationship between the children's endeavours in connection with the rules – and, how the rules may influence or impact on these and their play experiences. Indeed, as some of

the studies reviewed have shown, other features of the education context can – and do – affect children's rule navigation and their play or other experiences. In the present research, then, the concept of structure is also used to understand and explain how these other aspects – such as: the other 'conditions' of the teacher's play provision (e.g. amount of time to play, access to resources and space); educators' enforcements of each of the rules; and, the routine and timetable – may shape, enable or constrain these.

In this chapter's introduction, in brackets I indicated that the concept of children as a 'beings and becomings' (see: Lee, 2001; Uprichard, 2008. p.30) also frames the present research. In the main, it is used to show how I view children in this thesis. It is the notion that children are beings who think, feel and act in the present; are social actors who have the capacity and capabilities to act – namely, have agency; and, have pasts. But are also in the process of multiple becomings – that is, they have various faculties that develop and evolve with time; and, are oriented towards their immediate and long-term futures. In part, it is used to consider how they are positioned in the classroom – that is, by the various other structures that are a part of the context, which may affect their agency and experiences; and, to offer a way of showing how they may act in the present to realise their immediate and long-term future goals. In the next chapter I define and discuss each of these concepts in more detail, and present the theoretical perspectives on agency and structure that will be used as 'tools' to interpret the present research's data.

CHAPTER 4:

Conceptual and theoretical framework

In Chapter 3, to appreciate what has been noted in the current body of work, I reviewed empirical works that have looked at or considered children's navigations of rules in various education settings. The discussion now turns to the conceptual and theoretical framing of my research.

The purpose of this chapter is essentially twofold. First, it is to clarify the critical realist metatheoretical underpinning of this research. Here, I discuss the ontological and epistemological positions that are taken – namely, realism and relativism respectively; and, then explain why, as is suggested in critical realism, I exercised rational judgement in deciding which conceptualisation(s) and theory would best aid the analysis of the data gathered. Second, it is to present the concepts that frame this research – namely, that of children as 'beings and becomings', agency, and structure (and the relationship between the latter two); and present the conceptual and theoretical insights which together comprise the 'tools' that will aid my interpretation and explanations of the children's experiences.

4.1 Ontological and epistemological positioning

Conducting social research involves acknowledging the complex nature of reality, addressing our 'conceptions of what we can obtain knowledge about', and a careful consideration of 'how such knowledge can be obtained' (Danermark *et al*. 2005, p.150). In this main section I clarify my ontological and epistemological positions, which are taken from critical realism. Before I do, however, it needs to be mentioned here that this is not a critical realist thesis in a strict sense. For, although I do discuss the various concepts that frame this study's 'object' in Chapter 2 and in sections 4.2 and 4.3 and below, I do not present detailed accounts of the various strata which may comprise these – as is the case in some critical realist investigations (see i.e. Connors, 2015 and Hu, 2018). And, whilst I do use Porpora's conceptualisations of agency and structure, and Archer's concepts and theorising on the relationship between the two: the former are the definitions taken, and the latter (together with Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) theorising) comprise the conceptual and theoretical 'tools' that will aid the analysis. Furthermore, it is the fundamental tenets of the 'original' critical realism 'developed' by Bhaskar (Callinicos, 2008, p.567) – and interpreted and further elaborated in the works of Collier (1994), Sayer (2000) and Danermark *et*

al. (2005) – that are regarded here; I neither examine nor engage with recent or ongoing developments in this metatheory. But instead, following Bhaskar and Danermark (2006, p.295), I take the philosophy's ontology and epistemology as the "guidelines" for this 'real world' study – not as a 'strait jacket' that determine all aspects of the research process.

The ontological position taken in this thesis is that the world is real (*ontological realism*), and that reality is intransitive, transfactual and stratified (Bhaskar, 1998a, p.xii-xiii). That is, whatever exists – be it natural or social – is real, irrespective of whether a) I am aware of its existence, b) I have 'adequate' knowledge of it, and c) it is the object of my study or not (Collier, 1994; Danermark *et al*. 2005). These objects or 'things' – e.g. a bureaucracy or individual – comprise multiple structures (hence, are structured), which are enduring and causally efficacious (transfactual) (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 2000). What is more, these structures are stratified; and whilst each stratum is made up of its own unique powers and mechanisms[35], and is irreducible, they may depend on – or combine with – one or more that are 'below' when 'interacting' and producing events (Danermark *et al*. 2005, p.60). For instance, an individual is real and therefore exists. Various strata, such as her physical, chemical, biological and psychological (each of which has its own powers and mechanisms) as a whole make a concrete being (Danermark *et al*. 2005, p.60) – again, all of which are real whether or not I see them and am cognisant of what they do. In virtue of her 'physical make up' she is able to walk around the classroom; she has these powers even when she is not doing the former. When she does walk in the classroom, however, these powers are 'activated' (Sayer, 2000, p.11-12).

The world, then, is an open system comprising multiple objects and their mechanisms (the domain of the *real*) (Bhaskar, 1998a; Sayer, 2000). When an object's mechanisms are activated – which can be at any time, and in interaction with the mechanisms of any number of other objects' – events are produced (domain of the *actual*) (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 2000; Danermark *et al*. 2005). The child's power to tidy the classroom, and her various physical and cognitive strata or structures from which it 'derives' – for example, are in the domain of the real; tidying, and 'its effects', which is the 'exercise' of this power, are in the domain of the actual (Sayer, 2000, p.12). Explanation of the actual or the real is in the domain of the empirical. To elaborate, through experiencing and observing events, researchers may be able to refer to the structures – and therefore possibly the mechanisms – that may have produced these (Collier, 1994; Sayer, 2000).

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[35] It is difficult to locate unambiguous definitions of power and mechanisms. It appears, each structure or strata has its own unique powers; when these powers are exercised – or activated, their mechanisms generate the events, observable or un-observable, that eventuate (Collier, 1994, p.43; Sayer, 2000, p.14).

For instance, one may be able to observe the structure(s) that constitute a 'household' or school, together with 'what happens when they act' (Sayer, 2000, p.12). Whilst observations may increase researchers' convictions about what exists, a 'causal criteria' may also be applied for those structures that are unobservable but whose effects can be experienced and observed (Collier, 1994, p.44; Sayer, 2000, p.12). For instance, linguists have deduced the existence of 'generative grammar' (structure, mechanisms and events), from individuals' ability to 'construct novel but grammatically correct sentences' (events and effects) (Sayer, 2000, p.12); similarly, one may assume a 'real rainstorm' took place overnight upon discovering a muddy, wet garden in the morning (Collier, 1994, p.44).

Ontological realism – viz. the recognition of a stratified ontology, and the domains of the real, actual and the empirical – then, clearly distinguishes between what exists (intransitive), and what we can know about what exists (knowledge: transitive). This is quite unlike empirical realism (or empiricism), where what is experienced (namely, through sense 'impressions') is reduced to what exists (Bhaskar, 2008, p.32)[36]; which thereby not only assumes a 'flat ontology' but also results in the conflation of ontology with epistemology (Collier, 1994, p.73-76; Sayer, 2000, p.11; Danermark *et al.* 2005, p.8, 21) – a consequence Bhaskar (2008, p.5) refers to as the 'epistemic fallacy'. Equally, whereas in empiricism causality is defined 'as regular succession' (Collier, 1994, p.34), and the impetus is therefore on identifying constant conjunctions – as is the case in the natural sciences where conditions to isolate and study mechanisms (in 'more or less closed systems') are created (Danermark *et al.* 2005, p.39): from the realist perspective, causality is emergent and contingent. That is, since multiple mechanisms may be activated at any one time, and owing to – as well as within, a whole host of conditions: any number of events may eventuate (Collier, 1994). Accordingly, social research is not concerned with mapping regularities and then predicting future events or offering 'putative social laws' (Sayer, 2000, p.14); rather, and by way of explanation, researchers attempt to identify possible causal mechanisms[37] together with how they may 'work', and to discover 'if they have been activated and under what conditions' (*Ibid.*, p.14).

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[36] Equally, Sayer (2000) argues, it is unlike 'strong' social constructionism, which denies reality (namely, what exists independent of our thoughts about and interpretations of it); here, then, reality is reduced to individuals' thoughts about it.

[37] This is not to say that reasons cannot be causes – as is believed in interpretivism; but that, both reasons (though not in a straightforward manner), *and* any number of interacting mechanisms can produce events that take place in the actual (Sayer, 2000; Porpora, 2015).

Following critical realism, the epistemological position taken in this thesis is *epistemic relativism*; that, the world can only be known through our descriptions of it (Sayer, 2000, p.47). Knowledge (transitive dimension) about the world (intransitive) is fallible and transient (Bhaskar, 1998b). That is, since 'the production of knowledge is a human activity' (Potter, 2007, p.273), theories about objects and social phenomena may be 'wrong' and therefore further developed, disproven and/or replaced by other more 'truer' accounts (about the same objects or social phenomena) at any time (Collier, 1994, p.50; Danermark *et al*. 2005, p.23); and, it is 'socio-culturally, economically and historically situated' (Bhaskar, 1998b, p.237; Potter, 2007, p.273). This is not to say that the use or production of knowledge is a failed endeavour; rather, it is the recognition that, whilst, at present, we may have 'useful knowledge' – in the sense that it enables us to describe, interpret and/or understand given aspects of the world, certain features of this knowledge may be 'improved' in the future in virtue of research (Sayer, 2000, p.43). Critical realism, however, does not accept judgemental relativism, which is the view that there are 'no grounds' for one to decide which knowledge or account(s) may be 'better', or 'should be preferred', over others (Sayer, 2000, p.47; Danermark *et al*. 2005, p.202) – in that, 'all beliefs are equally valid' (Bhaskar, 2011, p.24). But instead takes the position of *judgemental rationality*, that one can rationally decide which theory or theories to use. To elaborate, one may use more than one theory as a way to enhance their explanatory power of the phenomena being studied. Where competing theories are concerned – that is, those that offer 'descriptions' of the same aspect of reality – one is able to rationally choose between these 'on the grounds: which theory explains more of the same phenomena under its own description' (Collier, 1994, p.91; Bhaskar (1998a, p.xi).

Since research looking at any aspect of the social world – i.e. at individuals' perspectives and experiences, agency, or various structures – is conducted in the open system, and it is impossible to create an artificial closed system where one may be able to isolate and study the specific aspect alone; as a way of erecting an artificial boundary, one has to carefully 'carve up' the object of study (Sayer, 2000, p.27). In Chapter 2, through discussing the background within which this research's focus is located – and situating the focus at the same time, I created the boundary around the object of this study. This is not to say that the points and concerns (i.e. school readiness approach, increase in 'early' formal learning, and educational play in favour of authentic play) raised have little relevance in this research; on the contrary, these contextualise the object of this study, and therefore can be considered as the various other (or secondary) objects that are intimately connected to it. Indeed, to a less or more degree these will be discussed and reflected on at various junctures the analysis chapters. The object of this study – viz. the main focus – is the children, specifically: their experiences, activities, perspectives and

reasons – with regard to and in connection with the rules that pertain to and encompass the play provision. To continue with this carving up, below I look at the concepts and theories that together frame this object, namely: the notion of children as 'beings and becomings', agency, and structure(s).

To summarise, on the metatheoretical levels, my ontological and epistemological positions are informed by critical realism – realism and relativism respectively; and, as is recommended in critical realism, the theories and concepts that I will use will be judged in terms of their 'practical adequacy' (Sayer, 1992, p.70; Sayer, 2000)[38]. In 5.1 I discuss how critical realism helped determine the methodological approach I took.

4.2 Children as beings and/or becomings

Whilst agency and structure – and the relationship between the two, are the main concepts that frame the present research (discussed in due course); in part, the notion of children as 'beings and becomings' also does. In this thesis, and as I highlighted in 3.3, it is mainly used to emphasise how I view children. But also, and partly, as a way in which to consider how the children are positioned in the classroom by the various other structures that are part of the context; and, how they may act in the present to realise their immediate and long-term future goals. In this section, then, to begin with I look at why it is said that children, in virtue of the prevalent notion of childhood, which English EYE provision is based on, understands and positions children as *becomings*; and then I briefly consider a relatively recent view that recognises children as *beings*, before explaining why I – and therefore this thesis – take(s) the view that children can be seen as *both beings and becomings*.

The prevalent notion, which is essentially the understanding that childhood is a period of development – that is, a time when the child's various faculties and capabilities evolve and become more elaborate as they age – it has been said, is largely made up of child-developmental psychology's postulation, and partly traditional socialisation theory (see e.g. James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Walkerdine, 1998; James, 2009). In addition to the fact that this is a taken for granted notion, it has been argued, it influences not only how children are seen and therefore positioned in society, but also the provision that is made for them (Walkerdine, 1998;

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[38] It is important to reiterate here that critical realism is not a theory, but a 'philosophy' that 'seeks to underlabour for science' (Bhaskar, 1998a, p.ix; Nielsen, 2007, p.96; Porpora, 2015). In this thesis, then, it clarifies my positions on the metatheoretical level(s), and acts as a guide for the research process.

Burman, 2008). English EYE provision, many have asserted, is based on this view; and this coupling of child- developmental psychology with EY pedagogy is widely believed to have gained momentum in the mid to late 20th century owing to the push for a child-centred 'progressive' education (Walkerdine, 1998; Burman, 2008).

Certainly, in the majority – if not all – of the influential reports concerning EYE provision that were published during this period, research and thinking from the discipline(s) were directly cited, and/or the terminology, charts and apparatus associated with it used (see for instance, HMSO, 1933; HMSO, 1967; HMSO, 1990). These are terms such as 'development', 'progress' and 'needs', the ages and stages of development, and the apparatus of observation. It is also quite clear to see that English EYE provision is grounded in this belief. The EYFS, EYFSP and *Development Matters* (EE, 2012)[39] documents, for instance, underline that the majority of children pass through typical stages of development – and make certain 'progress' in their learning, as they age; and, each child has 'individual needs' that need to be considered (DfE, 2012, p.6; EE, 2012; DfE, 2017, p.9).

Aspects of this prevalent view, however, have been strongly criticised over the years – particularly since the late 20th century. One point of contention is the dualism of childhood and adulthood. The former, it has been said, implies children are 'incomplete' and therefore 'immature, irrational, incompetent' and 'asocial', whilst the latter insinuates adults are 'complete' and therefore 'mature, rational, competent' and 'social' (Mackay, 1991, p.28; Mayall, 2000). Likewise, terms such as 'growth', 'progress' and 'growing up' imply that children are in a state of 'becoming' – as if they are 'not-yet' complete; and simultaneously that, 'mature adulthood' is when the desired state of complete 'being' is reached (Jenks, 1982, p.13; Qvortrup, 1985, p.132; Mayall, 1994, p.2; Lee, 2001, pp.103-106; Jenks, 2008, p.95; Qvortrup, 2009, p.632). This is considered problematic for several reasons: it legitimises adult control and authority over the lives of children (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Cannella, 2008); endorses a hierarchy which positions children at the bottom and adults at the top (Cannella & Viruru, 2004); and, it silences children's input(s) on matters which concern them (Hendrick, 2000; Lee, 2001; Mayall, 2002; Dahlberg *et al*. 2007; Cannella, 2008).

Criticism is also aimed at the notion of children's 'needs' (Wyness, 2006, p.47; Cannella, 2008; Woodhead, 2015, p.64). Whilst there is not a clear definition of what these 'needs' are exactly, writes Woodhead (2015, p.56), these appear to be a way of 'conveying' the 'requirements of

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[39] A non-statutory guidance that was widely used by educators implementing the EYFS during the fieldwork year, and which perhaps continues to inform practice today.

childhood' (Woodhead, 2015, p.56). Much, if not all provision that directly and indirectly concerns children, many have argued, is implicitly or explicitly grounded in the 'discourse of children's needs' (Cannella, 2008, p.123; Wyness, 2006; Woodhead, 2015). But a number of faults have been found with these and the associated 'discourse' (Cannella, 2008, p.123). First because, it is maintained, these are either determined through 'questionable positivist science' but offered as 'intrinsic to children, or part of their make-up'; or, are a 'cultural construction, superimposed on children 'in their best interests' as future adult members of society yet presented as 'universally appropriate to everyone' (Cannella, 2008, p.35; Woodhead, 2015, p.58-59). Second, as it is assumed that adults can identify children's needs 'mainly or solely' through observation – providing they are familiar with what these are in the first place, and they are in charge of planning 'appropriate interventions' or 'programs' designed to 'meet' these: children are silenced with the 'message that they are not competent to determine their own needs' (Cannella, 2008, p.35; Woodhead, 2015, p.57). Lastly, this 'decontextualizing' and 'depersonalization' of the child – owing to the idea that they are developing and their needs identifiable – means that 'we lose sight' of their 'concrete experiences, their actual capabilities, their theories, feelings and hopes' (Dahlberg *et al*. 2007, p.36; Mayall, 2000, p.248).

Upon examination of the EYFS, EYFSP and the Development Matters documents, whilst there does not appear to be any elaboration on what children's 'individual needs' are, one could suggest that these seem to be what children 'have' in accordance with their learning and development. Furthermore, observation and assessment seem to be the main tools through which it is said educators can 'recognise' these and then 'plan activities and support' (DfE, 2012, p.10; EE, 2012; DfE, 2017, p.13; STA, 2018). Indeed, these tools are also advocated as the means through which educators can 'understand' children's 'interests', and then use this knowledge to 'shape learning experiences' (DfE, 2012, p.10; EE, 2012, p.45; DfE, 2017, p.13).

In perhaps direct contrast to the prevalent understanding of the child and childhood, an alternative view, which gathered pace towards the end of the 20th century through the interconnected work of anthropologists, sociologists and historians (Woodhead, 2008; Mayall, 2013) – who, together, have laid down the foundations of the 'new' sociology of childhood – is that children are and ought to be seen as 'beings' (James *et al*. 1998, p.207; James & James, 2004). That is, they are persons living in the 'here and now', who – like adults – experience, think, feel and act (James & James, 2004; Leonard, 2016, p.34). Within this view is the conviction that children are social actors who, by way of their agency, influence the relationships, situations, and contexts of which they are a part (Mayall, 2002; Leonard, 2016). To explicate what this means exactly, Mayall (2002, p.21) defines the terms '*actor*' and '*agent*' – although,

she writes, the 'etymological root' of the two 'is the same'. The former suggests that the child 'does something' perhaps 'arising from a subjective wish' (Mayall, 2002, p.21). This, according to Wyness (2006, p.236), 'implies that children are of the social world: beings rather than becomings'. The latter 'suggests a further dimension', that children's actions and interactions have an 'effect', they make a 'difference – to a relationship or to a decision, to the workings of a set of social assumptions or constraints' (Mayall, 2002, p.21; see also, James & James, 2004, p.24-25). Human agency is discussed and explicated in the ensuing sections.

Whilst, in the context of England, it is believed that this view of the child has largely been embraced within academia, its uptake in education specifically has been relatively slow in comparison (Mayall, 2006; Moran-Ellis, 2010). With regard to the former, over the years much research grounded in the view of the child as a social actor has, for example: looked at children's capacities to be agentic – or at how agency may be exercised; encouraged children's participation in the research process – or looked at the various ways in which they participate in the relationships, situations and contexts of which they are a part; attempted to hear and represent their 'voice'; and, tried to consider and present their experiences from their perspectives (Mayall, 2006; Moran-Ellis, 2010, p.193; Mayall, 2013). In relation to the latter, however, it is thought that the prevalent understanding of childhood together with pervasive concerns to do with the protection and preparation of the child, are preventing the 'status of childhood' from being raised (Mayall, 2006, p.16; Moran-Ellis, 2010). These are concerns to do with ensuring the vulnerabilities of the child are protected from 'hostile' adults – and adult public life, and that children are both educated and 'socialised into conformity with the norms of social life' in preparation for future adult life (Mayall, 2006, p.9, 14; Moran-Ellis, 2010).

It needs to be mentioned here, however, that there have been a number of developments in the arenas of children's rights and participation. The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, for instance, highlight that children's wishes and feelings are to be heard and taken into account in matters which concern them – i.e. where to live, and which parent to reside with; the Gillick competence (or principle) recognises that children (under the age of 16) can make decisions about their medical care without parental permission; and, the UK ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in December 1991. Furthermore, some schools have introduced councils that include child membership (Cotmore, 2004) – though there has been some concern about the degree of participation children are afforded (Alderson, 2000; Wyse, 2001); and, the Office of the Children's Commissioner, an independent national organisation which seeks to protect and promote the rights of the child, seeks children's perspectives and experiences when conducting research.

Whilst the UNCRC requires states that have ratified it to recognise, hear and give 'weight' to children's views, writes Lee (2001, p.93-94), it 'is *ambivalent* about children' – and this is perhaps purposely so. To elaborate on this, Article 12 is examined. Here, Lee (2001, p.93) suggests, in stating that the child 'has the right to express' her 'own views', the Convention acknowledges that children 'have something important to say' and 'adults' interests do not always coincide with those of children'. In so doing, and on the one hand, it appears children are recognised as beings (*Ibid*., p.93). But, because this statement is preceded with 'the child who is capable of forming his or her own views', and followed by the caution that these (views) are to be 'given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child', it seems to suggest that a) even where children are 'deemed capable' of 'speaking for themselves' it is not a given that they will be heard, and b) the 'significance that is subsequently given to what they say' depends on adults' determinations of children's 'levels of age and maturity' (*Ibid*., p.93-94). Therefore, and on the other hand, it appears children are recognised or positioned as becomings (*Ibid*., p.94). According to Lee, then, the fact that the Convention does not state if children are beings or becomings is 'significant' as it suggests the realisation of the principles does not depend on a 'clear decision over children's status', in its place, the states that ratify the Convention are encouraged to 'work with and through childhood ambiguity' (*Ibid*., p.96, 100).

In this thesis, to use Lee's (2001, p.100) words, I also do not make a 'clear decision' on whether children are beings or becomings. This is partly to avoid taking one view and therefore inadvertently denying the other, but mainly because I believe children can be understood as 'both 'beings and becomings" (Uprichard, 2008, p.303). To elaborate, I consider children as beings in the sense that they a) exist, live and think in the present, b) are social actors who have the 'capacity' or 'capability' to act and with that effect the various relationships and contexts of which they are a part, and c) have pasts (Giddens, 1984, p.9; Uprichard, 2008; Mayall, 2002; Leonard, 2016, p.64). At the same time, they are becomings in the sense that they a) have various faculties that develop and evolve with time – or as they age, and b) are oriented towards the immediate future – and can also be concerned with their long-term future(s) (Qvortrup, 2004; Uprichard, 2008). With regard to the second point 'a' here, this is not to say that children are becomings in the sense that they are progressing to become adults (Jenks, 1982) – though legally turning eighteen years of age is seen as the departure from childhood to adulthood; rather that, with time and over time, they become more able to do 'certain things' (Lee, 2001; Qvortrup, 2008, p.267) that are typically thought of as adult capabilities.

4.3 Human agency and social structure(s)

To this point, the discussion has outlined the metatheoretical foundations of this research, and through the consideration of the prevalent and alternative conceptualisations of childhood, explained how the children will be viewed. The focus now turns to theorising on the concept of agency – more specifically, human agency. Whilst the children's agency is not the central object of this study, it does make up a considerable part of it. As is clear from the overarching question that this research is designed to address and the sub-questions that comprise it, the children's agential navigation(s) of the rules is a significant focus.

In this main section, I offer the definitions that are taken when I refer to the concepts of agency and structure in this thesis; and, present the concepts and theorising, which are developed in the works of Emirbayer and Mische (1998) and Archer (1995; 2003), that together form the conceptual and theoretical 'tools' that will aid my understanding and explanations of the children's activities and experiences, the rules and the context within which the former are situated. With regard to the 'tools', at the start or end of each section, I explain how each of these will or may be used. It needs to be mentioned here that this is in no way to suggest the definitions taken and the explanatory 'tools' represent an absolute or true account (or interpretation) of agency and structure(s) – since no theory or combination(s) of theories are a) infallible, and b) 'mirror' or accurately represent a phenomena (or phenomenon) (Sayer, 2000, p.42); but that, in addressing this research's object a) these are understood to be the most suited, and b) this combination, I believe, offers greater 'explanatory power'.

4.3.1 Agency: a definition

I start this discussion with a consideration of the points that Porpora raises and makes with regard to human agency in *Reconstructing Sociology* (2015, see chap 5) as a way to clarify what I am referring to when the term agency is used in this thesis. According to Porpora, human agency is distinct – in that, it is quite unlike the agency of animals, and that of non-conscious objects or material things in the world (e.g. 'rugs', knives or furniture) (2015, p.136); it has central features which make this so, and in any theorising of human agency, these need to be recognised. These are: the 'person' – and therefore the 'self' and 'consciousness', 'intentionality', and 'purposive actions' – or the 'doing' (*Ibid*., p.132-134). What causes 'needless confusion' (*Ibid*., p.136), he states, is when the agency of non-humans and humans is referred to under the same term – as is the case in Latour's Actor-Network-Theory (see, Latour, 2005). Here, Porpora suggests, the 'ambiguity in the meaning of the word agency' has been used to 'steal' it from

humans and 'share' it with 'inanimate objects' (Porpora, 2015, p.134). Whilst it is the case that agency, when defined in the 'abstract sense', 'centrally involves consequential doing' – that is, it is 'the causal power to do something, to make something happen'; as 'causal power *simpliciter*', it does not cover what we mean when we refer to or think about 'human agency and social action' (*Ibid.*, p.134). As causal power alone, then, this refers to non-conscious agency – and therefore, agency in the 'broad sense' (*Ibid.*, p.134). Where human agency is concerned, however, this is conscious agency – and therefore, 'agency in the specific, narrow sense' (*Ibid.*, p.134). In this case, it has to be acknowledged that whilst this is indeed causal power, it is 'caused' by the self; and since the self is 'something floating inside of us', it is a) part of – or makes up – the person (*Ibid.*, p.129), and b) a person – in virtue of having a self, is conscious. It therefore follows that, in the case of humans (or human persons), agency is causal power exercised by the causal powers of the conscious self (*Ibid.*,).

What further distinguishes human agency from that of material objects and things – namely, agency in the 'specific, narrow sense' and agency in the abstract 'broad sense' – is the 'distinctive character' of the 'doing' in the former (Porpora, 2015, p.134). That is, Porpora (2015, p.135) writes, 'agentic action', which is when humans exercise their agency – or act in the world, is not simply humans acting (in which case it would simply be seen as action(s) or 'reactive behaviour') (*Ibid.*, p.134); but it is, in fact, intentional activity, which is exercised to realise various purposes. To explain this position, Porpora (2015) examines Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) theorising of human agency (discussed in detail below), which is presented in a widely cited, dense article. It is important to note here that Porpora does not take issue with their entire conceptualisation, but essentially with two specific features, which he believes are the crux of human agency (the 'doing'), that are omitted – specifically: the self, and intentionality (*Ibid.*, p.132).

In the first place, Porpora (2015, p.138) writes (and as mentioned above), there is a conscious self – a person (a 'centred, concrete' thinking, feeling and acting being), which is what objects do not have and therefore are not. If this 'centred consciousness' (*Ibid.*, p.133) is disregarded, as it is in Emirbayer and Mische's theory – they posit there is not a self but rather a 'dialogical structure, itself thoroughly relational' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p.974): agency is abstracted from 'concrete agents', which therefore implies that 'actors' are 'just passive places where agency "occurs"' (Porpora, 2015, p.132-140). However, when it is recognised that agency (causal power) is the capability (capacity, capabilities) of a conscious actor (humans, persons), it is possible to see that agency is consciously exercised by persons (*Ibid.*). The second issue that Porpora takes with Emirbayer and Mische's treatise is that, in defining human agency 'as

involving engagement' but then not explicating 'what counts as engagement', they leave the question of 'what agentic action means' open (*Ibid*., p.135); 'If engagement involves doing something', he asks, then 'what is the distinctive character of that doing?' (*Ibid*., p.134). In examining the definition of the term 'effort' (which Emirbayer and Mische use) and suggesting it is typically defined as '*an attempt*', Porpora suggests this would be taken to mean that 'simply put, human agency involves purposiveness, that is, consciously attentive, goal-directed behaviour'; although, and in spite of their mentions of 'projects' and 'projection', they 'never endorse' any such 'explicit statement' (*Ibid*., p.134-135).

But, whereas Emirbayer & Mische (1998) do not recognise the 'marker that distinguishes conscious from non-conscious doing', Porpora (2015, p.136) highlights that Latour does (see Latour, 2005) – and that is: 'intentionality'. To be specific, when a conscious individual acts, she acts in the given ways intentionally. This is not to say that all of the events that transpire are what were intended, as she does not have control over these (viz. of the consequences of her actions); rather that, 'all that we call action originates in some intentional action, i.e., a behaviour that under some description we can say the agent purposively performed' (Porpora, 2015, p.137). Furthermore, since intended actions are purposive – in that, these are to achieve an intended outcome, and since purposive action is motivated by reasons such as individuals' 'wants' and 'beliefs': human agency is driven (or motivated) by individuals' reasons (*Ibid*., p.137). To put this another way, human agency (namely, conscious agency), is intentional (i.e. purposive and goal-directed) behaviour, which is motivated by individuals' reasons; it is 'the causal power to do something, to make something happen' (*Ibid*., p.134-141). This is the definition of human agency that is taken in this research; from this point forward when the term 'agency' is used it is under this definition.

4.3.2 The Chordal Triad of Agency

Whilst Porpora's explanation of agency enables an understanding of its distinctive character, it does not offer the vocabulary or the 'tools' with which certain aspects of individuals' agential endeavours could be considered (as well as understood, interpreted and explained). Here, Archer's, and Emirbayer and Mische's conceptualisations are particularly useful. Whilst, at first glance, it can be said that these two accounts share some subtle similarities (e.g. the mentions of projects, reflection and deliberation); upon closer inspection, it is possible to note that they concern – and therefore offer greater explanation(s) of, quite different aspects of agency. Archer's work enables an understanding of how individuals may navigate various structures when trying to realise their 'projects'; and, of the relationship between agency and structure(s).

Emirbayer and Mische's theorising is largely to do with the actions that individuals may choose to execute during emerging and evolving situations, which are connected to their pasts and oriented towards the future. In this section I will be looking at Emirbayer and Mische's work.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify two points. First, although Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) theorising largely concerns individuals' thought processes, and it is impossible to access these (Archer, 2003) – nor do I intend to; since it is possible to observe individuals' actions, to ask them why they decided to execute these (and, perhaps why these over other possible actions) – and accordingly, hear these reasons: it is these (exercised actions and reasons for these) that I endeavour to note and understand with the aid of their conceptualisation. Second, I do not offer a comprehensive account of their theorising, as doing so would compromise my thesis's word count; instead, I present and consider the 'primary locus' (namely, the crux) of each of the three elements, and their main 'dominant tones' (namely, the central features) (see i.e. Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.975, 988).

When deciding how to act in the evolving situations that they are involved in, individuals, according to Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.971), may recall their previously employed actions, and reflect on their past 'patterns of thought'; and, imagine where they would like to be in the future – or how they would prefer for the events, in which they will be involved in, to transpire. Emirbayer and Mische term these 'temporal orientations of agency' – which consist of the past, future and present – respectively as the 'iterational', 'projective', and 'practical-evaluative' elements; these, together, constitute the 'Chordal Triad of Agency' (*Ibid*., p.971). In all 'empirical instances of action', they write, 'all three of these constitutive dimensions of human agency' can be found; that is, an individual is 'oriented toward the past, the future, and the present at any given moment' (*Ibid*., p.964, 971). However, there may be times – depending on the nature of a given emerging situation, when they may be 'primarily oriented' toward one of these elements, and partly the other two (*ibid*. pp.964). Examining the 'changes in agentic orientation' it is stated, enables us to 'gain crucial analytic leverage for charting the varying degrees of maneuverability, inventiveness, and reflective choice shown' by individuals as they navigate their situations (*Ibid*., p.964). To enable a better understanding of each of these temporal orientations, Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.971) present and discuss these individually – as, 'analytic distinctions'. In the remainder of this section, I consider what each of these elements involves.

The *iterational* element is chiefly to do with the past; its primary locus of agency here 'lies in the *schematization* of social experience' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.975). The projective and practical-evaluative elements of agency are 'grounded' in the iterational (*Ibid*., p.975); to act in

the present, individuals are always (in varying degrees) thinking about their past actions and imagining how the future may unfold – depending on which of their past actions they decide to employ in the present. This element of agency, then, is 'manifested' in individuals recalling 'schemas' that they previously employed in order to decide or 'select' which ones would be most appropriate – and therefore to use, in their 'ongoing and situated transactions' (*ibid*. p.975). These schemas can be best understood as the 'habits' – the 'more or less tacit and taken-for-granted' actions – that individuals have exercised (often on numerous occasions) and accordingly 'developed through past interactions' (*Ibid*., p.975); like habits, these consist of the 'corporeal' (physically exercised) and 'affective' (relating to their past moods, feelings and attitudes), and also 'cognitive patterns' (previous thoughts and trains of thought) (*Ibid*., p.975).

Although most everyday situations, which are much like those that individuals have previously experienced (perhaps on many occasions), and in which the actions that are required are more or less identical to those exercised during those occasions – for example, routines such as lining up for assembly, putting on name tags on the morning, and sitting on the carpet for registration – 'require only marginal clarity of consciousness': individuals are always focusing their attention on the 'area of reality' to 'single out the elements of response required' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.979-980). Here, individuals undertake a 'process of selection', which involves manoeuvring between 'practical repertoires of habitual activity' to 'assure the appropriateness' of their response in the given unfolding situation (*Ibid*., p.980). At the same time, whether individuals are involved in routine 'unproblematic' situations that require little conscious clarity, or if they are in situations where they are unsure of how to conduct themselves; after focusing their attention on the particular area of reality (aspect of, or entire unfolding situation), they 'identify typical patterns of experience' (*recognition of types*), which are 'simplifying models' through which they have characterised (and continue to construct) 'recurrent aspects of persons, relationships, contexts, or events' (*Ibid*., p.979). These enable them to recognise and compare the 'likeness' of their emerging experience with those of their past (*Ibid*., p.979). As a result of their schematisation, individuals may form 'more or less reliable knowledge of social relationships', and in virtue of this, 'predict' how others may behave and events may unfold (*Ibid*., p.980-981). These 'patterns of expectations', then, 'give rise to stability and continuity to action' in the sense that an individual may continue to act in certain ways, when in the company of certain people and/or in certain situations (*Ibid*., p.980-981).

The *projective* element is essentially to do with the future; the primary locus of agency here 'lies in the *hypothesization* of experience' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.984). Here, the main orientation toward the iterational is through the *identification* of 'prior typifications from

experience' as a way to make sense of and consider possible future 'trajectories'; and the main orientation toward the practical-evaluative is through '*experimentation*', where 'alternative courses of action' are 'tentatively enacted' during emergent situations (*Ibid*., p.988). Individuals do not simply repeat past routines, write Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.983-984), but they also reflectively and 'creatively' challenge, reconsider and reformulate 'received structures of thought and action', and this is in light of their 'hopes, fears and desires' (*Ibid*., p.971). This is mainly when they respond to 'problems' in their unfolding situations – i.e. when they would like to do or realise something but cannot; which, in their opinion, will not be suitably 'resolved by the taken-for-granted habits of thought or action that characterize the background structure of the social world' (*Ibid*., p.984). The main way in which they do this is through 'an imaginative engagement with the future' (*Ibid*., p.984).

Much of the imagining that takes place within the projective element of agency, it can be said, concerns possibilities and anticipation. The *anticipatory identification* aspect of this element, for instance, is when individuals draw on their past experiences so as to 'clarify' their 'motives, goals and intentions'; anticipate 'possible future constraints'; and, to ascertain 'morally and practically appropriate courses of action' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.989). Another aspect involves individuals imagining multiple possible trajectories of action, as well as 'alternative means-end sequences'; in doing this, they 'expand' the flexibility of their responses 'in a given field of action' (*Ibid*., p.990). For instance, when playing a game of chess, an individual may imagine taking multiple courses of action, and her opponent's responses to each of these – in order to increase the likelihood of winning the competition; in imagining all of these scenarios (and the various actions she may take in return), she expands the flexibility of her responses. At the same time as imagining 'possible scenarios of action', individuals may think about possible *hypothetical resolutions*; that is, how their actions may 'adequately respond' to the 'moral, practical, and emotional concerns arising' from their 'lived conflicts' (*Ibid*., p.990). In the case of the chess player, it may be that she is playing because she wants her chess playing abilities to be recognised, but also because she wants to meet other chess enthusiasts, to be involved in a competition, alleviate her boredom, and because she thinks it will make her smarter. Whilst individuals may not be as aware of these resolutions as they are about their 'goals of action' (in this case, to win the game of chess), Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.990) state, when asked, they will 'give more or less differentiated and multivalent descriptions of what they "want" or "intend" in their plans to pursue a particular course of action'. The final feature of this element, *experiment enactment*, involves both 'imagination' and 'action' (*Ibid*., p.990). Once individuals have imagined various scenarios, trajectories of action, and hypothetical resolutions, they may put these to the test in 'tentative or exploratory social interactions' (*Ibid*., p.990).

The *practical-evaluative* element is principally to do with the 'demands and contingencies of the present'; the primary locus here 'lies in the *contextualization* of social experience' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.994). The main orientation toward the iterational in this element is individuals '*characterization*' of the evolving situation in relation to past experiences of a similar nature; the relationship with the projective is in the form of '*deliberation* over possible trajectories of action' through which individuals imagine the consequences of implementing 'alternative hypothetical scenarios' in their real unfolding situations (*Ibid*., p.997-998). This element of agency entails individuals' capacity to '*make practical and normative judgements among alternative possible trajectories of action*' within and '*in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations*' (*Ibid*., p.971; authors' own italics). The 'first analytical component' of the practical-evaluative element is *problematization*. This is when the individual recognises the present situation to be 'somehow ambiguous, unsettled, or unresolved' (*Ibid*., p.998); in relation to individuals' projects, this is when it is felt that there is – or may be – some difficulty in realising these. That is, there may be an aspect of the 'reality' (situation, context) that is 'in some degree resistant to their immediate and effortless realization' (*Ibid*., p.998). To settle, resolve or somehow realise the project, the individual recognises that 'something must be done – some practical judgement to be arrived at' (*Ibid*., 998). Following the recognition of the problem, the individual then relates these 'problematic circumstances' to previous experiences – namely, past patterns of thought and action (the iterational) – through which these are '*characterized* in some fashion' (*Ibid*., p.998). In doing this, she considers if past actions could be employed here; if it calls for the 'performance of a specific duty'; or, if the project (in the given situation) is inappropriate or even impossible (*Ibid*., p.998).

According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.998-999), in trying to figure out how to act, individuals engage in the process of *deliberation*. This involves a careful consideration of past 'habitual patterns of action' – and if these could be 'adjusted' and exercised in the present; and, at the same time, much 'conscious searching consideration' of how to proceed in the emergent situation (*Ibid*., p.999). Following this, a decision is reached. These, however, may not be reached resolutely; some decisions may be 'provisional, tenuous, and opportunistic', and may even be connected 'with more than one problematic situation simultaneously' (*Ibid*., p.999). The decision, then, leads to the *execution* of action; this is the 'capacity to act rightly and effectively within particular concrete life circumstances' (*Ibid*., p.999).

In summary, in this sub-section, I have presented and considered Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) Chordal Triad of Agency – specifically, the iterational, projective and practical-evaluative

elements. Whilst, in this discussion, I have presented the 'internal structures' of each of these elements (as Emirbayer and Mische do), it is important to note that, in any given empirical instance of agency, all three of these are present; the individual is always oriented toward the past, future and present – albeit to varying degrees (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.972). For instance, when tidying the classroom, a child may be largely oriented toward the past (recalling and re-exercising past patterns of action); partly the present (since each unfolding situation is different (unique) and may require the individual to consider small changes in the context e.g. the presence of a new authoritative adult and less time to tidy); and partly the future (e.g. imagining dinner time and eating with favourite peers; imagining an ordered classroom to return to after break). These elements, the conceptual vocabulary offered, and the conceptualisation overall, will be used as 'tools' when trying to understand the children's (new and perhaps repeated) actions, and their reasons why these were chosen (perhaps over others). In the final sub-section of this main section, the discussion turns to theorising on why individuals may act in the first place, and how their endeavours may be shaped, constrained and enabled by various structures.

4.3.3 Interests and projects, enablements and constraints

In the discussion to this point (in this main section), I have largely considered the conceptualisation of agency – namely, how it is defined; and, how individuals may reflect on their past actions and imagine various scenarios unfolding in the future, when deciding how to act in the present. The latter theorising will be useful in understanding the reasons behind the children's 'chosen' acts in the analysis chapters. In this sub-section (comprising four parts), I present the conceptual and theoretical 'tools' that will be used to understand the relationship between the children's agential endeavours and the rules, and the context within which these are situated. Here, I consider theorising on the relationship between agency and structure(s) to be particularly useful. The purpose of this sub-section, then, is to discuss Archer's conceptualisation of the relationship between agency and structure, and to explain how and why it will be used.

Before commencing this discussion, it is necessary to clarify that the below concepts and theorising will primarily be used (in the analysis) to conceptualise and understand (as well as, interpret and explain) the relationship between the children's 'agential' endeavours and the rules as a 'structure' (i.e. how these may impact on, enable and constrain the former). However, because the children's activities will not be taking place in isolation (i.e. in an artificially closed system) – and therefore, one cannot disregard the context within which these are situated: at various points in the analysis, I will also draw on these to consider the influence of the various

other structures[40] (which can be considered as those that pertain to or are the 'parts' (Archer, 1995, p.15) of the larger structure of primary education) on the children's behaviour and experiences. These are, for instance, the 'conditions' of the play provision, the teacher's and other educators' powers (as adults and social role-incumbents), and the school's hierarchy. In this sense, these can be regarded as the secondary but nonetheless important structures, which will be considered (see sub-question 6 of this research).

4.3.3.1 Social structure

Before I present Archer's theorising, in this section I briefly consider three common approaches on the concept of social structure with reference to Archer (1995) and Porpora's (2015) critical considerations of these, before explaining why a different (fourth) definition is taken in this research.

First, there is the understanding of structure as 'lawlike regularities that govern the behaviour of social facts' (Porpora, 2015, p.98). This perspective was largely taken in structural functionalism (or 'Structural sociology'), and derived from or was based on interpretations of Durkheim's work (Archer, 1995, p.3; Porpora, 2015, p.105). If this approach were taken in this research, causal power would be accorded to structure alone. 'Social facts' (e.g. what primary education is, what a child is, how teachers ought to teach) would determine or 'mould' the children's thinking and behaviour; they would not have the causal power to think, reason and make-sense of the former (Archer, 1995, p.3; Porpora, 2015, p.105-106). Archer refers to this approach as 'methodological collectivism' and suggests it engages in 'downward conflation'; individuals are 'unilaterally moulded by society' and agency is rendered epiphenomenal (1995, p.46, 3).

In a second understanding, which can be considered as the reverse of the above, structure is viewed as 'Stable patterns or regularities of behaviour' (Porpora, 2015, p.98). This perspective is largely taken in what Porpora refers to as the '*micro-foundational* approach to sociology' (Porpora, 2015, p.106); and can be linked to the work of social exchange theorists, and more recently rational choice theory. If this perspective were to be taken in this research, causal power would be accorded to the children and accordingly agency. The children's actions and behaviours would not be influenced by structure(s), but merely give rise to patterns of relations over time due to repetition (e.g. children would repeatedly act as pupils, adults repeatedly as

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[40] In section 4.1, I referred to social structure (bureaucracy) and structured objects (e.g. the individual). Here, and throughout the remainder of this thesis, when the term structure is used, I am referring to social structures – as is defined in 4.3.3.1.

teachers; and the roles of 'pupil' and 'teacher' as well as the structure of primary education would exist due to the formers' repeated acts). Structures, then, would conditionally influence the children's and adults' actions (i.e. to act as children and adults, or pupils and teachers (structural positioning, and roles); behave in particular ways; or to teach in certain ways (structures like EYFS, school hierarchy and Ofsted inspections); and therefore, neither constrain nor enable their activities. In this sense, structure would be a sort of 'abstraction': 'a dependent variable only with no causal effects' (Porpora, 2015, p.107-108). Archer refers to this approach as 'methodological individualism' and suggests it engages in 'upwards conflation' (1995, p.34, 4). Structure is 'a mere aggregate of consequence of individual activities' incapable of influence – it is rendered epiphenomenal; individuals (people) 'are held to monopolize power' (*Ibid*., p.4).

The third approach, which, like Archer's, attempts to reconcile the relationship between agency and structure, considers structure to be 'Rules (or schemas) and resources that structure behaviour' (Porpora, 2015, p.98). This perspective is most closely associated with Giddens' well known structuration theory (see: Giddens, 1979; Giddens, 1984). Here, social structure is conceptualised as 'rules and resources' (Giddens, 1984, p.25); it is 'virtual' and exists as 'memory traces' (Giddens, 1979, p.63-64). Whilst this perspective, when compared to the first and second discussed above, could be more useful in the present research, as it enables a recognition of structural influence by way of enablement(s) and constraint(s) (Giddens, 1984, p.25); and, of the unintended consequences of individuals' agential acts as producing and reproducing structure(s): on the grounds of 'practical adequacy' (Sayer, 1992, p.86; Sayer, 2000, p.40-46), I consider Archer's (1995; 2003) work to be more useful. Since agency and structure are conceptualised as a 'duality' (Giddens, 1984, p.25) – and therefore 'inseparable' (Archer, 1995, p.97); and, because structures are 'temporally 'present' only in their instantiation' (Giddens, 1979, p.64) – and therefore neither their 'pre-existence' (i.e. 'as roles, positions, relations') is recognised (Archer, 1995, p.99), nor their autonomous causal powers: it is difficult to a) consider how these may influence individuals' behaviour(s) prior to being instantiated by them, and b) practically examine the interplay between them.

A fourth conception, which emanates from critical realism, considers structure as '(Material) relations among social positions and social constructs' (Porpora, 2015, p.98). It is this understanding that is taken in this research. The structure of a society is the 'totality of social relations' that characterise it (*Ibid*., p.98). Social relations exist between roles (pupils, teachers) and positions, and between positions and social constructs (teaching, learning; education) (*ibid*.). Many different relations, that do not have 'social ties', can also emerge and exist – e.g. relations of differential power, of exploitation, dependency and inequality (*Ibid*., p.99). Whilst some

relations may be concept-dependent and internal – i.e. pupil and teacher (both are aware of it and may continually produce it), or pupils and rules (the former are aware of the latter and may maintain or change these through the unintended consequences of their actions); others may not be 'similarly concept-dependent' and external – i.e. a relation may be controlling (one child controlling the other), but one or both may be unaware of this and have no concept of control (*Ibid*., p.102). There exist, then, many kinds of social structure, and each has emergent properties or powers that are causally efficacious. The social construct and role of 'teacher' for instance, affords the incumbent of the role various powers; for instance, to arrange the classroom in certain ways, and to formulate the rules. Various structures enable and constrain her practice; but also, various structures that she may create or be a part of, may in turn enable and constrain the actions of others. With regard to the former, these could be the Head of Foundation Stage (HoFS) and head teacher (school's hierarchy), LA advisor and Ofsted; in the case of the latter, the rules that she decides for the play provision, for instance, may enable and constrain the children's play and agential endeavours. Although she decides these rules, once created, as a structure (or object in critical realist terms) these causally effect the children's behaviour – though in a 'non-deterministic, non-lawlike' way (*Ibid*., p.106).

4.3.3.2 The morphogenetic approach (and sequence)

In the immediately preceding discussion, I considered three different conceptualisations of structure and presented the one that is taken in this research. What I did not do, however, is elaborate on how exactly the relationship between agency and structure is theorised in the fourth view (which is taken in this research), and how one can practically examine the interplay between them. In this sub-section, and the following two, then, I present particular aspects of Archer's account, which will then be used in the analysis chapters. The aspect of the relationship that I discuss here will be used to consider sub-question 5 of this research.

To be able to understand the relationship between agency and structure, Archer argues that they need to be seen as an 'analytic dualism' (1995, p.15), not as a duality; as each possesses its own 'emergent properties', which are 'proper' to them and 'therefore *distinct* from each other and *irreducible* to one another' (*Ibid*., p.14). That is, individuals, in virtue of their agency, exert their distinct 'causal powers', which are independent of – and not irreducible to – those of structures (*Ibid*., p.14); and structures, as a result of their existence, also exert distinct 'properties and powers' that are not irreducible to those of individuals' agency (*Ibid*., p.14). In the case of the latter, this is irrespective of whether these are observable or not – e.g. although the structures of 'childhood' and 'gender' exist they are not physically observable, they exist and causally effect

people's actions. Furthermore, since structures pre-exist – as a result of the unintended consequences of previous individuals' collective agential actions, individuals are born into and therefore inherit social conditions that were not of their 'making' (e.g. the notions of childhood and gender, and the structure of education and primary education) (*Ibid*., p.72); and because these are maintained, troubled, and in some cases eliminated as a result of the unintended consequences of the present individuals' collective agential actions: it therefore follows that it is practically possible to observe the 'interplay' between 'the parts and the people' or 'structure and agency' (*Ibid*., p.15). The morphogenetic approach, Archer writes, 'supplies a genuine method of conceptualizing how the interplay between structure and agency can actually be analysed over time and space' (*Ibid*., p.15).

Before I present the morphogenetic 'sequence'[41] it is important to clarify two points. First, I am neither viewing the rules as a 'grand' structure (like, i.e. the notion of childhood), nor suggesting these pre-existed the reception teacher's practice (when each of these were created will be considered in each of the analysis chapters); the intention here is to use the morphogenetic approach (and sequence) as an analytical tool only. This is not to say that Archer's theorisation is not relevant to the other structures, as many of these did pre-exist the children (e.g. primary education, and the roles of 'pupil' and 'teacher'), and the children and the teacher (e.g. education, notion of childhood). Second, the approach will *only* be used to consider the interplay between the children's endeavours and the rules, not the 'secondary' structures (e.g. the EYFS, school's hierarchy and the PSC) that will be considered; it will therefore make up a small part of the analysis – for considering sub-research question 5.

The morphogenetic approach, then, is based on the recognition that agency and structure are 'analytically separable' and 'temporally sequenced' (Archer, 1995, p.76). T^1 of the sequence (see Figure 1 below; *Ibid*., p.76) represents the pre-existing structure; these would be the rules that are present when the children first arrive in the reception classroom. T^2 represents the activity that 'takes place in a context not of its own making' (*Ibid*., p.78); this would be, for instance, when the children first encounter or learn about the rules, and start making sense of them during their free play. T^2 and T^3 represent individuals' collective agential endeavours, which, depending on their 'vested interests' can maintain, slow down or speed up a change in, or challenge the existing structure; this would be if the children agree with and apply the rules, actively try to challenge or change them through their activities, or even ask the teacher to remove them. Lastly, T^4 represents the morphogenesis of structure – a change, which is produced in virtue of

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[41] Whilst Archer (1995, p.76) refers to the theory altogether as the morphogenetic 'approach', she terms the figure which demonstrates the temporal interplay as the 'morphogenetic sequence'.

the unintended consequences of individuals' actions; this would be if the children's endeavours eventually led the teacher to modify or altogether remove a given rule. If, however, the children's endeavours (between T^2 and T^3) do not lead to a change in (or the removal of) a given rule, this would be referred to as the morphostatis (the maintenance) of structure (*Ibid*., p.295).

Structure
_____
T1

Interaction
_____
T2   T3

Structural elaboration
_____
T4
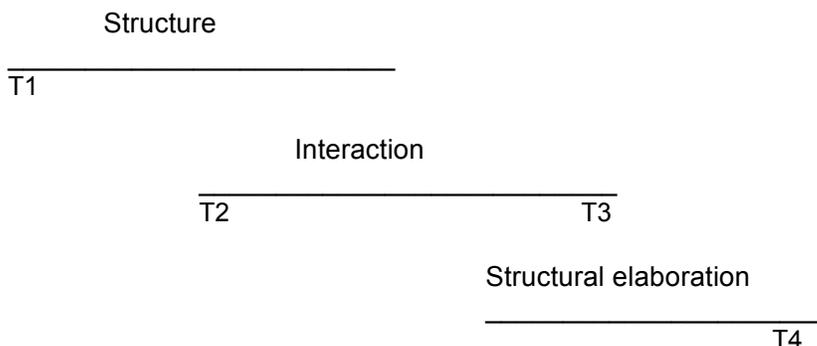
Figure 1. The morphogenetic sequence

4.3.3.3 Interests, projects, and structure(s)

Here, I consider Archer's conceptualisation of individuals' navigation(s) of structure(s) when trying to realise particular 'projects' (2003, p.6), and how structures may enable or constrain these. The concepts of this particular aspect of her theory will be used to aid my explanations of how the children may plan or try to realise certain 'desired' 'ends' in light of the rules (*Ibid*., p.6).

According to Archer, 'there are no constraints and enablements *per se*, that is as entities'; rather these 'are the potential *causal powers* of structural emergent properties', which, like the causal powers of individuals' (i.e. to reflect, deliberate, act), 'remain unexercised' unless 'activated' (2003, p.5). That is, 'constraints and enablements do not possess an intrinsic capacity for constraining or enabling in abstraction' (*Ibid*., p.5). When an individual – or individuals – try to realise a particular 'project', however, these constraints and enablements are activated; it is therefore the 'specific agential enterprise' that these 'aid' or 'obstruct' the 'achievement of', and not the individual him or herself (*Ibid*., p.5). The term 'projects' is used to generally refer to any 'courses of action' that individuals may (alone or collectively) plan and design 'in order to achieve their own ends' (*Ibid*., p.6).

How, then, does one navigate the constraints and enablements that a structure may exert on their projects? According to Archer (2003), this is in many ways. In the first instance, she writes,

the individual 'diagnoses' her 'interests' (*Ibid*., p.9); and through 'anticipation' considers how her project may be enabled or constrained by the particular structure (*Ibid*., p.6). At this stage – and on the one hand, the individual may 'foresee the impediments' that a project may 'encounter' and therefore decide against trying to realise it (*Ibid*., p.6); however, and on the other, she may 'anticipate the ease with which' it (or another project) may be realised – 'and the benefits that would accrue', and so decide to 'adopt it' (*ibid*. p.6). When in the process of realising a project, if the individual realises that it is being constrained, she may 'act strategically to try to discover ways around it or to define a second-best outcome' (*Ibid*., p.6). However, if she realises that it is being enabled, she may strategically 'deliberate about how to get the most out of' the 'propitious circumstances'; if this were the case, she may even decide on a 'more ambitious goal, so that a good outcome is turned into a better one' (*Ibid*., p.6).

During any or all three of the above stages – namely, when diagnosing their interests, anticipating how their projects may be enabled and constrained, and when actively trying to realise these – the individual is 'fallible' (Archer, 2003, p.9). She may 'mis-identify' her interests, 'mis-diagnose' the situation, and 'mis-judge' the appropriate course of action (*Ibid*., p.9).

4.3.3.4 Sets of agents, and a stratified model of 'people'

Here, I present the notions of primary agents and corporate agents – and structure; and, the 'stratified concept' of 'people' (Archer, 1995, p.254). Like those considered in the above sections, these concepts and theorising will be used to understand and explain some of the various 'sides' (or 'aspects') that either make up, or which are linked to, the object of this study (Sayer, 1992, p.86-87). At the end of this section I explain how and where these will be useful.

There are various and multiple sets of 'primary agents' and 'corporate agents' at various strata of society (Archer, 1995, p.258-259) – i.e. in small settings, within institutions and organisations, and on the grander scale. Primary agents, Archer writes (1995, p.259), are a collectivity of people who are 'similarly situated' – in the set, they can be viewed as the powerless (though not entirely as I elaborate below); corporate agents are also a collectivity of people who are similarly positioned – in the set, however, they are the powerful. This is not to say that an individual (or even certain collectivities of people) is a primary agent at all times; she may be the former in some 'domains' but a part of the corporate agents in others (*Ibid*., p.259).

The corporate agents are in charge of the decision-making, and are involved in the 'modelling' and 're-modelling' of given structures (Archer, 1995, p.259). The decisions that they make, and

the reasons why they attempt to 'bring about certain outcomes', are essentially connected to their shared 'vested interests' (*Ibid*., p.260, 258). Corporate agency, then, 'shapes the *context*' – though this this is often not in the way that a particular individual in the collectivity wants, but 'as the emergent consequence' of the collectivity's interaction (*Ibid*., p.260). The primary agents 'inhabit' the context that corporate agency shapes (*Ibid*., p.260). Unlike the corporate agents, they have no part in decision-making, and have no say in the modeling or re-modeling of any structures. However, having a 'lack of say' does not mean that they are passive or that they have 'no effect' on the context (*Ibid*., p.259). For, firstly, as they 'react and respond' to it (simply in virtue of being situated in it), their collective actions can have 'powerful, though unintended aggregate effects' – and therefore, reconstitute the environment that corporate agency anticipates to manage (*Ibid*., p.259). Second, they may deliberately 'suspend' their agential powers 'on the part of' the corporate agents 'whose interests it serves' (*Ibid*., p.260). Third, there may be pockets of people who repeatedly express their antipathy toward the corporate agents' 'policies' (decisions, structures), which are often designed to maintain stability and order, and this may eventually lead the latter to amend or slightly alter these (*ibid*. p.260). Lastly, primary agents may congregate and collectively protest, which then may persuade the corporate agents to amend certain policies or even the entire system (*Ibid*., p.264).

People behave differently in different contexts depending on a number of factors, which may be related to the role(s) they assume, and how they are positioned; and accordingly, the emergent powers (or lack of) that they may have, and the privileges or under privileges that they experience – together with, their (different) interests and reasons. To aid the acknowledgement, consideration and explanations of these factors in social research, Archer offers the 'stratified concept' of 'people' (1995, p.254). The *Person* (human being; individual), is at once many kinds of *Agent(s)* (similarly situated and/or positioned collectivities; see above), and sometimes an *Actor* (individual); she is or has a continuous sense of *Self* (self consciousness), a *Personal identity*, and a *social identity* (see: Archer, 1995, chap 8; Archer, 2003, p.118-121).

People (or individuals) are social agents of different kinds. When an infant is born, for instance, she immediately inherits the 'properties of Agents through belonging to particular collectivities' in society; this, Archer refers to as the 'privileges and underprivilege' that people 'acquire involuntaristically' (1995, p.277). For example, one may be middle class/working class, rich/poor or male/female (*Ibid*., p.277). The collectivities that she is a part of will have a strong influence on the type of actor she chooses to become in the future (*Ibid*., p.277). The actor strata of the person is the 'role encumbent' (*Ibid*., p.276). Roles (as and like structures) exist, and are relatively enduring, and therefore have 'emergent properties which cannot be reduced to the

characteristics of their occupants' (*Ibid*., p.276); in occupying a given role, then, the person has these emergent properties. However, whilst roles also come with vested interests (e.g. a teacher's vested interests – amongst others – are in teaching her pupils, and making sure they learn), these are not determining; the person may, therefore, have these vested interests, but also – as a person with her own emergent properties (e.g. her self and self consciousness, personal and social identities, reflexivity, and agency) – she can and may 'actively decide to personify it in a particularistic way' (*Ibid*., p.276). Roles also – as with any structure – have 'relatively autonomous powers of constraint and enablement', and can be maintained (statis) or troubled (genesis) – and in extreme cases, eliminated (*Ibid*., p.276).

The person *is* the conscious self. This 'relational property' (self-consciousness), which is emergent from her relations with the world, is continuous (Archer, 1995; Archer, 2003, p.119); hence, she has a continuous sense of self. She also has a personal identity, which emerges from her involvement with the 'orders of natural reality – nature, practice and society' (Archer, 2003, p.120). Whilst her concerns – i.e. and respectively, about her 'physical well-being', 'performative achievement' and 'self-worth' – are 'vested' in these three orders at all times, she may prioritise an 'ultimate concern' in one order over the others (*Ibid*., p.120). To clarify, Archer writes, 'who we are is a matter of what we care about most and the commitments we make accordingly' (*Ibid*., p.120). Lastly, there is the social identity, which Archer suggests, is 'a sub-set' of the personal identity (*Ibid*., p.120); for instance, when the individual thinks about the role(s) she assumes, she reflects on these in relation to her own (personal) concerns. In recognising that a person has a personal identity and social identity, the researcher is able to consider how an individual may act in and personify a given role and why (Archer, 1995; Archer, 2003).

In the present research, the concepts of primary and corporate agency will be used to conceptualise and understand the differential relation(s) between the children and adults (as pupils, educators and teacher); and, to consider how other sets of primary and corporate agents (secondary structures) may shape or impact on the children's play and agential endeavours, and the teacher's practice. The notions and theorising of role(s), position(ing) and stratified persons, will aid my interpretations and explanations of a) why the children (i.e. as persons, children, pupils) may choose to act in certain ways in relation to given rules, b) the children's understandings of, and attitude(s) and behaviours toward the educators and teacher (perhaps in view of them being adults, or educators – or both), and lastly c) the educators and teacher's decisions, 'vested interests', and even the constraints and enablements their 'projects' experience, in virtue of their assumed roles (secondary structure) and positioning.

4.4 Summary

In this chapter I have presented and clarified the ontological and epistemological positions that I take in this research – namely, realism and relativism respectively; and explained that, as is suggested in critical realism, I have exercised my rational judgement in deciding which conceptualisations and theories – when used in a complementary fashion – would offer greater explanatory purchase. I have also considered and clarified the concepts that together frame the object – viz. focus – of this study; namely, the notion of children as 'beings and becomings', agency (human), and structure(s) (mainly the rules; partly others).

The concepts and theorising that have been presented comprise the 'tools' that will be used to understand, interpret and explain the children's experiences. To clarify, I – and therefore this thesis – take(s) the view that children can be seen as *both beings and becomings*; this notion is also a small part of the conceptual framework, and will be used to understand how various structures may position children. Agency and structure – and the relationship between the two, are the main concepts that frame the present research. I take Porpora's (2015) definitions of agency, and of structure. Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) Chordal Triad of Agency will be used to understand and explain why the children may choose to execute certain actions (perhaps over others). Archer's (1995; 2003) work will aid the interpretation and explanations of why the children may decide to navigate the rules in the way(s) that they do – and how the rules may shape, enable and/or constrain their play experiences, endeavours and agency; how various other structures may influence or impact on these (i.e. the educators, school's hierarchy, LA advisor and Ofsted); and lastly, the children's and adults' experiences in virtue of their assumed roles and how they are positioned.

In Chapter 5, which follows, I discuss this research's methodology, explain which methods were used during the fieldwork and why, detail the ethical process I went through, and describe how the data was analysed.

CHAPTER 5:

Methodological framework and fieldwork

In the preceding chapter, I presented this thesis's conceptual and theoretical framework. In this chapter, first I explain why I took a broadly ethnographic approach, and then I offer a detailed account of the research process. The latter involves outlining the steps that were taken when gaining access to the school and classroom; the ethics process – from before the study took place through to the examination and presentation of the data; and, the methods that were employed and why.

5.1 An ethnographically informed methodology

When deciding how best to investigate the object of their study, one has to carefully consider which methodology and methods would be most suitable (Sayer, 2000; Danermark *et al*. 2005). That is, the 'particular choices should depend on the nature of the object of study and what one wants to learn about it' (Sayer, 2000, p.19). Since the object (focus) of this study is the endeavours and experiences of five young children over the course of one school year, a broadly ethnographic methodology was thought to be 'fitting' (in section 5.3.1 I explain why I chose a small sample). In critical realist terms, this object can be best described as 'intensive' (Sayer, 2000, p.20-21). Intensive research tends to 'study' 'individual agents in their' contexts, and the research question it seeks to investigate or answer is usually along the lines of 'What did the agents actually do?' (Sayer, 1992, p.243; Sayer, 2000, p.21). In view of this, the methodology of ethnography and qualitative methods such as observations and interviews are considered to be the most appropriate means through which these kinds of questions are investigated (Sayer, 2000, p.21).

Whilst I followed the processes and practices that one would when conducting an ethnography, this research parted from traditional ethnographic work in two ways. First, instead of either making little to no notes when in the classroom, I observed the children's activities using a time sampling method, and recorded their movements via a map (see 5.6.1). Second, I did not look at the whole class as a case study, or the whole school; therefore, I did not include all of the children who were in Sunflowers (fictional name for classroom), or the various other members of the school. This is not to say that other aspects of the classroom were 'disregarded', as I did consider the routine and timetable, and seek the views of the other educators' who were often present; rather that, since the focus was on the children's experiences in connection with the

rules, I concentrated on Mrs Terry's play provision – and the various 'conditions' within it, and her reasons, motivations, experiences and perspectives with regard to the many matters that were linked to the children's experiences. In the remainder of this section, through a brief consideration of what are said to be the 'fruits' (Hammersley, 2018, p.10) of ethnographic work, I further clarify why this methodological approach was believed to be the most 'useful' for this research (Prout & James, 2015, p.7; Leonard, 2016, p.26), and explain how I tried to work with or minimise some of the limitations that come with using it. The alleged strengths and limitations of two methods that are traditionally employed in ethnographic research, which were also employed in this study – namely, participant observation and variously structured interviews – are discussed in their respective sections.

Whilst the eventual decision to use a broadly ethnographic approach was based on the fact that I believed this was the most suited methodology in realising this study's research questions: it was a) influenced by my reading of proponents of the 'new' sociology of childhood's advocation of it, and b) based on a consideration of what are widely recognised as the approach's strengths. From their early writing in the late 1900s, in developing a 'paradigm' for the sociology of childhood (Prout & James, 2015, p.7) and pushing for research and methods that enable researchers to access and foreground children's 'role, experiences and activities', James & Prout (2015, p.x) have strongly backed the application of ethnography[42]. This is for a number of interrelated reasons.

First, in 'expressly' facilitating researchers 'desire to engage with' children's own views and perspectives and to observe their lived experiences first-hand, it is asserted that the approach enables us to gain access to – and/or understand – 'aspects of children's lives' from their own standpoints (James, 2007, p.247, 252; Prout & James, 2015, p.7). Indeed, an ambition in ethnographic work is to understand people's experiences from the inside and then to 'represent' or describe these to those on the outside (Woods, 1986, p.5). This most commonly involves researchers studying the everyday lived experiences and activities of people in their 'natural' surroundings (Denscombe, 2014, p.84; Hammersley, 2018, p.4). That is, unlike the positivist tradition whereby researchers may set-up controlled experiments to perhaps 'test' given 'hypotheses' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.6); here, and by way of exploration, the primary objective is to gain an understanding of a phenomenon, culture or group of people as they go about their typical activities (Denscombe, 2014; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

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[42] This includes others who have been a part of the movement from the start and those who agree with its sentiments (see e.g. Jenks, 2000; Qvortrup, 2000 – and his later writing in 2017; Corsaro, 2011).

Secondly, it is asserted, in canvassing 'children's own views and opinions directly' (James, 2007, p.251) through the utilisation of ethnographic techniques, the approach not only 'allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production' of data (Prout & James, 2015, p.7; Leonard, 2016), but also – and in doing the former – embodies and supports a key tenet of the 'new' sociology of childhood; that, children are competent and active social actors who influence and determine their own lives, and the relationships and societies of which they are a part (James, 2007; Prout & James, 2015). In this way, and in congruence with how I – and therefore this thesis – view(s) children, it enables us to focus on children's lived experiences 'not only as protoadults, future beings' but also 'beings-in-the-present' (James & Prout, 2015, p.215).

Lastly, in doing the above and in employing their 'own accounts' and interpretations 'centrally within the analysis' (James, 2007, p.252), it continues to be a part of – and facilitates – the shift in recent decades which has marked the move away from research that is conducted on children, toward that which treats them as active participants (Konstantoni & Kustatscher, 2016; Christensen & James, 2017). That is, from the objects of adult research to 'their being subjects in the research process' (James, 2007, p.246; Christensen & James, 2017). It is in taking these reasons, together with what are said to be the strengths of this methodology, that I decided a broadly ethnographic approach would be useful. In spending a relatively long time 'immersed' (Denscombe, 2014; Hammersley, 2018) in the classroom, carrying out detailed observations (Cohen *et al*. 2018) of the children's activities and participating in many discussions (Denscombe, 2014) centred on understanding the reasons and motivations behind their endeavours – and, hearing their perspectives: I was able to gather and construct 'thick description'(s) (Geertz, 1973, p.6) which would, over time and eventually, help 'answer' this research's questions.

This ethnographically informed research spanned an entire school year: September 2012-July 2013. I visited for one full day a week during term times (Mondays), and the week before a school holiday, I would attend Monday through Wednesday. In line with traditional ethnography all of the methods that were used were qualitative in nature (Denscombe, 2014; Cohen *et al*. 2018; Hammersley, 2018)[43]. Participant observation and informal discussions were the primary means of data collection, and these were supplemented with a field diary, child-led tours, semi-structured interviews, peer-observation and mutual collaboration.

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[43] Though both qualitative and quantitative methods are utilised in many studies (Hammersley, 2006).

The above-mentioned strengths notwithstanding, there are several alleged weaknesses of this approach; and, some cautions that are offered where research with children is concerned. With regard to the latter, it is advised researchers seek both initial and ongoing consent/assent; pay close attention to the unequal power relations that exist between and the child participants; and, exercise reflexivity throughout the research process (James, 2007; Prout & James, 2015). The former are largely to do with the research methods that are commonly employed and the fact that it is often a lone researcher who makes sense of the data. How I tried to act in accordance with this advice, and to minimise – or work with – these limitations are discussed in several of this chapter's ensuing sections (see e.g. 5.8 and 5.8.1). Here, I consider those that are to do with objectivity and bias, and generalisation.

A critique often levelled at this methodology is that since researchers partly or wholly immerse themselves into an aspect of their participants' lives for a prolonged period of time, their research is likely to be highly biased and subjectively produced (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Hammersley, 2012). The crux of this criticism seems to be that researchers are unable to produce data that is entirely impartial. In response to this, it can be said that no research is perfectly value/bias-free (Styles, 1979; Woods, 1986; Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Hammersley, 2012). Researchers are historical and inherently subjective beings; and, irrespective of the amount of effort that is put into making sure their studies are not partial – albeit to an extent: ultimately, these will be (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Hammersley, 2012).

In addition to keeping a field diary as a way to make my biases clear throughout the research process[44] and practise my reflexivity: my time away from the classroom, and therefore the participants, was another way in which I was able to knowingly prevent my subjectivities from affecting my research activities. Because the fieldwork largely entailed one day a week in the classroom, I would physically distance myself from the research site methodically. This helped me to observe an insider-outsider perspective (Fetterman, 1989) throughout the fieldwork, and aided my efforts to avoid 'going native' – a phenomenon which occurs when researchers become overfamiliar with their participants and the context studied, so much so that their abilities to remain objective are impeded (Spano, 2005; Davies, 2008, p.81).

Whereas many quantitative or experimental investigations can be replicated (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007), this is understandably not the case for research that is ethnographic in nature (Cohen *et al*. 2018). For, this kind of research is conducted in natural situations – in the open

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[44] This has long been advised in literature (see e.g. Woods, 1986; Ahern, 1999; Spano, 2005; Davies, 2008; Berger, 2015).

system – and thus within a number of real life variables that cannot be managed or imitated. Accordingly, it is near impossible for a researcher to repeat an ethnography and construct the same data (Davies, 2008; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The aim of the present study is not to generalise: it is to gain an insight into an aspect of young children's lived experiences in the context of one reception classroom. I have made all of my research endeavours – from the selection of the school through to the recommendations made – as explicit as is feasibly possible (following the advice of Woods, 1986; Davies, 2008; Wang, 2013).

5.2 Research with children

In recent years, as I briefly stated in the preceding section, there has been a marked move towards research that is conducted *with* children in place of that which is *on* them. This is largely recognised as the result of two main developments which took place around the time, namely: the 'new' sociology of childhood's advocation and work, and the impetus in academia – and more widely, to obey children's rights as recognised in the UNCRC (Mayall, 2013; Tisdall, 2016; Hammersley, 2017; see e.g. Kellett, 2005; Einarsdóttir, 2007; O'Kane, 2017). As a result, there has been a wealth of research in which researchers have encouraged children's participation (Christensen & James, 2017; Hammersley, 2017; O'Kane, 2017); and this is from within the 'new' sociology of childhood, the field of children's rights, and a number of other disciplines (Hammersley, 2017; Thomas, 2017). In this section I briefly consider what children's participation may involve in practice; the alleged advantages in doing the former, but also the criticisms and/or cautions that have been raised; and, explain how I decided to approach the data collection.

Children's participation in research generally takes two overall forms – though, indeed, there are empirical studies in which a mix of both is observed (see e.g. O'Kane, 2017). One form involves children's participation in one, several or perhaps all of the stages that comprise an investigation – e.g. in the planning, data collection, analysis and dissemination (Holland, Renold, Ross & Hillman, 2010; O'Kane, 2017). These kinds of research are largely referred to as 'participatory action research' or 'participatory research' (Hart, 1992, p.15). The position taken here is that because it is an aspect of their lives that the adult researchers are seeking to better understand, it is the children who are best placed to carry out the research (Kellett, 2005; see also, Alderson, 2008). For, as insiders, not only do children 'have immediate access to peer culture', but also they may frame the research, approach the data collection, and analyse the data in ways that adult researchers may not think to (Alderson, 2008; Kellett, 2005, p.7; Thomas, 2017). This, it is stated, may generate a 'better quality of analysis' (O'Kane, 2017, p.189), and therefore 'offer

valuable insights and original contributions to knowledge' (Kellett, 2005, p.7). Furthermore, child participants may be more comfortable in sharing their concerns with child researchers, as the usual 'power and generational issues' (Kellett, 2005, p.9) that exist between adults and children would not be as present.

The other form involves the use of 'participatory' methods (Clark, 2017; O'Kane, 2017), which some have dubbed 'child-friendly' or child-specific (Punch, 2002, p.321; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008, p.501; Fraser, Flewitt, & Hammersley, 2014, p.48). Here, and often in addition to conventional methods, any number of other methods are employed (Einarsdóttir, 2007; Merewether & Fleet, 2014; Clark, 2017). These are methods such as: drawings, photographs, walking tours and video diaries (Merewether & Fleet, 2014; Clark, 2017; Hammersley, 2017; O'Kane, 2017). In this area, Clark's (2017) mosaic approach, which sponsors the combining of the two kinds of methods, has been particularly influential (see also: Einarsdóttir, 2007; Merewether & Fleet, 2014). In taking this approach, she has maintained, researchers both 'recognise' and enable children to communicate through their different "voices' and languages' (Clark, 2017, p.17). This is not to say that children cannot express their feelings, ideas and views verbally – because they can and do; rather that, some visual 'tools' may enable (some) children to do the former in 'other symbolic ways' (Clark, 2017, p.17).

Over the years, however, both forms of participation have been criticised. In writing about children's involvement in the entire research process, Hammersley (2017) strongly rejects the arguments that children a) find it easier to communicate with – and understand – each other, and b) have the right to participate in research that is concerned with their lived experiences. Whilst it is the case that 'adults may face challenges in understanding children and their lives' because the latters' perspectives and experiences do differ to theirs, he writes: children do communicate with adult researchers, and adults can gain understandings of aspects of their lived experiences (*ibid*. p.122). Equally, children's rights should not 'extend unproblematically to include participation in controlling research about themselves' (*ibid*. p.122); if this were the case across the board, even where a sensitive or controversial topic is under investigation (e.g. paedophilia or racism), we would have to permit adults control too (*ibid*.). What is more, research is a 'specialised activity' demanding 'knowledge and skills' that cannot be acquired quickly; allowing children to take the reins significantly compromises the research's quality (*Ibid*., p.122). With regard to the use of participatory methods the main issue here appears to be that, in using these, researchers may be inadvertently treating and therefore positioning children as incompetent (Punch, 2002; Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). However children, it is argued, ought

to be seen and treated as persons irrespective of their age(s); as they can, and do, engage in conventional methods (Punch, 2002; Christensen & James, 2017).

When deciding whether or not the children's participation (in any form) is to be facilitated, Clark (2017) and others (see e.g. Punch, 2002; Groundwater-Smith, Dockett, & Bottrell, 2014; Merewether & Fleet, 2014) emphasise that the decision must be based on a) if this would be the most suitable way in which to investigate the research's focus, and b) the specific research context; also, each of the methods should be reflexively considered in terms of their strengths and limitations. In the present study although I did seek the children's interpretations on some of the observational data, and acted on their advice to conduct 'interviews' (see 5.8): they had no other involvement in the research process. If the aim of this thesis, however, were to look at how the children navigated the rules with a view to then amend either the latter or other aspects of the play provision, I may have fostered further participation. This is because I do think that in enabling children to take a more active role, this kind of research has the potential to generate useful insights; though, where the participation of young children is concerned, the trained researcher ought to have the final say and ultimate control. Equally, the data collected during the fieldwork largely derived from the application of conventional methods (observations, informal discussions and semi-structured interviews); these were complemented with those that are considered to be participatory (child-led tours, peer observation and mutual collaboration). The former, which were essentially descriptive in nature, were chosen because I believed they would enable me to note the children's endeavours firsthand, and to hear their reasons and perspectives either at the time or soon after. The latter, which I view as 'participant-friendly' techniques (Fraser *et al*. (2014, p.48) – or 'tools' (Clark, 2017), were introduced during the fieldwork to aid my interpretations and understandings at the time, and to gain further insight (Clark, 2017).

5.3 The setting

Access to Westhill Infants (fictional name) was gained through Mrs Terry (classroom teacher). I sent letters to primary schools in the West Midlands, all over London and partly the south of England: it was the only school that I received a reply from that would not take more than two hours to get to from London (other replies came from two schools in Cornwall).

The school is located in an urban and what is considered to be a deprived area, in a densely populated part of the West Midlands. At the time that the study was conducted, it was an LA operated state school, with an attached nursery for three to four-year-olds and a junior school.

The large majority of the children who were in attendance at the time were bilingual, and the children of second- and third-generation South Asian immigrants; a high percentage were entitled to free school meals.

The reception classroom, Sunflowers, was one of a three-form entry; and whilst the classroom had twenty-six children on the register in September 2012 – and although the school operated a one-intake entry, several four-year-olds joined over the school year taking the total to thirty.

The classroom's teacher was Mrs Terry, and the teaching assistant Mrs Tanveer; both educators were full-time members of staff. Mrs SENCO (Special Educational Needs Coordinator) attended the classroom every day for the first term, but this gradually lessened over the following two; Mrs PPA (planning, preparation and assessment cover) took over on Monday mornings (see Appendix 1 for details on educators).

The three reception classrooms followed the same routine and timetable (see Appendix 2). Whilst the morning and afternoon sessions took place at the same time every day, the breaks/outdoor play and snacks times varied (e.g. both took place earlier or later in the day; and the former was sometimes extended depending on who was on 'outside duty'). The main planning meetings were held once a term between the three reception teachers and the HoFS. Whilst the three classrooms would follow the same 'topics' – e.g. 'day and night' or 'people who help us', the teachers had the freedom to choose how they wanted to 'teach' or plan for these.

5.3.1 Sampling

In total, this research looked at the experiences of five children between four to five years of age[45]. The main reason why I decided on a small sample was because I wanted to be able to look at how individual children navigated each of the classroom's rules, and if this changed during certain situations and/or over time. If I had included a larger group or the whole class, I may have missed the more subtle ways in which each child acted or chose to act.

Since the aim of this study is neither to look at how children respond to a particular intervention – via perhaps testing, and control and experimental groups; nor to look for any patterns, similarities or differences across groups of children – with a view to generalise the findings (Cohen *et al*. 2018): a probability approach was not deemed appropriate. As the intention is not

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[45] One child was removed and 'replaced' with another; a sixth participant's data was destroyed (see 5.4.2.1).

to generalise, but actually – as is the case in traditional ethnographic work – to gain an insight into the experiences of a small number of children in one context (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Cohen *et al*. 2018): a non-probability approach was better suited. Within the latter, I decided to choose the sample purposively, rather than through a random means (Merriam & Tisdell). This was for a twofold reason. On the one hand, because the overall group I was selecting the participants from was rather small (twenty-six children were on the register at the time), I was concerned that picking at random could result in a sample that was too similar (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). On the other, it was anticipated that the purposive selection would offer some variance in the sample (*ibid*.) – and therefore, perhaps, a varying insight into how individual children may navigate a given rule depending on their personal experiences, level of understanding(s) and preferences.

So that I could look at each child's experience(s) from their first week in the classroom through the end of the year, and because there was not the time to observe *all* of the children for a period of time before choosing whom to include: with the help of the educators, I made a list of seven potential participants on my first day in the classroom. This included three female and four male children. Mrs Terry, Mrs Tanveer and Mrs SENCO had either worked with or cared for the majority of the children at some point, and the former two had met with all of them two weeks prior. On this day, working our way down the register we talked about each child's play preferences, level of English, and whether or not they had previous experience of being in an early years setting. I started observing the children that day. The following week I did the same, and by the end of the day I had decided which six (three female, three male) I would ask to participate in the study (see Appendix 3 for a brief summary of each child, and reasons for selection).

5.4 Gaining consent and ethical mindfulness

In early 2011 Mrs Terry and I met briefly and had an informal chat about my project. In this meeting, we talked about the research's focus, what I would be doing in the classroom, and the time frame of the fieldwork; I also answered any questions that she had. We agreed to meet in August prior to the commencement of the 2011-2012 school year. However, this meeting did not take place. Mid-2011 Mrs Terry told me that she would not be able to accommodate me for the coming school year: the school was experiencing a number of changes, and her responsibilities were going to be increased.

The following year (September 2012), prior to the children's first week at school, Mrs Terry and I met once more. On this occasion, we discussed the research in depth. Since Mrs Terry had already spoken to the HoFS on my behalf, at that time I did not speak to any other adults at the school. The school term began on a Thursday; I called at the school the following Monday. Over the course of the day, I spoke with the HoFS and Mrs SENCO about the project, and answered any queries that they had. A week later I repeated this exercise with Mrs Tanveer, and then obtained signed consent forms from Mrs Terry, Mrs SENCO and Mrs Tanveer (see Appendix 4 for letter and form).

5.4.1 Parents

In line with the British Education Research Association's (BERA, 2011) guidelines and the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC 2015) framework I sought the children's parents' and guardians' consent first. On my second Monday in the classroom (September 2012), I spoke with two parents and one uncle in the morning, and with one parent in the afternoon. I explained the aim of the study, what my role in the classroom would entail, and how their child/nephew would be involved. I then gave them a document, which provided information about the research, and a consent form (see Appendix 5 for letter and form). Over the course of the week Mrs Tanveer spoke with one parent on my behalf in Sylheti, and Mrs SENCO with another in Punjabi. Although they did not, both of these parents were told they could request a copy of the documents in a language of their preference. The following week, I discovered that of the six, five forms had been returned. The parent, who had not signed the form, spoke with me during morning registration: she was uncomfortable with the idea of her child being video-recorded. Since I had noted that all but two of the parents had agreed to the use of this method: I told her that I would no longer be using it. She subsequently signed the form. It was unclear exactly why this was the case though Mrs Tanveer and Mrs SENCO said that it was probably because the 'community' was not familiar with the practice of research – and therefore uncomfortable with the use of the method. In the weeks that followed, the parents would occasionally ask me how the research was going. By the time the first term had come to and end, this ceased to be the case.

5.4.2 Children

In addition to gaining consent from parents, consent must also be taken from children (BSA, 2002). Drawing on Articles 3 and 12 of the UNCRC, the BERA's (2011: 6) guidelines underline that all children who are viewed as 'capable of forming their own views' must be afforded with

the opportunities to express their opinions in matters which concern them. In relation to children's membership in a research project, then, it is essential that researchers assist them with the process of giving full consent.

A number of steps were followed with the children, and this was throughout the fieldwork. During the first two weeks of my time in the classroom, I made a conscious effort to be visible and approachable. This was by locating myself near the children throughout the course of the day, and only engaging in talk or play when they initiated it; as, they were new to the classroom and I did not want to get in the way of their settling in. Although the children wanted to know what I was doing, they did not seem to be particularly interested in what I was writing or in myself. By the end of these two weeks – aside from Aahid, the other five children had made contact with me. In the third week, at various times throughout the day, I spoke with the children about my research. According to Davies (2008), early discussions with participants should be designed to provide participants with as much information about the research as it is possible in order for them to make an informed decision, and in time. This initial talk was less to do with gaining the children's permissions outright, and more about informing them of the exploration and what their involvement in it would entail. Each child was told that even if they decided to participate, they could say no and/or to opt out – at any point (in keeping with, British Sociological Association (BSA), 2002; Social Research Association (SRA), 2003; BERA, 2011; ESRC, 2015).

Although all of the children said they were 'happy' to participate; they were not presented with the consent forms until week five. This is because first, the BSA (2002) outlines that researchers must take due care to ensure that the information children are provided with is comprehensible and according to their level of understanding, so that they are able to make an informed decision. Since the children had not yet experienced what it would be like for them to have me observing and talking to them, I wanted them to have some 'exposure' to the participant experience before formally agreeing to it. Second, I was mindful of the fact that it may be difficult for me to establish rapport between some of the children and myself, and needed to allow time for this to develop. Lastly, if any of the children changed their minds in the interim, I wanted to give them the chance to let me know when I re-approached the matter. For the reasons discussed here, then, I took the children's verbal agreement as 'provisional consent' (see, Flewitt, 2005, p.4).

To minimise the likelihood of coercion, in compliance with the SRA's (2003) and BERA's (2011) principles, I avoided disclosing to the children that their parents had given their consent. And, as Mahon, Glendinning, Clarke, & Craig (1996) write that a one-to-one situation between the adult-

researcher and child-participants is likely to exaggerate adult authority – even if the former endeavours to sustain an egalitarian non-judgemental relationship with the latter: I met the children in pairs. Certainly, there was also the possibility of speaking with the children as a group; however, I did not feel this would be suitable. Some (Aahid, Asli and ex-participant) and children were more outspoken than others (removed participant, Masood and Yelda); I did not want them to influence their peers' decisions. Moreover, the idea was to create a situation in which the children would have the time to 'digest' what I was talking about (Davies, 2008), and to be heard. Speaking to the children in pairs meant that they would be in the company of a peer and myself – rather than with me alone; and, in keeping with the advice outlined in the UCL Institute of Education Research Ethics Guidebook (2016), they would have the space to ask questions, and to have these answered.

So that the children did not mistake our meeting(s) for a school-related activity, I avoided conducting it during free play (when children had to participate in adult-led activities). Instead, these took place during the morning and afternoon registrations and break times over the course of one day. Each pair was taken to the room immediately outside the classroom so that they had a private space in which to talk without being overheard (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Alderson & Morrow, 2011). An educator who spoke Sylheti translated during Masood's discussion. All of the children had their name cards if they wished to print their names on the form; all of them signed the forms (see Appendix 6 for form).

In week four, each child was given a set of three laminated cards – a happy face, blank expression, and sad face – to keep in their trays (see Appendix 7). These also mimicked the traffic light system: green, amber and red respectively. When these were handed to the children, I explained and demonstrated how they could be used. The intention here was to provide the children with an alternative avenue through which they could communicate their 'feelings' to me. To begin with, they all used the cards to communicate when they were happy with my presence, and this was in many ways – i.e. the happy-face was placed on my lap; held up to me until I acknowledged it; waved at me from their trays; and, talked about. There was only one instance during which the sad-face was used for its purpose, and this was by Aahid on the day he received his set. A few seconds after sitting next to him to observe, Aahid turned his back to me. As I contemplated leaving, he retrieved his card and placed it on my lap: I immediately left the play area.

Over the next three months or so, these were used wittily though on rare occasions. In October, for example, Asli presented her sad-card face whilst grinning. When I nodded and left to observe

Aahid, she approached me and said 'only joking' and to 'come back now'. On another occasion, as I observed Asli, Yelda held up the sad-face. When I nodded at her, she said 'you not seeing me; make me sad'. The following day, when I sat to watch her, she retrieved the happy-face and placed it on my book. By the end of the first term, all of the children had stopped using the cards.

I also exercised an ethical sensitivity throughout my time in the classroom, and this was in two main ways: permission seeking and attentiveness. Even if consent is received at the beginning of a study, this does not mean that a researcher no longer has to pay attention to ethical issues, especially when the participants involved are children and/or those considered as vulnerable (Alderson & Morrow, 2004; Blaise, 2005; Birbeck & Drummond, 2005; Walford, 2008; Alderson & Morrow, 2011; Warin, 2011).

With regard to permission seeking, in the majority of the times that I endeavoured to instigate a discussion, I first asked if I could ask a question (akin to: Morrow, 1998; Blaise, 2005; Swain, 2006 & Einarsdóttir, 2017). If the participant said 'no', I would respond with a gesture or comment to indicate acknowledgement. Instances such as these, however, were rare: the few times that this did take place, it was either when a child was occupied at the time, or because they wanted to test whether I would respect their wishes. With observations, verbal permission was largely sought during the first two months of the fieldwork. In addition to the above-mentioned example of Aahid using his sad-face card, there was only one other occasion when a participant openly said no. Attentiveness was exercised via my 'ethical radar' (Skånfors, 2009, p.15). Adhering to ethical guidelines alone is neither adequate nor genuine; researchers need to watch out for both subtle and obvious cues to identify participants' discomfort (*ibid*.). Indeed, this is not simply a technique or method that one can put to action effortlessly, rather it is a skill that takes time, familiarity and practise.

To begin with, it was difficult to know when my company was unwanted; oftentimes – and mindful of inadvertently intruding on participants' time and space: as the SRA (2003), Alderson & Morrow (2004) and Warin (2011) advise, I would simply stop observing. This is not to say that my judgements were 'accurate', as many times the participants questioned why I had stopped. Over time, after gaining a degree of familiarity with individual children's personalities and conduct, I was able to cognise overt and covert signs. I also noted one verbal expression, and several physical actions that indicated I had to halt and/or end a discussion. The term 'I don't know' teamed with the breaking of eye contact or long pauses was the former; looking away for a few seconds coupled with long pauses or a change of subject were the latter. In all of these instances, I would thank the children for their time as Birbeck & Drummond (2005) did.

5.4.2.1 Two ethical dilemmas

Nearing the end of the autumn term, I started to feel uneasy about observing one of the six participants. After a conversation with Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer about my concerns, I decided it was best to remove the child from the research. A week later I spoke with her mother, and she agreed. In the wake of this, I gained permission from Fadila and her mother, and began observing her from the spring term onwards. I decided to include Fadila because a) she regularly played with Asli and Yelda, and so I had some data of her talk, activities and endeavours (between September-January), and b) she was familiar with my research, as she had asked me about it on multiple occasions and had conducted 'peer observations' with me.

The second issue arose in June 2013. Although I had a child's and his mother's consent – and had been observing him since September 2012: when his father returned to the family home and learned about his son's involvement in the project, he told Mrs Terry that he had decided to end it. This news was tough to receive, and although I struggled between wanting to speak to the parents and accepting their wishes (in the same way that Warin (2011) did upon learning of a participant's wish to withdraw): I decided not to query the decision. All of the child's data was deleted from my laptop, and all hard copies shredded.

5.5 Anonymity, privacy and confidentiality

When speaking to the children about their participation, I informed them that I would be using pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity (as Morrow, 1998 did). Aahid and the ex-participant considered my point and then nodded; Asli, Yelda and the child who was removed, tried to persuade me to use their forenames; and, Masood appeared confused and repeatedly said his name. To Asli, Yelda, and the ex-participant, I pointed out that it was likely my writing(s) would include verbal accounts and/or activities that they would rather people could not connect to them (again, as Morrow, 1998 did). Since I had been observing and conversing with them up to that point, I read aloud some extracts from their data to make my point; they agreed to the proposed anonymity. With Masood, I had an educator explain in Sylheti that I did indeed know his name and would use it in the classroom, but that when I would write about him in my 'books' I would use another name. I explained this was because I did not want people who did not know him and/or to know what he did in the classroom. After this, he warily and confusingly sanctioned my decision.

All parties were told that the school would be given a pseudonym and its location concealed. When describing aspects of the school and the classroom, I have made sure to exclude features that may compromise the promised anonymity.

During the consent process, I told the children that I would occasionally like to talk with Mrs Tanveer and Mrs SENCO about my observations, but that I would not be sharing excerpts that would result in their names being put on the 'sad side'[46] or any of our discussions. All of the children gave me their permission. The children were also told that if their parents asked about my observations, I would talk about their child's preferences and play partners only; this point was communicated to the parents and educators too. Conscious that this may cause the adults unease, I explained it was because I wanted to gain a real insight into the children's activities; and, to do this, I needed to gain their trust. If I repeated what they had told me in private, I would risk losing their confidence. All of the participants, their parents'/guardians' and the educators were made aware that if I learned of a safeguarding issue – or a concern of a similar nature, I would reveal parts of an individual's data.

5.5.1 Storage and protection of data

In accordance with ethical standards set out in the SRA (2003), BERA (2011) and the ESRC (2015), and in line with the Data Protection Act of 1998, I informed all participants of how the data would be stored, and how it would be used during and post data collection. This was in person and via the information document that accompanied their consent forms.

The notes that I made in the classroom did not refer to the participants by name (like Delamont, 2012). Instead, the initials of the children's forenames were used to refer to them; all educators were referred to via acronyms according to their titles. For instance, if Masood were sitting with Mrs Tanveer, it was recorded as 'M sitting TA'. On the days that I took my laptop in; when it was not in use, I would store it in the classroom's store cupboard, which was accessible to the educators in the classroom only. The laptop was password protected and kept in a case inside my backpack.

In line with the Data Protection Act 1998, all of the data were typed in Microsoft Word on my laptop: all participants were given pseudonyms, and the school never identified. According to the SRA (2003: 40), some 'individuals and organisations' may consider the use of laptops as storage

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[46] For behaviour reinforcement chart, see Appendix 8).

devices to be risky; however, they can offer much in the way of data security. All digital data-related documents were stored in a password protected folder created in the sole administrator account. The data that were recorded on paper were kept in a locked draw in my study at home.

5.6 Participant observation

Observation, particularly participant observation, is the cornerstone of ethnographic work (Montgomery, 2014; Cohen *et al.* 2018). It is also seen as an especially valuable method for learning about children's experiences, as it enables researchers to spend time closely looking at their activities in their 'natural' everyday settings (Groundwater-Smith *et al.* 2014, p.104; Montgomery, 2014). Alongside the informal discussions form of interviewing, it was one of the two main methods used in this study. The key strength of this method is that it allows researchers to construct 'rich and detailed' data of participants' actions 'in situ', and this is 'firsthand' – as opposed to through 'once-removed accounts' gained, for example, via interviews or questionnaires (Fine, 2015, p.530; Gunson, Warin, Zivkovic, & Moore, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.139); and, to note any changes that may take place – i.e. in participants' activities, their relationships with others, and their situation(s) (Montgomery, 2014; Cohen *et al.* 2018). Indeed, in using this method, not only was I able to personally see how the children were navigating the rules; but also, both how they changed the way(s) in which they navigated some depending on which educators were present (see e.g. 6.3.1), and how their application of others evolved over time (see e.g. 9.4).

But observations are not without their limitations. For one, researchers are not always able to discern why participants may be acting in the way(s) that they are, or to ascertain their perspectives (Merewether & Fleet, 2014; Clark, 2017). Likewise, since it is often one researcher conducting these there is the ongoing danger of misinterpretation and selective note taking (Fine, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With regard to all of the former points, to gain as much insight as it was realistically possible given the time and contextual constraints, I sought the children's and some educators' explanations and interpretations on some observational data (see 5.8). I also often held discussions with the children about what I had seen during, and where possible, soon after many of my observations (as is common in ethnography; see e.g. Fine, 2015; Cohen *et al.* 2018).

Two added benefits, which I had not anticipated, are that: observation can reveal aspects of participants' experiences and endeavours that they may choose not to share in their discussions with researchers (Fine, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Wilkinson, 2017); and, where children are

unable to communicate verbally with researchers, these can help us to build an 'impression' of their time in the context studied (Clark, 2017, p.26). Here, although during her discussions with me, Asli chose not to tell me why she circumvented some of the rules – and how she did this from her own perspective (see 6.2.2 for further discussion): since she did not appear, at least not obviously, to conceal these from me when I was observing her, I was able to note many of these endeavours (see e.g. 6.3.1). Equally, although Masood was not able to communicate with me in English at the start of the year (see 5.7 and 9.3 for some elaboration), during this time I was able to build a picture of how he made sense of the rules through observation.

The advantages and disadvantages of the various observer roles one can take are well considered in literature. Viewed on a continuum, at one end is the complete observer, and at the other is the completely detached observer; in the middle is a mix of both (Cohen *et al*. 2018). As a complete observer, the researcher is fully immersed in the participants' activities and context, and tries to act as they would (Fine, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In doing this, it has been said that researchers may construct more 'authentic' impressions of their participants' experiences (Fine, 2015); and, perhaps even learn more about their feelings, activities and perspectives than they would as a non-participant, as their endeavours may foster a strong relationship of trust between the two parties (Wilkinson, 2017). Here, however, there is the danger that one may 'go native' (Fine, 2015, p.532). At the other end, whilst it may be the case that the completely detached researcher is more able to maintain their objectivity because they are not directly involved in the goings-on (Cohen *et al*. 2018); since they are not actively involved in the participants' experiences – and interacting with them during these, the distance may make the research subjects less comfortable in opening up to them (Wilkinson, 2017).

Whilst there were a number of times when I was either immersed in the children's activities and making little to no notes, or observing for long stretches of time without speaking to anyone: for the most part, my observer role was located somewhere in the middle of the scale (as is the case in most studies, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The former was either borne out of an agreement with the children – often when I had stopped observing according to my observation schedule for the session, or on a Wednesday (during the three-day stretch) when I would spend part of the day as a full participant. The latter was when I observed the children as they continued with their activities during free play. Most commonly though, the large bulk of my time was consumed with making notes whilst simultaneously and sporadically conversing with the children, and/or partly participating in their play. In doing this, I was able to experience the benefits that each role affords: I kept myself from becoming too immersed in the children's activities and the context, and therefore compromising objectivity; and, was able to spend time building a relationship of

trust with the children, which meant they became comfortable in sharing their reasons and perspectives with me.

To reduce the likelihood of the children seeing me as an educator – and therefore either refraining from sharing their views with me, and/or believing they had to participate in the research activities: I strove to set myself apart from the educators through my dress, talk and actions. To do this, like Swain (2006), I asked the adults and children to address me by my first name and wore smart jeans, casual tops and clean basic trainers; the staff tended to don smart and mostly formal clothing. Likewise, whenever the children would approach me about a matter that an educator would normally deal with, I would state that I could not be of assistance because I was not a 'teacher' (as Mandell, 1988 and Punch, 2001 did) and suggest they located one. During term one, all of the children (but especially the participants) tested my claims; my response – or lack thereof, was to continue with what I was doing unheeded. Words that are generally considered fairly rude or impolite – like: 'bottom', 'shit' and 'fart' – were, for example, uttered; and, various actions – such as: kicking and sticking out tongues – were executed. Indeed, their (re)actions to my claims are not exclusive to this study, as several researchers have highlighted how child participants tested them (e.g Mandell, 1988; Punch, 2001; Corsaro & Molinari, 2008). Furthermore, like Mayall (2008), I told the children that I was an interested researcher, and made no attempts to downplay my adult 'status'; I did not assume that the children saw past the obvious (and different) physical and cognitive capacities that existed between us. Indeed, I regularly helped the children by taking puzzles down from a tall windowsill, and pulled apart firmly attached resources; my ability to spell was also frequently drawn on.

5.6.1 Recording observational data

The observations were recorded via a time sampling method, which was decided by way of trial during my pilot study (see Appendix 9 and 10 respectively); and, practised a semi-flexible approach. The original intention here was to observe each child at five-minute intervals for a total of twenty minutes, and then to move to the next child. For example, if I were to observe Yelda from 13:00 until 13:20, I would start at 13:00 and watch her for roughly two minutes – whilst making notes with pencil on paper – and then spend the remaining three or so minutes elaborating on these. I would then observe her at 13:05 and repeat the exercise. For 5-10 minutes – sometimes more, other times less – after the observation, I would fill in detail and perhaps make notes for personal reference. However, whilst I did use the schedule throughout the year, there were many times when I was either unable to observe each child individually and/or for the duration desired. This was for several reasons, namely: a child was absent; had to

leave the classroom before or during an observation; or because the child participants were playing together. Instead, a flexible sequence was followed. If I were observing Asli as she played with Fadila and Yelda, I would note what all three participants were doing/saying as best as I could though Asli would be the focus of my attention. If the plan were to look at Fadila or Yelda's activities next, I would either continue observing the three participants for perhaps 10-20 more minutes, or I would have a 5-10 minute break to fill in details and then commence observing. The main reason why I decided to use this method is because I found it difficult to record what the children were doing during my pilot study. Using this method allowed me to record the children's talk and actions as they occurred. This is not to say that I recalled or noted everything, rather that I considered it to be more useful and practical than using a free description or 'open' method of observation (see e.g. Fine, 2015; Cohen *et al*. 2018).

To ensure I did not unintentionally favour observing or spending time with a certain child or children as Blaise (2005, p.42-44) found, and to make sure that they were observed at different times throughout the day: at the end of each day, I would consult an ongoing record that I kept of which children I had observed (which included times and duration) and then roughly plan the observation schedule for the next visit. Time is an often-neglected aspect of ethnography (Ball, 1990); participants can and do act differently depending on the time of day. Therefore, factors such as this need to be taken into consideration.

During the second week of September and the first week of October, as I observed the children's endeavours in connection with the no-play dough and no-crawling rules, I noticed that they were taking certain routes in the classroom, and looking in the direction of certain educators as they did this. I made notes about the resource(s) they had (and how they were handling these), where they were travelling, the pace at which they were travelling, and tried to note as best as I could which educators they were looking at. By the second week of October I found it quite difficult to continue doing this. When I left the classroom that week I decided that it would be easier if I mapped the children's movements and activities on a bird's-eye-view of the classroom (see Appendix 11). To do this, I drew up the former and created a key (see 5.9.1). When I returned to the classroom on the fourth week I took small printed copies of the map with me, and when and as the children travelled I jotted these on the maps in pencil. I also recorded where the educators were located, and each instance was noted on a separate map along with the time at which it took place. These maps were helpful, as they enabled me to quickly note the children's activities – as Merewether & Fleet (2014) also found, and to write down what took place before and after their movements.

It is generally advised that researchers methodically document the supposedly rudimentary particulars of a setting (Delamont, 2008), as this additional information may aid their interpretations of participants' involvements and therefore the analyses of the data. Each morning I recorded the: total number of children in attendance; adults present; resources placed on tables and/or carpets; and, any changes to the classroom's layout, displays and the role-play. The beginnings and/or ends of terms were also recorded; recognisable changes in the weather; and, changes to the usual routine.

5.7 Discussions and semi-structured interviews

The other main method that I used was interview(s), and this was mainly in the form of informal discussions and partly semi-structured (Groundwater-Smith *et al*. 2014; Cohen *et al*. 2018). Whilst the former, alongside participant observation, are also at the heart of ethnographic work, it is not uncommon for researchers to use all three methods in a complementary fashion (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); as, each one offers particular advantages (Fine, 2015). In the present study, then, since the observations largely enabled me to learn about the children's activities and not their reasons, motivations and perspectives: here, the informal discussions were particularly useful. These were not only a way in which I could hear or 'access' the former (Merewether & Fleet, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), but also a means through which I could keep myself from relying on my own adult-centric position from influencing my – both at the time and later – understandings and interpretations of what I had seen (Griffin, Lahman, & Opitz, 2016). The discussions took place multiple times throughout the course of a day, and were noted on paper via pen or pencil. Aside from Fadila[47], all of the participants were patient with me and would wait for me to finish writing before continuing. On some occasions they would devote their full attention to me, on others they would continue with their activities and/or talk to their peers. If I missed a point I would either ask them to repeat it or rephrase the question.

A further advantage of using this method of interview is that it gives children the power to a) control the flow or topic of the conversation, b) decide what, and how much or little to share, and c) end the discussion when they so wish – or even, not to take part in the first place (Groundwater-Smith *et al*. 2014; Griffin *et al*. 2016). Indeed, there were a number of times when the children changed the topic of conversation, gave me short or abrupt answers, and cut the conversations short; although the children were aware that they could choose not to answer my questions, they did not do this. Whereas participants changing the topic of conversation is also

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[47] Fadila often said it was because she could not 'talk slowly'.

considered to be one of the weaknesses of this method (Groundwater-Smith *et al*. 2014) – and I agree that it can be; in this study, if a child rebuffed my attempt to return to the original concern, I treated it as an opportunity to understand what mattered to them at that time. Occasionally, however, the children did bring up an issue or concern that I considered useful to the research's focus, so I noted these down (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Many have also highlighted that children may try to give what they think the adult researcher would deem the 'right' answer (see e.g. Groundwater-Smith *et al*. 2014; Gunson *et al*. 2016). To minimise the likelihood of this, at the start of the year – and occasionally over its course, I reminded the children that I wanted to hear their personal views, and that there were no right or wrong answers.

In December I tried to conduct two semi-structured interviews with the children in a neighbouring room. Whilst I was able to initiate talk on an aspect of the classroom's routine in the first meeting, and on Mrs Terry's and Mrs Tanveer's roles in the second: both of these interviews were rather 'messy'. Asli, Yelda and two of their chosen peers attended the first meeting; Aahid, Asli, Yelda and the ex-participant attended the second. During the former, all four children continuously giggled (like Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten's, 2002 experience), and took control by deciding the topic(s) of conversation and walking in and out of the room. In the latter, the children kept steering the conversation in my direction and played with the resources in the room (see Gallagher's 2008 experience). In light of these experiences, I decided it was best to rely on the informal discussions.

Near the beginning of the year, two children (non participants) instigated 'interviews' with me. These soon became a semi-regular occurrence. The participants and/or their peers would approach me and request an interview; if I were free we would conduct one, if I were not we would make time for it later that day. These took place in the reading area (RA), and either involved whiteboards and markers, or pens and paper. We would take it in turns to ask each other questions and allow time for the jotting of responses.

Since Masood spoke no English at the start of the school year, and because I had a very basic understanding of Sylheti: during these months, I would closely observe his actions, gaze and sounds, and then use these to aid our discussions. During this time, I also had Mrs Tanveer, his peers and other educators interpret and translate for us. As his English steadily improved and his speech gradually became clearer, we started to communicate with little to no external help. On three occasions Masood joined his peers and me for the 'interviews'. Here, he would use a range of actions, facial expressions and utterances to communicate his views (as the children

did in Rabiee, Slope, & Beresford, 2005), and both his peers and I would try to interpret and translate these.

Throughout the year I had informal discussions with the educators, and these were recorded via pen and paper. Although I endeavoured to conduct semi-structured interviews with all three educators, this was only possible with Mrs Terry. Mrs Tanveer and I arranged to talk twice, but both times she was absent for medical reasons. Mrs SENCO left the school near the end of the school year; her contact details were not passed on to me. In July 2013 I conducted a semi-structured interview with Mrs Terry, which was audio-recorded and transcribed. In January 2018 we met to informally discuss the progress of my thesis; because I found the discussion to be useful for this research, I made bullet-pointed notes with pen on paper.

5.8 Exercising reflexivity: others' interpretations, collaboration and child-led tours

To both challenge and try to keep my subjectivities and positioning from influencing how I understood the observations, I sought the educators and children's interpretations and explanations (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford, 1997). As part of her studies, Mrs SENCO occasionally observed some of this research's child participants; sometimes we observed the same child at the same time[48]. Using this as an opportunity to receive others' interpretations, we discussed our respective reflections together with Mrs Tanveer. If Mrs SENCO observed a participant in my absence, she would share her notes and reflections with me upon my return. Towards the end of each term, Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer would also observe the children's activities – for the school's own monitoring system and in connection with their EYFSPs. If they observed a child close to the time that I did, when and where possible I would seek their interpretations.

In September and October I regularly had a 'peer observer' – who was either one of the child participants or another member of the classroom – observing alongside me. These children usually had a sheet of paper attached to a clipboard and one of my pens. As time passed, more children became interested in the activity. In the first few weeks of my time in the classroom, I was frequently asked to read aloud what I had jotted; the children took great interest in hearing about their peers' and their own activities. This soon became a regular occurrence. Throughout the year, once a fortnight on average and in the classroom during afternoon break: I would read excerpts from the previous week or day's observations, and then note the children's reflections.

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[48] During these I would always ask for the child's permission first, and not observe them for as long a time.

'Mutual collaboration' is another way in which researchers can reflexively consider their data (Finlay, 2002, p.218).

In March, I asked all of the children if they could show me how they moved around the classroom when circumventing the no-play dough and no-crawling rules, whilst explaining the reasons behind their chosen actions. These were partly in the way that the 'child-led tours' were conducted in Merewether & Fleet (2014, p.905) and Clark (2017, p.64), and the 'walking interviews' that Evans and Jones (2011) trialed. The children were also encouraged to use the resources that were in the classroom – or the original resource if it were at hand, to aid their reenactment (like Drew's, 1993 participants). These took place during the first three weeks of March 2013 in the mutual collaboration sessions mentioned above. As the children retraced their steps, I would ask them questions such as: 'Why would you look at Mrs Terry?' (If they suggested this). And, 'Why did you run that way?' Their talk and actions were jotted on paper, and their movements were marked on an A4 laminated bird's-eye view that I had of the classroom. Aahid, Fadila and Yelda showed me what they did and talked throughout; as Masood crawled, he pointed in the direction of where he was travelling; Asli decided not to give me a tour (possible reasons why are considered in 6.2.2).

Each of these methods was useful in different ways. Although the peer observers would observe for a few minutes at a time and their writing was often indecipherable: occasionally, their comments were insightful. During one observation, for instance, when I asked Fadila if she thought Asli appeared to be 'worried' about something, she told me that it was perhaps because Asli's good friend Odessa – whom she had known since nursery – was leaving the country for an indefinite period of time. This was news to me. These and the discussions with the educators were useful because there were several instances when I was able to note a word or sentence I had missed, as one of them had heard or recorded it. My discussions with Mrs SENCO and Mrs Tanveer were also worthwhile because, occasionally, these would reveal an aspect of the children's experiences or activities that I had not considered or given much thought. For example, early on in the year Mrs SENCO told me that Masood was trying to be accepted in Aahid and his group's play but was not 'having much luck'. This made me consider his following of the group as another possible reason why he was circumventing the no-crawling rule.

Mutual collaboration, which some recognise as a participatory 'method' (see e.g. Merewether & Fleet, 2014; Clark, 2017, p.17), is sponsored as a way to get closer to children's meanings, since it involves children talking, listening and reflecting. In this study, these were insightful on some occasions only. Sometimes the children would be very interested in the extract and go into detail

about what they had been doing and why; other times they would seem disinterested, give short responses, and/or change the subject. Of course, the latter could have been down to other factors, such as: their mood or feelings at the time, the company they were in, and/or poor recollection. Here, video extracts may have been more useful, as these may have better aided the children's recall and perhaps even fostered more engagement – as those who have used visual data in this way have claimed (see e.g. Merewether & Fleet, 2014; Clark, 2017).

Aahid, Fadila and Yelda's tours helped 'confirm' what I believed they had been doing in connection with the no-play dough and no-crawling rules and why. Unlike Merewether & Fleet (2014), perhaps because the three children paused a number of times to allow me to do this: I did not find it tricky to jot the children's talk, actions and movements. I do however think that video and audio recording equipment would have been helpful here, as these would have freed me to concentrate on the children's activities and our interactions (see e.g. Merewether & Fleet, 2014 and Clark's, 2017 experiences).

5.8.1 Exercising reflexivity: field diary

Every day that I visited the classroom, I made notes in my field diary; this research instrument was useful on many fronts both during the fieldwork and when reading and analysing the data.

For example, during my first few days in the classroom – and following the advice of Fetterman (1989) and Walford (2008), I recorded how I was feeling; and tried, as far as it was possible, to describe what was on my mind. I wrote about how nervous I was about meeting some educators for the first time, and how I was slightly anxious because I did not know what the children's impressions would be of me. I also reflected on how it was that I view children in general – from my adult positioning, and tried to be as explicit as I possibly could about the potential biases that I felt I may have had (common worries for a 'novice' researcher, Woods, 1986; Ball, 2012). These jottings remained at the back of my mind when I conducted my early observations and when I talked with the children, and reminded me to critically think about the way(s) in which my likely biases might have influenced how I viewed, treated and conversed with them.

Since I did not have the time to write in the field diary when in the classroom, I practised a version of reflexive bracketing (Ahern, 1999). Somewhere on my observation sheets, I would jot short notes to myself; these were later elaborated in my field diary – as both my thoughts and general memos (like Woods, 1986). The former would be for example: the reasons behind some of the decisions I had made; the motivations behind the questions I had asked (Hertz, 1997); the

emotions I had felt; and, general reflections. The latter would be reminders, like: ask Aahid about last week's crawling. When analysing certain excerpts from the data – at a later stage, I was able to look at these introspective notes and reflect on why I had been feeling a certain way, and how they may have impacted on what I had seen, recorded and discussed (Pillow, 2003; Walford, 2008).

5.9 Analysis of data

The informal analysis process for this research started early during the fieldwork. From the fourth week of October and throughout most of the year, when transferring the children's movements from paper to the maps I had on Microsoft Word, I would make the following notes beneath each instance: the tactics the child appeared to be using; what the child had been doing before and after (e.g. playing with cars on C1); and, anything that stood out – i.e. if they looked at Mrs SENCO more than the other educators for the first time, or changed course mid-travels. During the October 2012 half term break, I went through all of the instances observed and wrote down all of the tactics that I had noted. These tactics, as 'codes', were grouped within three categories. The overall category was the rule (e.g. no-play dough); within this was a second category, which was the 'strategy'[49] (e.g. acquiring play dough), and a third which was the objective (avoiding detection). Here, I also wrote a brief 'summary' of why each child appeared to be acting in the ways that he or she was, the main educator(s) that the child appeared to be looking at, and the tactics that the child seemed to be using.

The first significant 'review' took place during the December 2012 and January 2013 break. Here, I wrote three 'case studies'[50] of Aahid, Asli and the ex-participant's endeavours. It was at this point that I noticed that the children appeared to be adjusting how they acted – or the tactics that they used, depending on which educators were present, where they were located, and what they were doing. Whilst I had been asking the children about the reasons and/or motivations behind their actions, and their perspectives on various matters – e.g. why they were 'acting' in the way(s) that they were, and what certain educators would say or do if the child was seen

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[49] Up to this point I had been referring to the tactics as 'strategies' in my field diary and observational notes (based on my reading of empirical works e.g. Rogers & Evans, 2008; Markström & Halldén, 2009; Ebrahim, 2011). Here, I decided that these were better described as tactics, which were part of an overall 'project' or 'strategy' (see 6.3).

[50] The original plan was to do this for all the children, but I ran out of time because I had underestimated how long it would take to go through the data.

circumventing a given rule: to get a 'better' understanding of what each child was doing and why, when I went back to the classroom I decided to ask them to take me on tours.

When in the classroom (throughout the year) I jotted memos on the observation schedules, and later elaborated on these in the fled diary. These were informal, and both shaped and informed by my reading of the empirical works, agency and structure theory, and my general subjectivities.

During the May spring break (2013), because Fadila was the 'new' participant, I decided to go through all of the data that I had on her talk and endeavours. Here, I used the 'find' function in Microsoft Word, and copied and pasted all of her data to a separate document. Whilst I did not have 'thick' and detailed data of her experiences, I was able to note some of the ways in which she had navigated and/or applied each of the rules from the start of the year to that point.

The main analysis commenced after the fieldwork, and at various junctures over the years that followed. I did not use a programme or software to aid my examination – such as NVivo, but instead used the 'find' and highlighting functions in Microsoft Word, and various A3 sheets of paper, highlighters and other stationery. This is because I was more familiar with the latter methods. Since the focus of this research is on the children's navigations of the rules, I started by colour coding all of the data that I had on the children's endeavours and talk in connection with each of these – e.g. all data associated with the no-play dough rule was in red, and all those related to no-crawling was in green; and then copied and moved all of these to separate documents, one for each rule.

The next stage involved assigning 'codes'. Here, I decided to print out the data and assign codes down the sides of the extracts; since the documents were lengthy, Microsoft Word would often freeze as I scrolled through it and whenever I saved the edits. These codes were wide-ranging. For example, I had codes linked to the tactics (e.g. hiding resource, hiding self, pace), on common words (e.g. shout, like, want, need), and phrases (e.g. not fair, they will shout, I like it). On a Word document I recorded all of these codes (the often-used, less used, and used once) as I went through the data.

After doing the above, the codes were grouped into four separate (but interrelated and often overlapping) 'collections', which I referred as the following: (a) 'rules', (b) 'case studies', (c) 'categories', and (d) themes. Collection (a) comprised the tactics, actions, themes, and talk that were observed and noted in connection with a certain rule. Collection (b) was an extension of the

former, here I wrote down how each child navigated a given rule, and the talk that was observed or noted. Collection (c) were categories that comprised various common codes (e.g. some of the codes in the 'adult reprimand' category were 'shouting', 'sad side', and 'fear'). Collection (d) were a number of overall themes that emerged from the former three collections. Some of these collections included terms and themes that are noted in the empirical works that have looked at children's navigations (see Chapter 3); and whilst some of these included the concepts and theoretical 'tools' (see Chapter 4), it was largely in 'collection' (d) that I referred to or used these.

When writing each chapter, I referred to all of the 'collections' that were connected to the given rule(s). When deciding which of collection (d) to use, I decided to use the ones that were most 'appropriate'. For example, for Chapter 7, I used the themes 'impression management' and 'morphogenesis post fieldwork' amongst others. Appendix 12, for example, shows which 'collections' I referred to when writing about the children's navigations of the no-building rule. As I wrote each chapter, I also referred back to the 'tools' and amended some themes as new or further themes emerged as a result of the writing process. Each of these chapters was re-written at least three times over the years.

Another decision that was made during this time was to include a small number of maps in analysis Chapters 6 and 7 (three and two respectively). This was because these offered a visual illustration of the children's endeavours. Furthermore, although, in these chapters, I use some numerical or quantity-type terms, such as: often, twice and several – this is not to quantify the children's movements with a view to ultimately generalise the data, but to simply give the reader an idea of how many times the child resisted the rule – sometimes depending on which educators were present. Below is the key to these maps; it was used throughout the course of the fieldwork.

5.9.1 Key to maps

Walking slowly   ……………………

Walking at medium pace   ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪ ▪

Walking quickly   _____

Skipping

Direction in which child is looking

Which side resource is held

Where child commenced walking
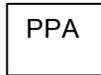
Where child stopped walking

Educators' movements

Mrs Terry | T |

Mrs Tanveer | TA |

Mrs PPA | PPA |

Mrs SENCO | SENCO |

Cover-TA | CovTA |

Student(s) on placement

S1/2

Teacher training student(s)

TR1/2

Teaching Assistant cover

TAc

CHAPTER 6:

Navigating the play dough rule

In this chapter and the next four, I present, discuss and analyse the data collected. Whilst, in each of the chapters, I present and discuss similar matters (e.g. children's reasons, perspectives and endeavours); there is some variation in the ways that I do this between some of the chapters, and in the 'type' of data that is offered in two.

To contextualise the children's endeavours that were observed, in all of the chapters but one the data are presented and considered in the same way[51]. In Chapters 6-8 and 10, then, I begin by looking at Mrs Terry's reason(s) for the rule – and the children's understandings of these; what appeared to be the reasons and motivations behind the children's navigations of the rule; and, their perspectives on the reason(s) and/or the rule itself. The remaining discussion is on the children's endeavours in connection with the rule over the course of the year.

Here, however, there is some variation in how their endeavours are discussed. Since the children were observed trying to realise an overall strategy, and to do this they used various tactics (further elaboration on how I define strategies and tactics are offered in 6.3 below): in Chapters 6 and 7, I a) discuss these in groups or alone via sub-sections, and b) offer some of the maps that I made (see 5.6.1) to illustrate[52] what these looked like in practice. In Chapter 8, because the three children navigated the rule in quite a different way during their initial weeks in the classroom – compared to how they did over the majority of it: I first look at their endeavours during the former, and then over the latter. As the rule – or their navigation of it – appeared to constrain the children's play episodes by way of disruption a number of times over the course of the year; here, Chapters 8 and 10 also include further sections (respectively, two and one) where I look at how they tried to negotiate their play during these[53].

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[51] Though, in Chapter 7, I discuss the children's experiences and endeavours in connection with two of the classroom's rules separately.

[52] These maps, for example, show the reader how a child exercised various tactics during one observed instance, and the likely reasons why based on where the educators were located (see e.g. Map 1 and Map 2; p.130).

[53] This is not to say that I only look at this aspect of the children's experiences in these chapters alone. At various junctures in all of these chapters, and where relevant, I consider how the rules and other aspects of the context appeared to shape, enable and/or constrain their play-related (and other) endeavours and experiences.

Since all of the children but Masood were seen applying three of the BEs from the start of the year, I consider their perspectives on each of these and the reasons behind their endeavours first in Chapter 9. However, because most of them navigated the other two (and partly one of the former three) in quite different ways during terms one, two and three, in the remainder of the chapter I present and discuss the children's perspective(s), reason(s) and endeavours in more detail.

In this chapter, I discuss Asli, Fadila and Yelda's endeavours in connection with a rule that forbade the children from playing with the play dough (PD) in any other part of the classroom but the table (referred to as designated-table) that it was offered on, on the day. I look at the children's understandings of the rule; how they tried to circumvent it; and, the reasons behind their endeavours. Before I do this, I offer a brief account of the classroom context.

6.1 The context

Whilst, over the course of the analysis, specific aspects of the classroom are considered in more detail; to contextualise the children's activities and experiences, here I offer a brief account of certain features of the classroom routine, the educators who were often present, and the play provision overall – together with the reasons and intentions behind Mrs Terry's approach. On Mondays, which was the main day that I visited the classroom, in the mornings Mrs PPA would cover for Mrs Terry whilst she carried out preparation, planning and assessment activities; although Mrs Terry would often be in and out of the classroom, during this morning session either or both Mrs PPA and Mrs Tanveer would be 'in charge'. Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were in attendance every day (unless absent for a given reason). In term one, Mrs SENCO was a regular member of the classroom (she occasionally visited in terms two and three); and throughout the year there were a number of students (on school, college or university placements) who came and went. Excluding me, there were usually between two to five adults in Sunflowers at one time.

The balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities was achieved through the approach mentioned in some of the studies considered in Chapter 2 (see: Cleave & Brown, 1991; Adams *et al*. 2004; Rogers & Evans, 2008). A literacy, numeracy or science session[54] immediately followed the morning and afternoon registrations; these were followed by an extended free play

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[54] The morning's post-registration sessions were largely literacy-related and occasionally numeracy; the afternoon's, primarily numeracy-related and sometimes science. These sessions usually lasted between 20 to 25 minutes (see Appendix 2 for routine).

session[55]. During these free play sessions the children were called from their activities (play or other) to participate in adult-led activities or administrative tasks. This approach was also followed in the other two reception classrooms, and all three of the reception teachers, the HoFS, and the head teacher endorsed it. Mrs Terry said she preferred it over others (i.e. rotating the children between both kinds of activities throughout the day or sessions; or, having adult-led activities in mornings and child-initiated in afternoons) because it afforded children the time to: 'really get involved' in their play, 'take their time when they're playing', and 'get to know what they like and don't like, and see what they can do with the resources' (Fieldnotes (FNs), 2012-13).

In contrast to the recent concerns considered in Chapter 2, the children were largely free to choose which resources to play with – as well as how, for how long, and with whom; and, these activities were not tied to specific learning objectives[56] (see e.g. Adams *et al*. 2004; Wood, 2010b; Lindon, 2013; Moyles, 2015). At the start of the school year (during the settling-in period) Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer placed resources on carpets one (C1) and two (C2); by week three, they had stopped doing this (see classroom layout: Appendix 11). Instead, the children could take out the resources they wanted though each carpet had a general rule (these are considered further in Chapters 7 and 8). In general, the 'messy' resources that were placed on table four in the morning (which can be considered as the 'arts and crafts' table; my reference) were not to be exchanged for other 'messy' resources (e.g. paints for glue or scissors). However, if the children wanted to introduce further 'non-messy' resources (e.g. cutters, rolling pins, cutlery), they could do so; and, if they wanted to have an altogether different set of 'messy' and/or 'non-messy' resources out at the start of the afternoon session, they were allowed to – again, providing there was agreement. Equally, although the educators would generally put resources out on the other tables too – and this was throughout the year; if they wanted, the children were free to add or bring other resources to the table(s), or – if there was a general consensus of agreement – to remove the resource(s) entirely and take out another set[57]. There was not a rule for where the children were not allowed to take the resources; they could take – or play with – them anywhere in the classroom (e.g. pencils, clipboards, puppets and cars) – though they were discouraged from transporting those that could compromise the adults' and their health and safety (e.g.

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[55] The morning's session was approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes long (09:40/09:45-11:10/11:15); the afternoon's, 1 hour and 30 minutes (13:00-14:30/14:35).

[56] This is not to say that the educators (when not at an adult-led activity or otherwise engaged) did not join the children's activities, as they often did and tried to further their learning and development (e.g. engaging them in talk, encouraging them to try to cut with scissors, or write a number).

[57] This is with the exception of table three, which is where the adult-led activity for the day took place.

scissors) or damage/stick to the furniture (e.g. the PD, glue and paints). They were also not allowed to play with the large construction resources that were stored on C2 and the reading area (RA) in other parts of the classroom (discussed further in Chapter 7).

When explaining why she had decided to create these 'conditions', Mrs Terry mentioned several reasons. Explicitly: because it was the children's classroom too (*I mean, it's their classroom as much as it is ours*); she wanted the children to feel as if they had some control over their play, and their learning (*I think they need to feel like they're in control…of their play, how they play, and some control in their learning*); and so that they had – and therefore experienced – a degree of autonomy, freedom and choice in the classroom (*they can get the resources out, put others away; not ask us. And, choose what they want to do; be free to try something, if it doesn't work, try something else…combine the resources*). Furthermore, so they could follow their interests (*they can just follow their interests, do what interests them, as long as it's safe*); and, take ownership over their actions, regulate their own behaviour and activities, and to foster and promote their independence (*they take them out, remember to put them back; where to put them. They remind each other. They don't keep coming to ask if they can – where things are, they know; they don't need us. It's independence*) (FNs, Discussions (DISC), and Interview (INT), 2012-13). Mrs Terry's sentiments echoed the various benefits that many have highlighted over the years (see Chapter 2; i.e. Whitebread, 2010; Chilvers, 2012; Whitebread, 2012; Moyles, 2015). In the remainder of this chapter, I present and discuss three of the participants' – Asli, Fadila and Yelda – navigations of one of the rules pertaining to the play provision.

6.2 The no-play dough rule: reasons and understandings

PD was a staple resource in Sunflowers; every morning, Mrs Terry would place it on a designated-table along with an assortment of instruments. These would be a mixture of rolling pins, trays, cutlery, chopping boards and cutters; and, on at least three to four days a week, it would be available throughout the day. At the tables, the children could play with the resources as they wished – for example, to create things or chop it into pieces; and, they could bring other resources to play with it – i.e. if they had rolling pins only but wanted cutlery, they could add the latter. The children were however not allowed to remove the resource from the table and take it elsewhere. Mrs Terry created this 'no-play dough' rule 'many years ago' to prevent the resource from getting stuck to the carpeted parts of the classroom. This was mainly because the cleaner had little time to clean the classroom, and partly because it was a 'health hazard':

…I don't let them take the PD because it gets all trodden on, on the carpet. No I can't. So we have to be firm with it simply because the cleaners get five minutes to clean, and the PD on the carpet is *awful*. So I'm *really* firm.

…it's a health hazard really because it's awful to get off. It gets all trodden in.

(DISC: 08.10.12)

When I asked Asli, Fadila and Yelda what the reasons for the rule were, all three appeared to understand it was because the PD stuck to the carpet and mentioned the cleaner; as can be seen in the excerpt below, which is taken from a conversation I had with Asli and Yelda:

Yelda: Mrs Terry say we not have it.
Asli: Mrs Terry said it's gets stuck on the carpet and the cleaner, she's shouting because she has to clean it.
Yelda: Mrs Terry say cleaner lady be sad, so we not having it on the every day.

(DISC: 03.06.13)

6.2.1 Children's reasons and motivations

Whilst Asli, Fadila and Yelda understood the reasons for the rule, during the first two terms of the school year they were observed regularly playing with the PD on C1. Before looking at the kinds of tactics that they seemed to employ in order to bring the resource to C1 – and to keep certain educators from finding out about their endeavours, I look at why they were bringing it and what they were doing with it.

PD, according to Mrs Terry, was a valuable resource in an early years classroom; it could be offered and manipulated in multiple ways, and it supported children's all-round development and learning:

Yes…I think it's great. They can chop and build…create...do modeling with it. We use it to count 'how many pieces are in this bowl?' And, 'can you break it into three parts?' And 'we can make a letter out of it!' Or a number on the card, they can trace their fingers along it. And, they talk while they play with it, and they talk about sharing it, and 'who's got more', and 'let's make this together'. There's the fine motor, you know: the chopping and dicing, squeezing and pinching. So there's lots they can do with it; I keep it out for them with different resources, and they can do different things with it. It's rarely the same; I put different things out so they're not always doing the same thing. It's always interesting for them; they're always playing with it.

(FN: 11.02.13)

Whilst the three children did play with it at the designated-table(s) together with the resources that were offered: this was on rare occasions spread over the school year. For the majority of the time – and this was almost every time that I was in the classroom during the first two terms: they had it on C1, with or without some of the offered resources. Although there were several possible reasons why they played with it on the carpet, it was quite clear early on that this was chiefly because it was used as a prop in their role-playing. Principally, this was as various kinds of food irrespective of the role-play theme at the time; and on several occasions – though this was only when the role-play corner was a veterinary practice, as medicine. During the former, the resource was part of their 'family' and/or 'picnic-party' storylines; and within these, it was either their babies' food, or the food of some or all the characters in the act. The few times that it became medicine its function was to treat the 'sick' babies.

As food, the PD was always torn into pieces – sometimes it was gathered, pressed together, and re-torn to create the same or different foods; and then it was distributed – either amongst the characters present, or into various dishes. And, throughout the duration of the play, the PD was treated solely as food – i.e. it was eaten, cooked, mixed and shared. As medicine, it was placed and/or pressed down on various parts of the babies' (puppets and dolls) bodies that needed treatment.

A closer look at the children's play shows that the PD, as food-prop and medicine-prop, was a central feature of Asli, Fadila and Yelda's role-playing. In *all* of the play episodes that were observed, either the talk was centred on the food (or medicine) – and this could be for several minutes at a time; or, it would be mentioned throughout the course of the observation. Furthermore, although there were a number of other resources or 'props' that were used – some regularly and some occasionally: the PD as-prop appeared to be key, and this was both to start the play and to keep it going. On one occasion, for instance, Fadila, Yelda and two peers tried to play without the PD as Mrs Terry had removed it from the designated-table prior to the afternoon session; however, three to four minutes into the 'picnic party', Fadila asked the educator why it had been removed and soon after it was put back out. The children immediately brought some pieces to C1 and commenced their play. On another, when I asked Yelda to talk me through the props she would need to play 'home-home'; seemingly without discussing it between them beforehand, she and her best friend Sabah both mentioned the PD first:

> Yelda: We…I will need the food.
> Me: Why?

Yelda: For the baby.
Sabah: (*Arrives: reading area*)…what you doing?
Yelda: We need to get the babies…then we can do home-home.
Sabah: Okay…(*nodding*)…you get food?

(Observation (OBS): 10:00, 7.01.12)

Much of the talk and activities that took place in connection with the PD props, then, appeared to be in the social domain. For instance, when playing – and in character, the three participants would talk about what they were making or going to make, as they prepared it; which guests they were cooking for and what they would be eating; discuss the food when the guests were present; and converse about what their babies had eaten, needed to eat or would eat. There was also much talk that took place before and after episodes; generally, this was to do with which characters would be starting off with – and perhaps keeping, the food; who would have it next; and, which babies needed feeding most often – for example.

There were also a number of times when the children were observed coming out of character to resolve conflicts that were connected to the PD. These were usually to do with whose turn it was to have the food or who had, had the food for the longest.

A possible reason why they argued over possession of the PD props is because there was often a small amount to share between several of them. For instance, if pressed together, the most that I saw them have on C1 at one time was approximately the size of a golf ball, the least was perhaps the size of a 50-pence piece; the highest amount of children observed taking part in one episode was nine. This was because first, the children who collected the PD from the designated-table(s) and transported it to C1, brought a small amount each time; second, they did not take an altogether large amount so that the educators did not realise where they were playing with it. This 'tactic' of removing small amounts a go – and overall, was one of several tactics that the children were observed exercising to make sure that they were not 'seen' resisting the rule; these are discussed in more detail in 6.3 and the sub-sections that comprise it.

Occasionally, the three children incorporated the tiddlywinks into their role-playing. Although they were allowed to take these out to play with, Asli, Fadila and Yelda were never once seen doing so. However, the few times that these were offered on a table they did bring small amounts to C1. To try to appreciate why they did not choose to play with the tiddlywinks instead of the PD – whether the former was out or not, I asked each of them. Their responses revealed that the PD was preferred for three reasons: 1) they simply 'liked' it more, 2) because it was malleable and

therefore they could make various 'things' with it, and 3) as medicine, they could stick it to the babies' body parts – something they could not do with the tiddlywinks:

> Asli: The PD's best because we can make lots of things.
> Yelda: And my baby dinner.
> Asli: We can make the baby's dinner, and all the family's.
> Me: The tiddlywinks can be dinner too.
> Asli: (*Nods*)…I like the PD.
> Yelda: I don't want them.

(OBS: 13:15, 22.04.13)

> Me: Why don't you get the tiddlywinks instead of the PD?
> Fadila: No, I don't want to.
> Me: Maybe you could have both the tiddlywinks and the PD…
> Fadila: I like PD more.

(OBS: 11:00-11:15, 10.06.13)

> Me: What about the tiddlywinks medicine? You can use that instead.
> Odessa: (*Shakes head*)…it doesn't stay on the babies!
> Asli: (*Nodding*).

(OBS: 14:30, 25.03.13)

6.2.2 Children's perspectives

In spite of the fact that all three of these children believed certain educators would 'shout' at them if they were seen circumventing the rule (I discuss which adults in more detail in 6.3.1); this, as I mentioned earlier (and will discuss below), did not deter them from bringing the PD to C1. To understand why this was the case, I decided to ask them. When asking Asli about this, however, I was not able to get a response. In fact, on the two occasions that I tried to ask her why she navigated the rule in the way(s) that she did – and on another when I asked if she would show me how she did this (during the tours, see 5.8), she denied taking the resource to C1. Although I do not know of the exact reasons for her silence, it is possible that either or both of the following reasons may have been behind it: first – and however difficult this is to acknowledge, she may not have fully trusted my (assured) confidence, as although she knew that I was not one of the educators – I was, after all, very clearly an adult too; second, she may not have been comfortable with openly talking about her endeavours for fear of others hearing about it (perhaps her peers and/or the educators).

Fadila and Yelda's responses, in contrast, revealed much about their views, reasons and endeavours. First, it appeared these two children did not agree with the reasons for the rule, and this was because a) they *were* able to play with the resource *without* it getting stuck to the carpet, and b) they returned it to the designated-table and so the class *did not* become 'messy'. Secondly, it seemed they believed that since they did the former, they were not compromising the reason(s) for the rule. Thirdly, they had consciously thought about the reasons for the rule and worked out a compromise with it; and, given thought to whether this was reasonable. In their opinions, their actions were judicious because they made sure they did not get PD on the floor, and returned it to its original location at the end of a free-play session. In February, for example, Yelda told me the following:

> Yelda: That's not on carpet…(*waves hand*)…look, that's not there.
> Sabah: No…we didn't put it.
> Yelda: We put it there…(*points: saucer*).
> Sabah: That's getting dirty on the carpet…we don't do's that.
> Yelda: I didn't; look…(*taps carpet*)…we take'd it but we didn't make it dirty.

(OBS: 13:25-13:40, 4.02.13)

And, that she always returned the PD to the designated-table:

> Yelda: We have to play it there…(*points: designated-table*).
> Me: But you have it here.
> Yelda: Yeh. But we taking it back.
> Me: When?
> Sabah: We finishing.
> Yelda: We tidying it…we put on the table.
> Me: Do the teachers know you take it back…when you finish?
> Yelda: (*Shakes head*)…they didn't put it on the table.
> Me: Who didn't?
> Yelda: The…naughty children.
> Me: Is that why Mrs Terry asks you to keep it on the table?
> Yelda: No! We didn't make it messy; we put it on table…I didn't put it there…(*points: carpet*)…not the messy there.
> Me: Will you return it to the table later?
> Yelda: Yes.
> Me: Do you take it back on other days?
> Yelda: (*Nodding*)…all the days!

(As above)

Indeed, between September 2012 and March 2013 whenever a free-play session came to an end, Fadila and Yelda were seen returning the PD to the designated-table and encouraging their

peers to do the same. On several occasions, they were also observed scraping it off the carpet – both during and after the free-play sessions. Asli, however, was neither seen returning the resource nor scraping it off the floor.

In this main section, I have presented and discussed the children's understandings of the reasons behind the no-play dough rule – and their perspectives on these; and, the reasons and motivations behind their endeavours. In doing this, I have attempted to contextualise the children's endeavours, which are discussed next.

6.3 A strategy, an objective and several tactics

Within the first few weeks of my time at Sunflowers it became apparent that, every day (at least, on the days that I was visiting), one or more of the same six children would bring small amounts of PD to C1, and play with it for the duration of a session. Asli, Fadila and Yelda were three of these children. Over time, I came to realise that, like the children in several of the works considered in Chapter 3 (namely: Rogers & Evans, 2008; Markström & Halldén, 2009; Ebrahim, 2011; Ólafsdóttir *et al.* 2017), the participants appeared to be exercising a strategy. However, whereas in the works mentioned here, the term 'strategy' appears to be used to denote the *ways* in which children acted with a view to achieve a certain outcome; from this point forward, I use it to refer to the overall 'project' (Archer, 2003, p.6) that the children aimed to realise. Here, there was one strategy that the children wanted to realise – namely: *acquiring-play dough*. This was the overall aim, specifically: to have the PD on C1 to play with. Closely linked with this strategy was the primary objective, which was *avoiding detection*; specifically, to make sure that certain educators did not discover the individual was circumventing the rule. Lastly, there were the *tactics*; these were the various methods (and actions) that the children employed to navigate the rule – and therefore, achieve the strategy and objective. As there were a number of tactics that the children appeared to employ – some that all of them used and others that only one or two of them did, and there were some subtle or obvious differences between each child's endeavours: in the following sub-sections, I consider these in parts.

6.3.1 Calculated movements, adult surveillance and (adjusting) pace

When looking at the various ways in which the children tried to navigate the no-play dough rule, it appears that the main deciding factor was their understandings and experiences of which educators were most likely to enforce it if they were seen. That is, the children's decisions on whether or not to collect the PD – and if so when, and the kinds of tactics they used either

before, during and/or after their travels depended on: whether certain educators were in the class, where they were located and what they were doing. Here, each of the children appeared to act according to what I refer to as their subjective *adult risk registers*. This register comprised a hierarchical ordering of which educator(s) each child believed posed the most risk to their endeavours and therefore the realisation of the strategy.

Before I present and discuss how the children appeared to act according to their risk registers, I consider what they said in their conversations with me, which indicated how they believed each educator would enforce the rule. A noticeable theme running in all of these was the children's belief that certain educators would 'shout' at them if and when seen circumventing the rule. The other point, which stood out, was that the children perhaps made their decisions based on if – and if so, how much – each educator was likely to shout; as this was, for them, an indicator of how much they enforced the rule. It can also be said that their talk also showed why they went to great lengths to keep their activities and endeavours covert – particularly when certain educators were in the classroom or in the vicinity of C1 when they had the PD. That is, the children's fear of the educators reprimanding them by way of shouting led them to employ various tactics in order to reduce the likelihood of this taking place.

Overall, Mrs Terry appeared to pose the most risk to their endeavours and Mrs Tanveer was a close second; Mrs SENCO looked to be near the bottom of their risk registers, and Mrs PPA and other support staff in lowest place. Below are two excerpts exemplifying Asli and Fadila's impressions:

> Asli: No…Mrs Tanveer's guna shout.
> Odessa: And Mrs Terry.
> Asli: Yeh…Mrs Terry.
> Me: Would they both shout the same, or one will shout more than the other?
> Odessa: Mrs Terry.
> Asli: (*Nods*)…Mrs Terry…then Mrs Tanveer.
> Me: What about Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO?
> Odessa: Mrs PPA doesn't.
> Asli: Mrs PPA's never sad…doesn't shout. Mrs SENCO sometimes shouts. Mrs Terry shouts moistest…and Mrs Tanveer.
> Odessa: Then Mrs SENCO…
> Asli: Mrs PPA doesn't at the children's.

> (OBS: 14:20, 11.03.13)

> Fadila: Mrs Tanveer will be first sad…then Mrs Terry…then…Mrs SENCO.
> Me: Will Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer all shout, or will one of them shout more?
> Fadila: No…(*shakes head*)…both shout.

> Me: Mrs SENCO, does she shout? What about Mrs PPA?
> Fadila: Mrs PPA doesn't; she doesn't care…Mrs SENCO sometimes shouts…she doesn't shout all the time.
> Me: Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer will shout if they see you with the PD?
> Fadila: (*Nods*).
> Me: Mrs SENCO sometimes?
> Fadila: (*Nods*).
> Me: Mrs PPA…
> Fadila: She doesn't.

(OBS: 14:10, 11.03.13)

Asli and Fadila's impressions of educators' potential responses, as can be seen in the above excerpts, were also based on how 'sad' each adult would or would not be if the child was seen not applying the rule. Indeed, Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer often used the term throughout the year – and this was particularly in term one along with Mrs SENCO, to express to the children how their actions or activities had made them feel. It is also likely that the children perhaps associated educators' use of the term with potentially having to put their names on the 'sad side' of the chart[58] that was part of Sunflower's behaviour enforcement system (see Appendix 8). This is because firstly, although they do not mention it here, when explaining what would happen if educators saw them not respecting another rule (see Chapter 7; 7.2.1), Asli, Fadila and Yelda explicitly mentioned having to put their names on the sad side; secondly, as they do here, they used the terms 'shout' and 'sad' interchangeably.

All of the tactics that these three children chose to exercise, then, appeared to be based on their adult risk registers; and – as mentioned earlier – these were in the hope that certain educators would not detect their endeavours. In the remainder of this sub-section, I discuss three of these tactics and consider the similarities and differences between the ways in which the children used them. The two tactics that all of the children almost always used were: *adult surveillance* and *calculated movements*. The former involved a child looking at one or more educator(s) when deciding if to leave C1 for the designated-table – and if so, when; and when deciding if they could leave the designated-table with the PD without being seen – and if so, when. Oftentimes, then, this involved the child looking at the educator(s) at various junctures either before, during and/or after their travels. The latter involved a child deliberately taking a route to or from the designated-table based on which educators were present, where they were located and what they were doing. Many times, the children would change course midway or at some point, if an

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[58] This chart had two sides: if the children displayed behaviours that were encouraged, they would be awarded a tick next to their name, which was the happy side (to the left); if they exhibited behaviours that were deemed unacceptable, they had to put their names on the sad side (right).

adult entered the classroom or moved from their original location. The third tactic – *pace* – involved a child deciding the pace at which to travel during these jaunts.

In total, I observed Asli and Yelda going to and from the designated-table twelve times each and this was from September 2012 through March 2013; I saw Fadila do the same six times between January[59] and April of 2013. Whilst Fadila and Yelda were seen going to collect the PD in Mrs Terry's company a number of times (discussed below), it appears Asli was very reluctant to do this. This is as, in all of the instances observed, I saw her travelling with the PD when Mrs Terry was present on two occasions only; and, both of these instances took place in September during her first month in reception. In the first, it appears Asli was either learning about the rule for the first time, or perhaps testing how the educators would react if they saw her. As, first she placed a basket containing PD on the designated-table – having come from the role-play and not looked at any of the educators during her travels, whilst Mrs SENCO was seated at it. Then she started to put more PD in it before Mrs SENCO reminded her of the rule. In the second, which took place the following week, she looked at Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer multiple times when she walked to and back from the designated-table. This time, I saw her looking at Mrs Terry five times, which is the most she was seen looking at an educator's activities. All of the remaining instances took place on a Monday morning when Mrs Terry was not in the classroom and Mrs PPA and/or Mrs TA were in charge.

Asli also made her trips when Mrs Tanveer was present, however she appeared to be more cautious in her company than she was when it was only Mrs PPA and/or Mrs SENCO in the classroom. For one, she would observe Mrs Tanveer's activities more than those of the other educators' who were present. Secondly, whilst she was seen adjusting the pace at which she moved when the other educators were present; when Mrs Tanveer was in the classroom, she seemed to travel in a similar way each time irrespective of whether she was going to or returning from the designated-table, that is: she would start by walking very slowly whilst watching her, and then pick up the pace. Thirdly, aside from two[60] occasions, she appeared to make sure she was hidden from her view by walking behind her and not in her line of sight. Lastly, all of the instances noted took place between September and November 2012; after this time, although she was observed making these trips, it was when the educator was not in the classroom. Indeed, in the final instance, which I noted in March 2013, when Asli saw Mrs Tanveer enter the

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[59] This is when she became a participant; see 5.4.2.1).

[60] The first time was when she was appeared to be learning about the rule or testing how the educators would enforce it (mentioned earlier); in the second, she turned her back to the educator when she arrived at the designated-table, and as she picked up the PD before leaving.

classroom as she was about to pick up the PD: she put it down and walked to the entrance of the RA. After a few seconds of looking at the educator from there, she returned to C1 without it.

Asli's activities when the two permanent members of staff were not present but Mrs PPA and/or Mrs SENCO were, however, looked to be quite different. For one, it appears she was not as reluctant; as in ten of the twelve instances, I noted Mrs PPA was present, and in five of these Mrs SENCO was. Secondly, she would either look at one of them once[61] – or not at all. Thirdly, there did not appear to be a pattern in the way(s) that she moved – that is, she was seen walking slowly, at a moderate pace, and quickly; and, in one she even skipped on her way to C1 with the PD in her hand. She also walked directly in front of Mrs PPA or in her line of sight on multiple occasions. Lastly, whilst, when Mrs Terry and/or Mrs Tanveer were present, Asli was seen making one trip to the designated-table and back – though there was one time when she did this twice (going behind Mrs Tanveer): she was observed going back and forth three times in the space of ten minutes one day when Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO were in charge. Here, each time she travelled, she glanced in Mrs PPA's direction once, and not at all in Mrs SENCO's.

Whilst, like Asli, Yelda's endeavours also appeared to be closely linked to her adult risk register, this did not appear to deter her from making the trips to and from the designated-table when Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer were present. Indeed, she made a near identical amount of journeys in the company of both educators and Mrs PPA: specifically, nine each in Mrs Terry's and Mrs PPA's, and eight in Mrs Tanveer's. She made four trips when Mrs SENCO was in the classroom. She did seem, however, to observe those that she believed were more likely to shout – the most; and those that she said would shout a little or not at all – the least. This is as, during the instances noted, Yelda was seen looking at Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer the most; though, if both were present, she would look at the former educator's activities more[62]. When Mrs Terry was not present, however, she was seen observing Mrs Tanveer's whereabouts and activities either over – or more than – the other adults'. Barring one occasion, Yelda very rarely looked in Mrs SENCO or Mrs PPA's direction; if she did, this was fleetingly. On this one occasion, as she made her way to the designated-table, Mrs SENCO walked into the classroom. Yelda looked at her multiple times, circulated the table nearest to the role-play and then decided to go back into it. Whilst I did not ask her about it, this was perhaps because she wanted to wait and see where the educator would go. As, when I commenced observing her approximately three minutes later, she had

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[61] This is barring one occasion in October when she looked at Mrs SENCO several times as she walked to and from the designated-table.

[62] There was only one occasion when I saw her looking at Mrs Tanveer more than Mrs Terry; this may have been because Mrs Terry was in the store cupboard and not in the actual classroom space.

been to the designated-table (table four), and was at table five with the PD in her pocket – which she then brought to the role-play.

The above instance was the only time that I saw Yelda decide not to collect the PD; in all of the others – irrespective of whether an educator walked in or if she seemed to notice that one was looking at her – she brought some back with her. On one occasion in early November, for example, as Yelda made her way to the designated-table, she seemed to notice that Mrs Terry was looking in her direction; she smiled and the educator returned it. She then moved away from the designated-table and continued to walk to the RA, where she paused very briefly and looked at Mrs Terry; at this point, the educator was looking elsewhere. Perhaps to make sure the educator did not see what she was planning to do, Yelda then walked to the far end of the classroom – looking at Mrs Terry along the way; before turning, walking quickly past the designated-table, and grabbing some PD on her way to the role-play (this is illustrated in Map 1; end of this section). Like Asli, in the majority of the instances noted, Yelda walked behind Mrs Tanveer – though she did take two trips in her line of sight one day in December; and, she was seen either walking directly in front of Mrs PPA or in her line of sight on multiple occasions. When Mrs Terry was in the classroom, however, although Yelda walked in front of her once in November: in all other instances she was not visible to the educator. For instance, she went behind her; when she was in the storeroom; and when a large piece of furniture was blocking the educator's view.

Whereas Asli was often seen pausing at the designated-table(s), seemingly calibrating, and then returning to the role-play; Fadila and Yelda walked as quickly as they could, swiped the PD and then made their way back to C1 or the role-play (Fadila was also seen going into the RA, which I discuss in 6.3.2). Since Asli decided not to talk about the reasons behind her endeavours, it is not possible to offer the reasons behind her movements from her own account. Fadila and Yelda's talk, however, revealed that they did this because they believed it would prevent the adults from learning about their activities. During her tour, Yelda said she walked 'quickly' every time so Mrs Terry did not see her:

> Yelda: I am walking quickly…here (*at table*).
> Me: Why?
> Yelda: Mrs Terry don't see me.
> Me: Do you always walk quickly, or just sometimes?
> Yelda: (*Shakes head*)…quickly all the days.

<div align="right">(TOUR: 14:30-14:40, 11.03.13)</div>

Indeed, although there were three instances during which I saw her slow down – albeit for a short time, in the majority of these Yelda walked quickly to and from the designated-table(s). Fadila, however, was noted walking quickly in all of the six instances observed. During her tour, she told me this was to avoid detection:

> Fadila: I go there quick (designated-table).
> Me: And do you come back slowly?
> Fadila: Quick, quick!
> Me: Why?
> Fadila: They don't catch me!

(TOUR: 13:25-13:35, 18.03.13)

Whilst Fadila did not appear to refrain from travelling with the PD when certain educators were in the classroom – as she was seen doing this a similar amount of times in each adult's company; she did seem to observe their activities according to her risk register. That is, Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were observed most often, Mrs SENCO once and Mrs PPA not at all. On the one occasion when Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were both present, she looked at them once each. When looking at the routes that she took to and from the designated-table(s); although this is based on my observations on a small number of instances, it is possible to note an overall theme in those where either one or both of the two full-time members of staff were present. Specifically, in all of these, before leaving the designated-table with the PD Fadila observed what the educators were doing; and, she never walked directly in front of them – but either behind them, or down the far end of the classroom (see Map 2 as an example; end of this section).

The discussion in this sub-section has shown that the children appeared to decide when and how to act based on a) which educators they believed were more likely to enforce the no-play dough rule, and b) where these educators were located in the classroom. It has also considered how the children exercised one or more of three tactics, which were based on their adult risk registers, to keep certain educators from realising what they were doing – and therefore, to keep their endeavours covert. But these were not the only tactics that I saw them using during the instances observed. In the next sub-section, I discuss another three that they were seen employing.
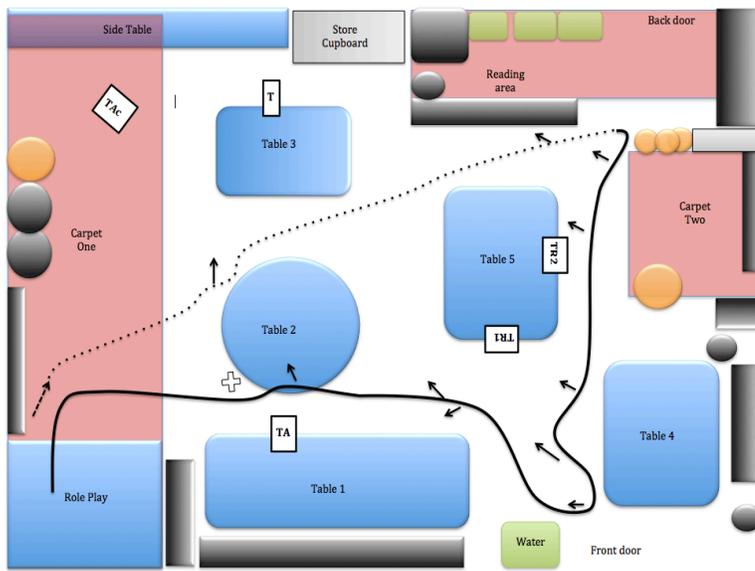
Map 1: Yelda
(13:20: 05.11.12)
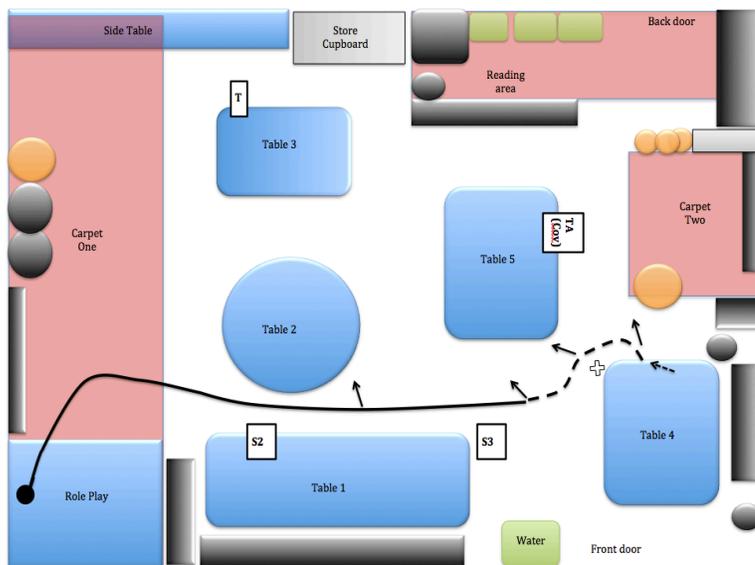
Map 2: Fadila
(14:05-14:15: 22.04.13)

6.3.2 Hiding self, and hiding or abandoning resource

In addition to surveilling the whereabouts and activities of certain educators', and taking certain routes around the classroom at various paces: Asli, Fadila and Yelda also used three other tactics to keep their endeavours covert – these were: *hiding resource*, *hiding self* and *abandoning resource*. The first involved the children going into certain areas or positioning themselves in ways that they believed would keep their activities hidden from the educators' view(s); the second, concealing the PD so that certain educators would not see that they were

transporting – or playing – with it; and the third involved leaving their play with the resource if Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer arrived on C1.

The amount of times that Asli was seen exercising these tactics and when, again indicate that she was perhaps more afraid of her endeavours being seen by Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer than her peers were; and, conversely, was much less concerned about Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO's reactions. This is because in all of the instances when either or both Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer were present, I saw Asli a) hold the PD close to her thigh and on the side that was not visible to them as the travelled, and b) walk straight into the role-play on her way back and then observe the educators from the window for several seconds before returning to her play on C1 (see Map 3 as an example; end of this section). During the single instance when Mrs Tanveer was sat facing the designated-table, Asli stood with her back turned to her and then swiftly placed the resource in her pocket before leaving. Furthermore, on multiple occasions I saw her quickly abandon her play with the PD on C1 when either of these educators walked onto it. However, whilst she also held the PD on the side that was not visible to Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO; when they were in the classroom but Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were not, she did not go into role-play but instead returned to her play on C1.

Yelda was also observed using all three of these tactics. Like Asli, when either or both Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer were present, she was seen holding the PD in the same way and on the side that was not visible to them as she travelled; and, on one occasion, when Mrs Terry was sat facing the designated-table, she turned her back to the educator before leaving with the resource. Similarly, she was also once seen putting the PD in her pocket, but this appeared to be because Mrs Terry was on C2 and Yelda wanted to look at the resources at the table nearest to it (table 5) before leaving for the role-play. Whilst there was one instance during which she returned to C1 and not the role-play – perhaps because a) Mrs Tanveer was sat at the far end of the classroom (on table four), and b) she had already made a trip without being seen by the educator: in all of the instances where either or both of the two full-time members of staff were present, she went into the role-play with the resource. However, she was not seen looking through the window once there. During her tour, Yelda told me she went into the role-play to hide the PD from Mrs Tanveer's view:

> Yelda: We hiding in here.
> Me: Why?
> Yelda: Mrs Tanveer don't see me.
> Me: What would happen?
> Yelda: Tell me 'no take it to the there'…(*points: table*).

Me: Can she see the PD in here?
Yelda: No.

In Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO's company, Yelda did not appear to be concerned about which side she held the resource on when travelling; as, she was seen holding it on the side that was visible on several occasions, and on the less visible side during a select few. Furthermore, she was never once seen abandoning her play when either of these educators was in the vicinity of C1. In contrast to Asli, Yelda was seen exercising the tactic of abandoning resource on one occasion only. Here, approximately a minute into a picnic-party on C1, she and Sabah quickly left for the shelving unit when they saw Mrs Terry had arrived. They then watched her for roughly three minutes, as she talked to their peers who were working on a puzzle; and only returned when she left.

All three of the children also appeared to exercise the hiding resource tactic when they played with the PD outside of the role-play anywhere on C1; this was by making sure to keep the resource on or inside the dishes. Whilst I did not ask Asli and Fadila why they did this, Yelda told me it was to keep Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer from seeing that they had the resource; she was also seen reminding her peers to do the same as her on many occasions. It is likely that Fadila and Yelda were also doing this to keep the PD from sticking to C1, as they had stressed to me in other conversations (see 6.2.2).

Fadila was also seen trying to hide the PD on two other occasions when she was on C1. In the first, when she arrived on C1 and saw that Mrs Tanveer was stood at the role-play's entrance, she quickly sat next to me on the shelving unit and placed the resource on the floor beside her ankle. In the second, as she sat next to me in the same spot, she quickly put the PD in her pocket when she saw Mrs Terry arrive. Unlike Asli and Yelda, however, when transporting the PD, Fadila was observed trying to hide it in various ways. During one instance for example, when Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO were the only two educators in the classroom, she swung it in her hand – on the side that was not visible to Mrs PPA – as she walked to the role-play; in another, she held it close to her thigh on the side that was not visible to Mrs Terry (at table 3) and Mrs Tanveer (RA); and, in April she held the tray that the PD was on close to her chest, tilted her head forward and lowered her gaze, as she walked down the opposite end of the classroom in Mrs Terry's line of sight. On this day and when she was making a second trip,

however, whilst she was able to walk behind Mrs Terry's table and onto C1 with the tray: she was seen and asked to return it.

On two separate occasions, Fadila also used the role-play to hide; and on two others, she went to the RA – though it is unclear whether this was to avoid detection, to play, or for both reasons. As, during these latter two, she sat on the floor and talked to her peers; I did not see her looking outside it at any point. During her tour, she told me that the role-play was for hiding, but did not mention the RA:

> Fadila: We can hide in there…(*points: role-play*).
> Me: Anywhere else?
> Fadila: No.
> Me: What about there…(*point: reading area*).
> Fadila: (*Shrugs*).

(TOUR: 12:25-12:35, 18.03.13)
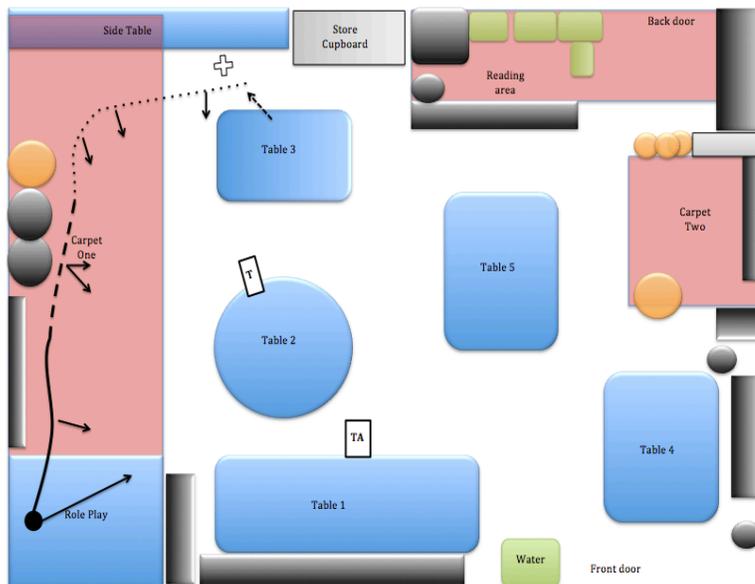
Map 3: Asli
(13:35: 24.09.12)

6.3.3 Peer tactics

In addition to using the various tactics discussed above, the three children were also observed using several others with their peers. Asli and Yelda were seen using *persuasion*, *negotiation* and *compromise* in different ways and with certain peers; and Fadila was observed using the tactic of *saving*.

In all of the times that Asli was seen using the former three, I saw that this was when either or both Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer were present; and, all of these took place on a Monday afternoon or another day of the week – explicitly, when Mrs Terry was in charge. The majority of the instances of persuasion took place between Asli and Hania or Mary although it is unclear why she tried to encourage these children only; as, the two times when I asked her soon of these took place, she shrugged her shoulders. During some of these Asli was successful, as the child went to collect the PD for her and brought it back; in others, she was not because they refused. On one occasion, I also observed her asking her best friend Odessa to get the PD for her; when Odessa refused, first she tried to negotiate with her and then to reach a compromise. When negotiating, she started by stating that she needed the resource, and then said she would 'make' something for her if she brought it; to compromise, she offered to give Odessa her turn to style my hair, which is something she both enjoyed doing and had negotiated with me a few minutes prior.

In the main, Yelda was observed using these three tactics largely within another one – specifically, *turn-taking* – which she jointly exercised with Sabah. From November through February, I saw the two children take it in turns to fetch the PD on several occasions; and on one, Fadila offered to go after Sabah when she said she did not want to go. During these, then, Sabah and Yelda would negotiate whose turn it was to go first or whose turn it was next; if one of them did not want – or refused – to go, the other would try to persuade her and/or to reach a compromise. When I asked Yelda why they did this, she simply said it was Sabah's 'turn to get the food'. There were also two times when Yelda persuaded her peers Sabah and Aana to bring the PD for her and the rest of the group; on both occasions the children went.

When I asked Fadila why, aside from the one occasion above, I had not see her taking it in turns with her peers to collect the PD, or asking them to get it for her, she told me that this was because she 'preferred' to do it herself:

> Fadila: I just go myself
> Me: Do you ask your friends?
> Fadila: No
> Me: Why not?
> Fadila: (*Shrugs*)…I don't want to…(*shrugs*)…I go quickly, and then I come back.

(OBS: 14:40, 22.04.13)

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One tactic that I only saw Fadila using – and this was on one day only, was *saving*. In April, as she was about to leave for the role-play with a tray carrying PD, Odessa offered to 'watch' Mrs Terry for her – which she then did. When I asked them about this, they told me the following:

> Fadila: She was looking at Mrs Terry and I was looking.
> Me: What did you see? Did Mrs Terry see Fadila?
> Odessa: No, she was writing.
> Me: What if she wasn't writing and she was looking around the room?
> Odessa: I will save her.
> Fadila: Thank you. I'll save you as well; you want to go? You want to go now? I'll save you.
> Odessa: No I don't want to.
> Fadila: Okay, I can save you the other time.

(OBS: 14:20-14:25, 22.04.13)

It appears, then, that this tactic had perhaps been employed before, as both children seemed to a) be familiar with the activity, and b) know what was expected of the peer who was charged with the 'saving'. What is more, not only did saving seem to involve observing an educator's activities, but also – and perhaps – alerting the travelling child when it was thought their endeavours were about to be discovered.

6.4 Discussion

In bringing this chapter to a close, I reflect on some of the key themes discussed with regard to the children's endeavours and experiences. When looking at the children's navigations of the no-play dough rule, together with their talk in connection with these, one can note that whilst these were, from an objective perspective, resistances of it – since they *did* remove the PD from the designated-table(s), and *travel* and *play* with it elsewhere; although accepting that their actions were not in compliance with it, in Fadila and Yelda's view these were actually a compromise. Furthermore, these two children's comments show that whilst, on the one hand, they both understood the reason for the rule and tried to respect it – and therefore agreed with it to a degree; on the other, they also disagreed with it because they strongly believed that they *were* able to play with the resource without it getting stuck to C1. From their perspectives, then, in both being able to – and actually doing – the latter, their endeavours were judicious; as, not only were they paying due regard to the reason, but they were also keeping the classroom tidy (the latter was not a reason for the rule, but it appeared they saw it as an added benefit which resulted from their activities).

The children's use of the tactics not only shows the various ways in which they tried to realise the strategy of acquiring-play dough, and how they attempted – and were largely able – to keep their endeavours covert; but also, and equally significantly, how they drew on their knowledge and past experiences to decide how to act in the present. For one, Asli's decisions on whether or not to collect the PD; the children's decisions on how and where to travel; and, their surveillance – whether great, little, or none at all – of certain educators' activities, all indicate: they each had a 'simplifying model' (adult risk registers) that they were using (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.979). This model, comprising how each educator enforced the rule, was based on their knowledge and past experiences; and was drawn on before, during and after each time they acted in the present (*Ibid.,* p.979).

Secondly, and following on from the first point, the children's actions during their travels suggests that they both continuously paid attention to what was happening around them and relied on their 'models' in order to decide how to act during 'evolving' situations (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.971). For example, when Asli made multiple trips during the ten-minute window when Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO were in the classroom, it can be said that both before and during her travels, she 'anticipated' the 'ease' with which she could realise her 'project' (Archer, 2003, p.5-6). This is because a) the educators had not enforced the rule in the past, and b) they had not enforced the rule the first time she made the trip that day; she therefore made the most of the 'propitious circumstances' (*Ibid*., p.5-6). Likewise, in the instances when Asli and Yelda changed course as soon as an educator walked into the classroom (or respectively smiled at her, in one); one could suggest that, here, the children assessed the changes and drew on their 'models' to decide whether or not their 'projects' would be 'constrained' – and accordingly, how best to act (*Ibid*., p.5-6). Asli, it seems, decided Mrs Tanveer's presence was going to 'obstruct' the 'achievement of' her project, so she 'abandoned' it (*Ibid*., p.5-6); and whilst Yelda also decided the former on one occasion, in the others she 'strategically' found a way around it by taking the longer routes (*Ibid*., p.6). Lastly, the three children's repeated use of certain tactics when Mrs Terry and/or Mrs Tanveer were in the classroom, indicates that they were consciously recalling and re-exercising 'schemas' (of action) that they had previously employed and had found to be successful (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.975).

The children navigated the rule in the ways that they did so they could include the PD as a prop in their role-playing. For them, as some of the excerpts presented in 6.2.1 show, having the resource was both a play-related 'need' – namely, as 'food' in family and picnic-party themes, and medicine for the babies in the surgery; and an interest, because they 'liked' manipulating

and playing with it[63]. In this regard, then, it can be said that the children's endeavours were the manifestation of them trying to fulfil or realise their play-related needs and interests. However, and in spite of the fact that they regularly played with the resource from September 2012 through March 2012, Mrs Terry (and Mrs Tanveer) was neither aware of how often they took it and why, nor of what they did with it:

> I don't know, I think…they like to show each other and what they've made don't they; they like to show us too. They don't take it often….when they want to show off what they've made.

(FN: 14.01.13)

A number of points can be made about this. First, it perhaps demonstrates that the children's endeavours to keep their activities covert were largely successful. I use the term largely here because there were three times when they were seen travelling with the PD[64] and a select few during the first two terms when a small piece was found stuck to C1. Secondly, it perhaps shows another dimension to the children's *hiding resource* tactic. That is, Asli, Fadila and Yelda may have been using the distance between the role-play end of C1 (where the play often took place) and the educators (during the free play sessions they were usually stationed at a table) to keep their activities hidden. Lastly, this raises the question of how much of the children's interests educators are able to learn about via observation (as is recommended in the EYFS; DfE, 2012, p.10; DfE, 2017, p.13) alone; but also, how much of their interests children 'reveal' to educators when being observed. Since the rule was created for practical reasons, it is likely that even if Mrs Terry did become aware of the children's preferences she may not have removed it. Indeed, during our meeting in January 2018, she told me that she had kept it for the same reasons.

In this chapter, I have not discussed how the rule affected the children's play experiences. This is partly because it did not appear to impact on their episodes overall; but also – and perhaps owing to the former, because the children did not seem to understand my questions whenever I asked them about this. To elaborate, most of their journeys were made when they had not yet started their play; and when they left, the remaining child(ren) would prepare the other resources. Likewise, if they left during a play episode, they would often be back and playing within 15-45 seconds. The main time that the children's play was perhaps constrained by the

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[63] In their conversations with me the children often used the terms 'need', 'want' and 'like' when explaining why they wanted the PD on C1.

[64] One is mentioned near the end of 6.3.2 (Fadila was seen); another two took place outside of my observations and involved Fadila and Yelda once each.

rule was when they abandoned it. However, during these, Asli would watch her peers playing and rejoin as soon as the educator left; and, in the one instance discussed, Yelda and Sabah immediately picked up their play – though for the first 30 seconds or so they looked at Mrs Terry twice each. The children's confusion towards my questions, then, perhaps indicates that they did not consider the rule as a constraint on their play overall – but rather as a somewhat burden since it prevented them from engaging in it openly; as, they often responded to these with explanations of what the reason for the rule was (all three), and/or how they were respecting (Fadila and Yelda).

CHAPTER 7:

Navigating two wooden floor related rules

In the previous chapter, I presented and discussed Asli, Fadila and Yelda's navigations of the no-play dough rule. In this chapter, I consider Aahid and Masood's – and partly Asli and Fadila's – navigations of two rules that were to do with the wooden-floored parts of the classroom, specifically: one which forbade the children from crawling on the wooden floor, and another from building constructions on it.

In this chapter, I present and discuss the data in the same way that I did in Chapter 6, though I look at the children's experiences and endeavours in connection with one rule first, and then in relation to the other. To offer some context to the children's endeavours, I start by looking at the reasons for the rule(s) and the children's understandings of these; the reasons and motivations behind their endeavours; and then their perspectives on the rule(s). This is followed by a discussion of how the children navigated the rule(s), together with the kinds of tactics that they appeared to use. Here, to show what their endeavours looked like in practice, two of the maps that I made are also included. At various junctures throughout the discussion, I also consider the ways in which the rule(s) shaped, enabled and/or constrained the children's play-related experiences and endeavours.

7.1 The no-crawling rule: reasons and understandings

The no-crawling rule prohibited the children from crawling on the wooden floor, which covered the entire middle of the classroom. Instead, the children were to use the carpeted parts of the classroom – of which there were three: C1, C2 and the RA. Mrs Terry created the rule 'many years ago' for safety reasons:

> It's to ensure they don't get hurt. They fall over the cars, when they're not looking. Or they forget and go to do something else, and then someone falls over it. It happens every year: one forgets and then another falls over. So, it's to make sure they're not getting hurt…health and safety.

(FD: 12.11.12)

Whilst the children were aware of the reason for rule, a few of them believed that it was also to keep the classroom from becoming untidy and the resources from breaking. This may have been

because Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer often reminded them to put a set of resources away before taking out another; and, Mrs Terry regularly spoke about handling the resources with care:

> Fadila: Cars will break!
> Aahid: How?
> Fadila: The children will stamp, and they will fall.
> Aahid: No they don't. Mrs Tanveer said they do that.

(OBS: 11:00-11:15, 10.06.13)

> Fadila: Because the children can be hurt, and…because…they make the classroom messy.
> Aahid: Yeh…but we are not making mess…(*shakes head*).
> Fadila: We just put it back…(*points: C2*).
> Aahid: Because the children will fall because they slip…then skid on the cars.

(OBS: 10:15, 10.07.13)

7.1.1 Children's reasons and motivations

Whilst Aahid and Masood understood the reason for the rule, throughout their time in reception they were regularly observed resisting it. Whilst I look at the ways in which the two children did this – and the kinds of tactics that Aahid and his best friends Aqeel, Hamza and Nazir (referred to as 'the group' from here onwards) exercised in 7.2, in this section I look at the reasons behind their endeavours. To offer some context, first I briefly describe what kinds of resources were offered on the two main carpets. C1 (left of classroom) was the largest of the three carpets. Here, the children played with the construction-type resources – e.g. large wooden building blocks, different sized Lego, and Duplo; whilst some of these were stored in the shelving unit on C1, the majority were kept in the classroom's store cupboard, which only the adults had access to. At the start of the morning session, the children could choose which set of resources to take out; if they wanted to take out another they could do so, providing no one was playing with the former. This was because the space was used for a number of other activities (see 8.1 and 8.3.2.2). C2 and the RA (right of classroom) were each half the size of C1. On these, the children could play with the transport-related resources that were stored there. Namely, three rugs (one farm; two different road maps); four larger resources – a train track, plastic tube, and two cardboard ramps – the latter three were each approximately half a metre long; and a large number of small vehicles. Here, the children could take out as many resources as they wanted at one time, as long as there were 'not too many'. Whilst they were allowed to play with the smaller resources that were located on each of these carpets anywhere in the classroom, they were not to remove and play with C2 and the RA's larger resources elsewhere; the same was the case for

the larger resources that were offered on C1. The children were never once seen circumventing this rule. When I asked Aahid and Masood why, they told me it was because the educators would notice it right away:

> Aahid: No…they will see it
> Masood: No they see.
> Me: But you crawl sometimes and they don't always see you.
> Aahid: (*Shakes head*)…they can see them, they are bigger.
> Masood: Big…Mrs Tanveer see that one.

> (OBS: 09:40, 13.05.13).

Furthermore, whilst there were no specific rules on how the children were to play with the resources on the carpets, there were two points that Mrs Terry said she looked out for, specifically: if the play was safe and the resources were being handled with care:

> I don't have any restrictions: they can explore with the resources and the materials and go where the play leads them. But I *will* stop them if it becomes dangerous or if they're damaging the resources.

> (DISC, 10.07.13)

Dangerous play, for her, was when the children could potentially hurt themselves or their peers:

> …if it involves stepping on the resources, throwing them or breaking them; or, if they're maybe making a tall…unstable…structure.

> (As above)

When asked how often the children were reminded to refrain from building tall structures or mishandling resources, Mrs Terry said she could not recall the last time. Indeed, during my observations the children were never once asked to alter or cease their play on the carpets.

Throughout the year, Aahid and Masood were seen crawling on the wooden floor – going between C1, C2 and/or the RA. The main reason behind their actions appeared to be that they enjoyed crawling with their peers:

> Masood: I like it; that one…(*points: wooden floor*)…and my cars there…Amir…(*points: Amir*)…me do that.

Aahid: Because…it is fun and I like it; we like playing on the floor, and I like my friends when they play with me.
Me: Is that why you push your cars on the floor with them?
Aahid: (*Nods*)…it is fun.

(OBS: 13:20, 13.02.13)

Aahid: Because…it is fun!
Masood: And me, that fun.

(OBS: 09:40, 13.05.13)

The other reason looked to be closely connected with the development and extension of their play, which involved incorporating the resources that were available on all of the carpets; at least, this was the case for Aahid and his group. Throughout the year, for example, the group created elaborate storylines, which encompassed a plethora of resources and were played out across a large part of the classroom space. The two recurring themes in these narratives were the 'bad dungeon' and the 'super bridge'. Before commencing their play, the group would bring a number of vehicles from C2 to C1 and then build a dungeon or bridge out of the construction resource that was out. Over the school year, the dungeon was made out of wooden blocks, large Lego and K'Nex; and the bridge was fashioned using the interlinks (gears), Duplo and large Lego. At the same time, they would discuss the direction of their upcoming play. As the play progressed, and if they thought it were possible, they would travel with their vehicles from the bridge/dungeon (C1) to C2 or the RA; there, they would incorporate whatever resources were out into their play. For instance: the farm would be a police station where their cars were trapped; the animals, thieves who were after their cars; the ramps, their getaway motorways; and, the children there, the monsters, formula one racers, and 'mad people'.

Whilst the group 'could' have kept these storylines to one carpet, it appeared that, for them, the 'fun' was in both the incorporation of numerous resources *and* the joint travel between the carpets. As, in addition to saying that they 'liked' crawling (above), Aahid and his group stressed the importance of the journey:

Me: You can make the dungeon here? [C2].
Aqeel: No, we can't; we don't have the blocks.
Aahid: (*Shakes head*).
Hamza: We can't: all the blocks are there [C1].

Aahid: We can't have them here.
Me: What do you have here?
Aahid: Tunnels…and this [ramp].
…
Me: Why did you crawl here? You could have walked here [C1].
Aahid: We have to come there; we have to be quiet.
Me: Why?
Aahid: If we be loud, then the police will hear us.
Aqeel: They will get us.
Hamza: We can steal the animals, then we will escape to here on the floor [C1].

(OBS: 14:30, 18.12.12)

Whereas Masood's navigation of the rule appeared to be for the same reasons as Aahid's, as he also travelled with the vehicles and played with these on the larger resources, it also seemed to be driven by his desire to be included in the group's play. I suggest this because during all of the instances in which the group crawled from one carpet to another: if Masood were at one of these carpets, he stopped what he was doing and observed their activities. Whilst there were two times when he remained on the carpet and watched them as they played and then left; on all other occasions, he stood up and looked at them travel down the wooden floor to their next destination. And during a number, he crawled behind them. Despite his efforts though, the group were not seen including Masood in their play; most of the time they refused to acknowledge him, and on some occasions (though not Aahid), they told him to stop 'following' or 'copying' them. Furthermore, on three of the six days that I saw Masood crawling on the wooden floor with a vehicle, he appeared to be imitating the group's actions, which he had observed earlier that day. In November, for example, after following and then mimicking the group place their vehicles on a Lego bridge on C1 in the morning; in the afternoon Masood did the same as he travelled between C1 and C2.

7.1.2 Children's perspectives

To try to understand why they resisted the rule, knowing both the reason – and the other two that were assumed to be – behind it, I asked Aahid and Masood about this. Their responses, particularly Aahid's, not only revealed the reasoning behind their resistances but also their perspectives on these reasons and the rule. Here, I am referring to Aahid's comments, which are presented in 7.1, and the excerpts from my conversations with the two children that are offered below. First, that they did not necessarily agree with the reasons because they had neither observed nor experienced the following, children: a) falling over vehicles on the wooden floor

(both children), b) stepping on the vehicles and thereby damaging or breaking them (Aahid), and c) Sunflowers becoming messy owing to their conscious or unconscious negligence (Aahid).

Secondly, these indicated that they had not only thought about the reasons for the rule, but also about how they could respect these whilst also meeting their own play-related interests. Indeed, in the same way Fadila and Yelda made sure the PD did not stick to C1, and to return it post play (see Chapter 6): Aahid and Masood did this by making sure they did not leave vehicles on the wooden floor during their travels, and to return these to their rightful carpets or storage post play. Certainly, during my observations I saw both children returning the resources; and, in all my time in the classroom, never once heard an educator reminding them or others to remove these from the non-carpeted parts of the floor. This not only demonstrates the children's strict application of their compromise with the rule, but also indicates that they were perhaps aware of the rule at all times.

Lastly, and on the topic of compromise, it appeared the children considered their endeavours to be justified. This is for the reason that, like Fadila and Yelda (again, in connection with the no-play dough rule), they had noted that because they did the former (second point), the educators' reason(s) for the rule had never become a reality – specifically, they had never seen children hurting themselves (first point). For Aahid, this looked to be a strong contention, as in all of the conversations that I had with him and his peers, he strongly counteracted the reasons for the rule by referring to his own experiences and observations (see e.g. excerpts in 7.1). Below, then, are excerpts from the discussions that I had with the two children (and Asli and Amir):

> Me: Maybe because children might fall over them.
> Aahid: I didn't fall.
> Asli: And me.
> Aahid: Nobody…we didn't give children plasters.
> …
> Me: Maybe someone would forget and leave a car there.
> Aahid: (*Thinking*)…I don't leave it; I put it there…(*points: C1*)…it is okay.
> Me: Do you? Why?
> Aahid: (*Thinking*)…mm…I make the classroom tidy…than I take the cars…and then, no children fall…because I don't leave the car there.

> (OBS: 09:50, 15.10.12)

> Me: What did Mrs Tanveer say, why are you not...(shaking head)…allowed to push cars on this floor?
> Masood: No…(*thinks*).
> Amir: They…we…children falling.
> Masood: No! No, me not fall there!

Me: What if Aahid or Nazir walk there, but they don't see your car and they fall over it?
Masood: NO! No not falling!
…
Amir: No we didn't leave the car there.
Me: But, you might forget.
Masood: No, that [car] me […] here [C1].

(OBS: 10:20, 20.05.13)

In this main section, I have looked at what the children's understandings of the reasons for the rule were, and explained that they appeared to disagree with these because they were able to prevent these from becoming realised in practice. The latter is likely to be one of the reasons why the children continually resisted the rule over the course of the school year (the other reasons are discussed in 7.3.1). In the next main section I discuss how they endeavoured to resist the rule in order to play with resources on C1, C2 and/or the RA by crawling on the floor.

7.2 Aahid (and his group's) and Masood's endeavours

In the same way that Asli, Fadila and Yelda acted tactically (Chapter 6), Aahid and his group were observed employing a number of tactics to realise the strategy of crawling whilst avoiding adult detection. The *crawling-strategy*, then, encompasses these children's desire to crawl on the wooden floor whilst pushing vehicles; the objective of *avoiding detection* is the same as that described in Chapter 6 (see 6.3). Although Masood only appeared to use one tactic (adult surveillance), and this was towards the end of the year, his navigation of the rule is also considered. In the below sub-sections I respectively present the children's endeavours, which were observed over the course of their time in reception.

7.2.1 Aahid (and his group): A strategy, an objective and several tactics

In total, I saw Aahid crawl between C1, C2 and/or the RA twenty-three times during my observations of him. When looking at his resistance of the rule, two similarities can be drawn between his endeavours and those of Asli, Fadila and Yelda noted in Chapter 6. The first is that Aahid looked to be using several of the same tactics that the three children were (discussed in due course); the second, when deciding if – and if so – when and how to travel, his group and he also based these on their 'shared' *adult risk register*. With regard to the latter, what is perhaps significant here is that, like the former three children, he seemed not only to have 'ranked' each educator based on his past experiences and observations of how they had enforced the no-

crawling rule; but also, and within this, on if – and if so, how much – each of them was likely to shout. Indeed, when I asked them if they looked at any of the adults when they crawled on the wooden floor – and if so why, Aahid and his peers told me the following:

Aqeel: Mrs Terry.
Me: Why?
Aahid: She says 'stop now'.
Me: Do you look at any other teachers?
Aahid: Mrs Tanveer! She's will say 'stop'!
Me: You look at her too?
Nazir: Yes.
Me: Mrs SENCO?
Nazir: Sometimes.
Hamza: But she's not gunna shout.
Aahid: She doesn't shout.
Me: Mrs PPA?
Aqeel: No.
Aqeel: She doesn't say anything enit?
Aahid: (*Shaking head in agreement*).

(OBS: 10:40-10:45, 03.06.13)

In view of the above, and when taking into account the children's endeavours which will be discussed below, it seems that Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were at the top of the hierarchy – that is, they were most likely to enforce the rule; and Mrs SENCO, Mrs PPA and other support staff at the bottom, as it was thought they were the least likely to enforce it or shout.

But it was not only for the above reasons that Aahid believed Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer posed the most risk to his endeavours in connection with the no-crawling rule, as he – and indeed the rest of the children but Masood – was also of the impression that they would tell him to put his name on the sad side of Sunflower's behaviour reinforcement chart:

Fadila: Mrs Terry's guna say 'sad side!'.
Asli: She will shout.
Fadila: Shout 'sad side!
Asli: 'Stop that naughty!'
Aahid: Mrs Tanveer will shout at me; tell me to put my name there; but I didn't go on the sad side, never.

(OBS: 11:00-11:15, 10.06.13)

It can be said, then, that the reason why Aahid (and his group) tried to keep his circumventions of the rule covert was because he wanted to avoid being seen and therefore reprimanded by

either of the two permanent members of staff – whether this were in the form of being 'shouted' at, asked to stop, or told to put his name on the sad side. Indeed, Aahid's (and the other children's) observations were close to the truth, as during my observations and my time in the classroom in general, I often saw Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer asking the children to stop crawling and reminding them of the rule; I never once heard Mrs PPA or Mrs SENCO enforce the rule.

In spite of the fact that Aahid and his group viewed Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer to pose the most risk to their endeavours, they were seen crawling when either one or both of them were in the classroom in almost half of the instances that I noted. When considering the possible reasons as to why this was the case, one could suggest that it was because of one or more of the following three. First, Aahid and his group's desire to crawl may have outweighed their fear of being seen (and accordingly, experiencing the consequences). Secondly, the children had found that they were able to keep their activities and play covert; as, in all of the instances that I noted, they were only seen in one of these (by Mrs Terry). Lastly, it may have been due to the fact that Aahid, like the children in Critchlow (2007), had noticed the educators never actually put his or his peers' names on the sad side; this can be seen in the former excerpt above, where he claims that he has 'never' had to do it. Certainly, Aahid's experience was not unique to him; as in all of my time in classroom, I saw Mrs Terry use the sad side three times only and Mrs Tanveer not once (see also 9.5). In July Mrs Terry told me why she preferred not to use it:

> The sad siiide…it's for serious offences only; you know, being *really*, *really* mean; you know, on purpose…or, hurting children physically, or on purpose – like really, being *really* unkind. That's a 'no'. I won't have that in my class. Some teachers use it constantly: *all-the-time* – not me, I only use it for serious offences; so they know they've done something out of order.

> (DISC: 10.07.13)

And that if a child were seen snubbing the rule, she would rather reiterate the reasons behind it:

> …I would rather explain, you know, safety reasons and why.

> (As above)

If the children were seen crawling on the floor, typically Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer would remind them of the rule and ask them to stop. If they were seen repeatedly doing this during a session, the educators would tell them that they had made them 'sad' or 'not happy'. On two separate

occasions, Mrs Tanveer asked a child (Ishaq and Amir) to sit next to her and 'think' about his actions.

All of the tactics that the group chose to exercise, then, appeared to be based on their shared adult risk register; and – as mentioned above – this was in the hope that Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer would not detect their endeavours. In the remainder of this section, I discuss how he used three tactics, which were the same as those that Asli, Fadila and Yelda employed when wanting to play with the PD – namely: *calculated movements*, *adult surveillance* and *pace* (see 6.3.1 on explanations of each one). A notable difference between the former children's endeavours and Aahid's is that in every single instance that was observed, I saw him and his group work collaboratively and travel as a collective. Furthermore, the majority of the decisions were either made or agreed by most members of the group before execution; and often, both before and during their travels, they would rely on each other's judgements.

The first difference that I observed between the ways in which Aahid and his group acted when either or both Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were in the classroom – and when the former were not but Mrs PPA was (together with various members of support staff) – was in the route(s) that they decided to take. To elaborate, whenever either or both the former educators were present – aside from the one occasion in November when the group went behind Mrs Tanveer whilst she was sat at table three: in all of the others that I observed, they travelled down the far end of the classroom. During his tour, when I asked Aahid to show me where he would crawl if Mrs Terry were sat at table three and he wanted to go from C1 to C2: Aahid left C1 between tables one and two, and then went between tables four and five to C2. It appeared he and his peers did this because they believed the distance between the adults and them reduced the likelihood of being seen; as he mentioned this during his tour, and on another occasion when I saw him actually make this journey when Mrs Terry was at the same table. Below is an excerpt from the latter conversation; and at the end of this section Map 4 illustrates the journey I discuss here:

> Hamza: Mmmm…because it's far.
> Me: From?
> Aahid: Mrs Terry.
> Aqeel: She doesn't see us here.
> Me: Really?
> Aahid: (*Nodding*)…the tables are blocking us.

(OBS: 13:15-13:20, 26.03.13)

In the latter educator's company, however, although I saw the group crawling down the far end of the classroom on several occasions; there were a number of times when they travelled directly in front of her table; paused beside it to talk; and, crawled next to – or around – it.

Secondly, whenever either or both the former adults were present, Aahid and his group were observed either making a single trip from one carpet to another, or two trips which involved a return journey. Conversely, whilst they were also seen doing the former when only Mrs PPA was in charge (Mrs SENCO was present in some of these), on two occasions I saw them travelling between C1 and C2 multiple times. Indeed, in the April instance I recorded a total of six trips; in the June one I recorded three. Here, the children seemed to be making the most of the 'propitious circumstances' (Archer, 2003, p.6); namely, the fact that the former two educators were not in the classroom, and the latter – who, in their experience, did not enforce the rule – was the only one present. For, they mentioned these factors when I asked them about their endeavours during the June instance:

> Me: Are you not worried that a teacher might see you?
> Hamza: (*Shakes head grinning*).
> Aahid: They are not here.
> Me: Who?
> Aahid: Mrs Terry.
> Hamza: Mrs Tanveer.
> Me: Mrs PPA…(*whisper*).
> Aahid: (*Laughs*)…she doesn't shout.

(OBS: 10:50-10:55, 10.06.13)

The third difference was in how much Aahid observed the educators' activities. In the former educators' company, I saw him observing what they were doing before and during his travels. Here, he did not seem to look at one educator more than he did the other; both of their activities were surveilled either many times or at least once each. With regard to the latter point, this may have been because I was looking particularly at Aahid's gaze during these instances; and, as I explain in 7.2.1.1, it may have been that it was one or more of the other members who were 'in charge' of looking during these. In perhaps stark contrast, in all of the instances that were noted but one – and fleetingly at that: I never once saw Aahid looking in Mrs PPA's direction.

Fourthly, in the majority of the instances that took place when either or both of the former educators were in Sunflowers, I noticed that either Aahid and the group started their journeys slowly, and then picked up the speed; or they adjusted their pace during these. When the children crawled slowly, this appeared to be because they were trying to determine if or when

the 'coast was clear', as here – and just before they began to crawl quickly, I saw Aahid looking at the educators' activities. Equally, and when moving quickly, they did not look in the adults' directions once. Furthermore, on the few occasions that I was able to hear their talk during these, I heard one or more members of the group (including Aahid) directing the others to pick up the pace – either when or soon after observing the educators. Whilst there were some instances during which the group crawled slowly and then sped up when Mrs PPA alone was in charge, this did not seem to be related to the objective of avoiding detection. The reasons being a) as mentioned earlier, the children never looked in her direction, and b) their endeavours and talk – from what I could hear – looked to be entirely connected to their play.

Point 'b' above is linked to another difference that I noted. That is, whilst the children largely played out variations of the same narratives throughout the school year when either or both Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were present (as mentioned in 7.1.1); on the two occasions when it was Mrs PPA alone in charge, I saw them fashion and engage in a more scientific form of play. In the April instance, for example, they trialed how their vehicles performed each time further weight was added. Here, Aahid and Hamza both suggested that each member of the group drive their 'trucks' (K'Nex creations) to the 'other carpet' (C2) and back; each time that they returned (C1), they were to affix another piece to their creation and then repeat the trip. The group did this; and the three times that they arrived back at C1 they briefly discussed how their vehicles had performed. In the June instance, the group compared how different vehicles had performed on the wooden floor. Here, they each started with a vehicle on C1, swapped these between each other when they got to C2, and then switched once more when they returned to C1. Each time they arrived at a carpet, they discussed how their vehicle had performed and if they liked it or not; and took it in turns to talk and listen. Their talk during these meetings – in both instances – exhibited analytical thought and engagement that I had not seen during these instances before.

In view of the above, then, it can be said that the rule constrained the children's play when the two full-time members of staff were present, as the children a) were not able to freely move between the carpets and incorporate the various resources in their play, and b) they had to break from their play to discuss or exercise tactics (viz. before and during their travels). One could suggest that it perhaps also constrained their creativity and learning because the fear of being seen meant that they did not consider trying – or were perhaps reluctant – to create and/or engage in other kinds of play. Conversely, Mrs PPA's lack of enforcement (and the children's knowledge of this) enabled their play, creativity and learning.
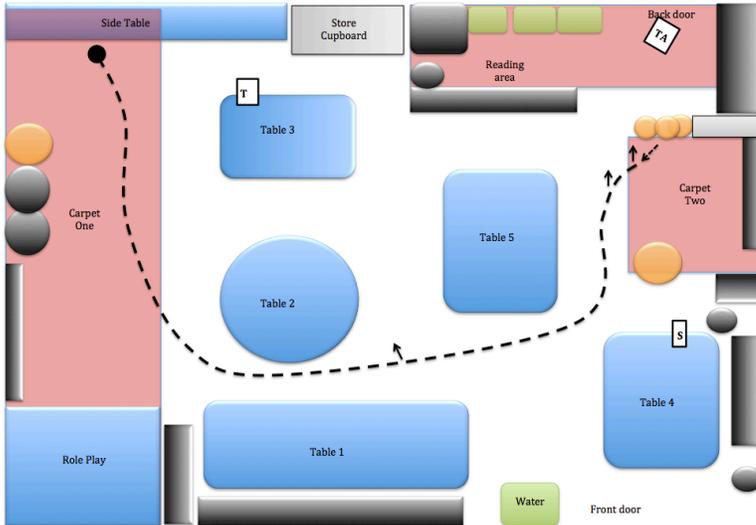
Map 4: Aahid
(13:15-13:20: 26.03.13)

7.2.1.1 Collaboration and performance

The conversations that Aahid and his group had before, during and occasionally after their travels show how they collaborated as a team not only to, and on the one hand, keep their endeavours covert; but also, on the other, exercise the tactic of *performance*. This involved maintaining the impression that they were acting in accordance with the rule. In this section, I present excerpts from some of these conversations so as to consider the way(s) in which they did this.

When looking at the children's talk before they left a carpet, I noticed that during each of these they would discuss: who would be leading, how and where they would all travel, and which member(s) would be keeping a lookout. In the below discussion, which took place before the children went from the RA to C1, for example, Aahid a) suggested they go behind Mrs Tanveer's table, and b) decided he would take the lead. Whilst Hamza considered the proposed route to be too risky and therefore decided not to join the others, Nazir and Aqeel agreed to it – with the latter member indicating this by declaring he would observe the educator's activities during their travels:

> Hamza: Noooo don't do it…don't!
> Aahid: It's okaaay; I can see [Mrs Tanveer]…we go back.
> Hamza: Don't! She's guna see. Let's go there…(*points: table five, then table one*).
> Aahid: No, we can go behind her; come.
> Nazir: Yeh, we can.

Hamza: Don't! I'm not going.
Aqeel: I'm looking.
Aahid: I'm going.

<p align="center">(OBS: 10:20-10:25, 12.11.12)</p>

To offer another example, when Hamza and Nazir suggested they went from C1 to C2 one afternoon in July, although Aahid decided against their proposal to begin with: after looking in Mrs Terry's direction (table one) he agreed, providing they went down the opposite side of the classroom (behind tables three and five). On this occasion, Aqeel decided he would lead and Hamza said he would observe Mrs Terry:

Aahid: No…(looks: Mrs Terry; looks at car, strokes it)…I don't want to now.
Nazir: But we can go quickly there!
Aahid: (*Looks: Nazir*)…but, then we…(*looks: direction of table three*)…we can…(*points: table three*)…go that way; I don't want to go there…(*points: middle of classroom*)…okay?
Nazir: Okay…(*nods*).
Aqeel: I will go first.
Hamza: I will look.

<p align="center">(OBS: 13:30, 9.07.12)</p>

Whilst, on one occasion, Aqeel informed the others that Mrs Terry had just walked into the classroom; their talk during their travels was largely to do with when it was time to pick up the pace. Here, as the below excerpt shows, it was usually one member who would tell the others when it was time to do this – often soon after looking at either or both Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer:

Aahid: (*Pauses; turns*)…fast…come on fastly.
Aqeel: (*Nods*).
Aahid: Mrs Terry's in the way.
Aqeel: (*Nods*).
Aahid: (*Looks: Mrs Terry, then pushes his car; this time moving quickly*).

<p align="center">(OBS: 13:10-13:15, 13.02.13)</p>

Twice, I saw the children 'pretending' to play with their vehicles so as to give the impression they were not resisting the rule. One was when a member believed Mrs Tanveer had looked in their direction (as they were about to leave C1); the other was soon after arriving on C1, when Aneesha threatened to inform Mrs Terry – who had just entered Sunflowers – about the group's

endeavours. In both, after Hamza and Nazir respectively told the children to 'push' their 'cars', all of the members did this whilst keeping their heads and gazes lowered (I discuss performance further in 7.5).

7.2.2 Masood

In total, I saw Masood crawl between C1, C2 and/or the RA a total of eight times during my observations. This is not to say that he very rarely travelled on the floor in this way, as he was seen following Aahid and his group on several occasions[65], and a number of other times when I was not specifically observing him. Unlike Aahid and his group, however, Masood did not appear to employ any tactics or to act according to an adult risk register. Barring one instance in June, I never once saw him looking at an educator before or during his travels; and, he did not appear to take a particular route to and from the carpets depending on which educators were present, or to alter the pace at which he moved. It was perhaps because he did not act tactically that Masood was spotted by either Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer three out of the eight times that he resisted the rule during an observation (this is exemplified in Map 5 below when Mrs Tanveer spots him). However, this may have also been because Masood was on the educators' radar – so to speak, and therefore noticed more than the others; as, during his first term in the classroom, he regularly and overtly resisted some of Sunflower's rules and the BEs. For instance, he would leave the carpet during registration and whole-class carpet sessions to play at the tables, physically hit his peers and refused to share (see 9.3 and 9.4). With regard to the June instance, although Masood did not look at either Mrs PPA (table three) or Mrs Tanveer (C1) as he left C2; when he passed the former educator's table, I saw him observing the latter's activities at least four times until he reached C1. Although it is not possible to say exactly why he did this, as when I asked him about it he did not seem to understand my questions, two reasons can be suggested. First, it may have been because it was the first time that one of the permanent members of staff was directly in his path (during my observations); and/or second, perhaps he had started to become aware of – and to use – the tactic of adult surveillance.

The rule, it can be said, constrained and enabled Masood's play-related endeavours and experiences. With respect to constraint, this is for the reasons that a) when he was seen, he had to halt his play and return to the respective carpet, and b) when he did return, he often hovered for a time – once for nearly a minute – before he commenced playing. But, and in relation to enablement, Masood's resistance of the rule towards the end of the year enabled him to realise

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[65] Although I noted it when I saw Masood following them, it is highly likely that I 'missed' many of these instances because I was not specifically looking to see if he had.

a play-related need or interest that he was not able to during the first two terms. To elaborate, over the majority of the year Masood and Amir regularly attempted but failed to join Aahid and his group's travel-linked play. However, towards the end of the second and beginning of the third terms, I saw them make several single trips together.
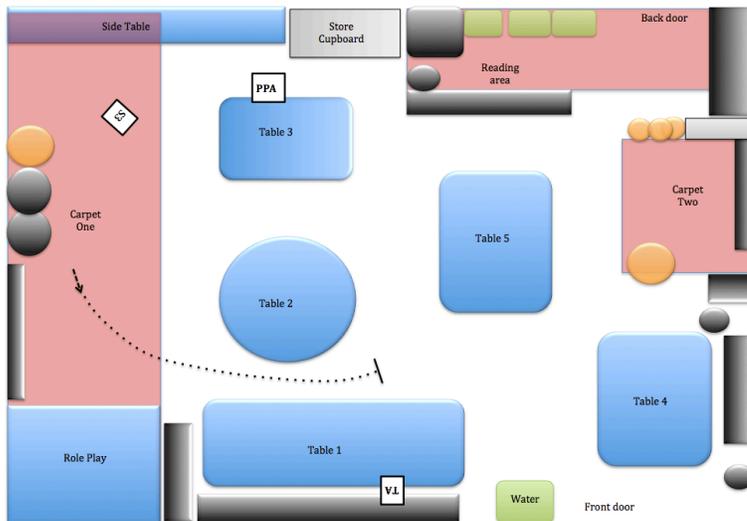
Map 5: Masood
(10:50: 29.04.13)

7.3 The no-building rule: reasons and understandings

In the discussion to this point, I have looked at what Aahid and Masood understood the reasons for the rule no-crawling rule were – and their perspectives on these; and how they tried to resist the rule so that they could crawl between C1, C2 and/or the RA. The discussion now turns to the children's endeavours in connection with the no-building rule. This rule forbade the children from building on any part of the wooden flooring. In this main section, I look at the reasons for it; what the children believed these reasons were – and their perspectives on these and/or the rule; and, the reasons and motivations behind their resistance of it.

Like the no-crawling rule, Mrs Terry said the no-building rule was created for health and safety reasons; that is, so that the children did not trip over the resources or hurt their heads when building under tables:

> …children going to the loo don't look at the floor and they just go flying over it, so for the health and safety aspect…

> …But you've got to have ground rules really haven't you…sometimes they build them all under the table and back; keep banging their heads. You've *got* to always think the ultimate sanction is whether they're safe in the classroom, and if you've got stuff all over the floor…

The children appeared to understand that this was for health and safety reasons – although they only spoke about falling over the resources. Again, and like the no-crawling rule, some also believed that it was to prevent the resources from breaking:

> Aahid: The children break it…because they will fall.
> Yelda: No. Children falling there.
> …
> Masood: They shouting me I do that; we fall; break it.

> Fadila: They said we will step on them and break them….then fall.
> Asli: Yeh. Children's will fall on them and breaks them.

For the most part, all of the children tried to apply the rule. Indeed, for the majority of the year, they were seen building – and trying to keep – their constructions on or between C2 and the RA. However, there were several times, spread across the three terms, when I saw Aahid and Masood – and Asli and Fadila twice each – resist the rule. In the following sub-section, I look at the reasons and motivations behind these endeavours.

7.3.1 Children's reasons and motivations

The large resources that the children often built with on or between C2 and the RA – and occasionally on the wooden floor off C2, were stored on the two spaces (namely, the train track, a plastic tube and two cardboard ramps). Mrs Terry was aware that, individually, C2 and the RA were not large enough for several children to play with all of these large resources at one time, so she often reminded them that they could build their constructions on and between the two carpets. Furthermore, although the children could bring the smaller resources from C1 to play with on C2 and the RA, they were not to take the large resources to C1. This was to keep the latter carpet from becoming overpopulated, as the children often engaged in a number of activities on it.

In total, I observed six instances of the children resisting the rule. Whilst I discuss these instances in more detail in 7.4, here I consider the reasons why they did this. When looking at

the children's explanations, which I sought partly during but mostly after I saw them building on the wooden floor – and considering these together with what I observed: it appears there were three interconnected reasons and motivations behind their endeavours. The first was to realise a shared interest, which was in building large off-the-carpet constructions through the combining of several different resources, together with their peers. As, in their conversations with me, all of the children said they both wanted and enjoyed doing this with others:

> Aahid: We put the tunnels together and we made one BIG tunnel!
> Fadila: We wanted to make a big tunnel, and the formula motorway. Then the cars can go through the tunnel...
> …
> Masood: Tunnel…that…me make big.
> Aahid: You like to make tunnels?
> Masood: (*Nods*).
> Fadila: And the motorways, I like making big motorways with the tracks and the…
> Masood: (*Nods*).
> Fadila: Because I can make them with my friends.
> Aahid: Me too. I like putting all the things there.
> Masood: I like make my friend.

(OBS: 10:55, 4.02.13)

The second reason was that the wooden floor enabled them to build sizeable constructions and to then play with these comfortably – or free from disruption. This was connected to two limitations, one that all of the children but Yelda[66] mentioned, and another that Aahid (and his group) often voiced. These were, respectively, that a) since C2 and the RA were heavily populated, there was not the space for them to build what they wanted to, and b) when they were able to do the former, they could not play with these for long because conflicts over the access would arise[67]. Resisting the rule, then, was believed to remedy these issues. Below are two excerpts from two separate conversations that I had with Aahid, in which he mentions all of the above:

> Aahid: No space [RA]...there is space here [wooden floor].
> Asli: There's no space there [C2].

(OBS: 11:00, 13.05.13)

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[66] This is because whenever I asked Yelda about this rule she chose not to answer my questions. This was perhaps because she was not interested in building – on the carpet or off – constructions, as I never once saw her engage in this type of play.

[67] I consider these to be two constraining aspects of the rule on the children's play. These are considered further in 7.3.2 and 7.4.1.

Aahid: All the time children are there…we can't play.
Hamza: They're reading in there.
Aahid: Yeh…(*points: children reading*)…and they're playing…(*points: children at construction*).
Me: But, you can play with that group…[children at construction].
Aahid: No, there's no space.
Aqeel: They all playing there
Hamza: There's too much children!
Aahid: We can't share…then we have to go.

(OBS: 13:10-13:15, 5.11.12)

The third reason was so that any number of children – who wanted to join the building and/or play – could do so; this was irrespective of whether or not they had been involved in the initial efforts. Indeed, on all of the occasions that I saw the participants resist this rule during an observation, the remaining children on C2 also joined them; and on the two that Mrs PPA alone was in charge (discussed 7.4.1), others from the RA and elsewhere also got involved. Furthermore, I never once saw one more of the children who had started the activity, asking or telling the others to leave.

7.3.2 Children's perspectives

Whenever I sought the children's perspectives on either the rule or the reasons for it, their responses – each time – were to do with how the former constrained their play. All of them, as mentioned above, would highlight that it prevented them from building large constructions, whilst Aahid would also bring up the former issue, and that a) overcrowding meant that he often could not build what he wanted to, and b) when he was able to, this led to conflicts over access between the children. These, he said, often resulted in him leaving the carpet(s). Indeed, the children's concerns were not far from the truth, as I discuss below. Here, I discuss Aahid and Masood's experiences, as, throughout the year, they were the two main participants who were observed trying to build and play with the resources on C2 and the RA.

The space available on C2 and the RA did appear to be a constraining factor. For one, oftentimes Aahid and Masood were not able to build in the RA (or between the former and C2) because the space would often be heavily populated. For example, Mrs Tanveer would regularly use it to listen to readers; children would be in there role-playing, playing with the puppets or reading books; and others would be trying to build smaller structures. The area was also a thoroughfare for educators accessing the store cupboard and children who wanted to go outside

to play or access their personal trays. Likewise, there were times when Mrs Tanveer either asked the children to refrain from building or to play 'quietly' so she could listen to the readers.

Secondly, when the children did try to act in accordance with the rule by keeping their constructions on C2, this often led to other issues. For the most part, they avoided these by making smaller constructions (i.e. using two of the larger resources and perhaps one/two sets of smaller ones) as this meant a) these were less likely to break, and b) they could navigate access to these as there would be space on the carpet to do this. However, whenever they made a larger one (i.e. all large resources and one/two sets of smaller ones), I saw them spend much of their time either fixing the parts that had come apart because their peers had stepped on these or accidently knocked the pieces, and/or dealing with conflicts.

Thirdly, and in relation to the latter points above, on the few occasions that the children were able to build large constructions between C2 and the RA; in all of these, their play was fragmented. On these occasions, for example, there were disagreements between the some of the children over access (or lack of) to the construction(s) and the resources; conflicts over the space and getting in one another's way; numerous negotiations over whose turn it was, where they were to be located, and which resources they could play with – which meant that they were breaking from their play to take part in these. In perhaps half of these, Aahid and his group eventually left the carpets altogether. Whilst I also saw Masood leave twice; during most of these instances, he either remained and tried to deal with the conflicts, or relocated to C2 to engage in solitary play.

This is not to say that the rule constrained the children's play at all times, as there were a number of times when I saw Aahid and his group building and playing with large constructions between C2 and the RA. When looking closely at these, however, and comparing them with the instances when they build off C2, a number of factors can be identified. Specifically, in all of the former, the children appeared to be making the most of the fact that half of the children had gone outdoors to play – and therefore, the space that had become available. In the latter, conversely – and perhaps because all of the children were indoors – it seemed the children partly did this because there were a) five or more children on C2, and b) several (and occasionally an adult) in the RA. The other reason, it can be said, was that they had noted Mrs Terry was not in Sunflowers. I discuss this latter point further in the next main section where I discuss the few times that I observed all of the children but Yelda resist the rule.

7.4 A strategy, an objective and several tactics

To realise the building-strategy, which was essentially to have a construction built on and around C2 to play with, and at the same time to *avoid detection*: the children largely appeared to exercise the tactics of *adult surveillance*, *pace* (see 6.3.1 for explanations) and *timing*. Timing involved quickly building a construction when it was believed the educator(s) present were either less likely to enforce the rule or not at all. In all of the instances observed, all of them – namely, Aahid, Asli, Fadila and Masood – seemed to act according to the same adult *risk register*. This had Mrs Terry at the top, Mrs Tanveer located somewhere in the middle, and Mrs PPA and other support staff at the bottom. I learned this through my observations of the children's activities, and their responses when I asked them what each educator would likely say or do if they were seen resisting the rule. Again, and as they did with the no-play dough and no-crawling rules, it looked like the children had based their impressions of if – and if so how much – each educator was likely to enforce the rule, on their past experiences and observations. And, they each expressed this to me by explaining if – and if so how much – they were likely to shout; as can be seen in the children's responses below:

> Masood: No…Mrs PPA.
> Fadila: Mrs Terry…and Tanveer…shouts.
> Aahid: Mrs Tanveer…sometimes…she shouts. Mrs Terry doesn't like it.
> Me: Mrs PPA and Mrs SENCO?
> Fadila: Mrs…PPA…no. Mrs Terry shouts…Mrs Tanveer's…sometimes.
> Masood: Mrs Terry shouting…me!

(OBS: 10:45, 4.02.13)

Similarly, Aahid and Asli believed that Mrs Terry would also ask them to put their names on the 'sad side' if they were seen.

7.4.1 The children's endeavours and experiences

In this sub-section, I look at the children's endeavours and experiences during the six times that I saw them resist the no-building rule. A noticeable difference is that whereas the children were seen resisting the no-play dough and no-crawling rules many times, here a much smaller number of such instances were observed. When looking at the reasons why this was the case, it appears this was because the children believed the adults were more likely to detect their endeavours, as it was not possible for them to keep these covert. Specifically, a) the

constructions were 'large' and could not be made less visible, and b) owing to the former, these could be seen from most parts of the classroom:

> Fadila: No…we can't they guna see them.
> Aahid: They're too big, they will see them.
> Asli: Because we can't hide them.
> Fadila: No…(*shakes head*)…Mrs Terry will see it.

(OBS: 10:45, 04.02.13)

> Asli: You know because Mrs Tanveer can see it from there…waves around classroom
> Masood: Mrs see me, say no.

(OBS: 11:00, 03.06.13)

What perhaps indicates that the children believed Mrs Terry posed the most risk to their endeavours was the fact that not only did I observe them resist the rule in her company the once only, but also this was early on in the school year (November). In all of the remaining five instances but one, Mrs Tanveer and Mrs PPA were both in charge; and in the sixth one, Mrs PPA alone was. In the former, Aahid (with his group) and Masood initiated the building twice each, and in the latter it was Aahid (with his group).

In all of the four instances when Mrs Tanveer and Mrs PPA were present, I noticed that Aahid and Masood acted similarly each time. First, before building both children looked at see what Mrs Tanveer was doing, and then quickly built their constructions. As they worked on these, they looked in her direction a number of times – but not once in Mrs PPA's; whereas Aahid would glance at the educator and then continue, Masood would pause, stand up and look at her for at least 2-3 seconds, and then carry on. When either one of them joined the other's play during these – which was every time; they would look at Mrs Tanveer beforehand, and then in the way I have described. On the day that Mrs PPA alone was in charge, however, whilst the children also built the construction quickly, they did not surveil her activities as much. Here, whereas Aahid looked at her before building, and then once fleetingly around a minute later: I did not see him looking at her after that. Likewise, Asli and Masood looked at her once each before they joined Aahid and the others.

The children's impressions about how much each educator was likely to enforce the rule were close to the truth. As, during the five instances that I discuss immediately above, whilst the adults did not 'shout', they did enforce the rule according to the children's risk register. To

elaborate, although Mrs PPA (bottom of register) was aware of the children's activities, she did not ask them to dismantle their constructions once; in fact, on one occasion, she complimented them on the size of it. Likewise, when Mrs Terry (top of register) walked into Sunflowers as the children played with their construction on the wooden floor, during the instance when Mrs PPA alone was in charge: she immediately told the children to relocate it to C2. During the four instances when Mrs Tanveer (somewhere in the middle) was also present, I saw that in two of these she asked the children to dismantle their creation (when they were nearly done building these); but, in the other two, she 'allowed' them to play for approximately ten minutes before she asked them to do so. After the latter two instances, when I asked her why she had decided to do this, she said it was for the reasons that the children were a) playing 'nicely' and 'quietly', b) looked like they were 'enjoying' themselves, and c) she did not think they were going to hurt themselves.

When looking at if – and if so how, the rule was enforced during all six of these resistances, it can be said that the children's play and endeavours were both enabled and constrained. To be specific, in the one instance when Mrs Terry was present and the two that Mrs Tanveer was, whilst the children were able to realise part of the building-strategy: since they had to dismantle these [68] and were therefore unable to play with them, their play – or attempts to – was constrained. Likewise, although they were able to realise their play interests, and therefore their play was enabled, on the two occasions when Mrs Tanveer 'allowed' them to play with their constructions: since the children did not seem to be fully immersed in these play episodes, these appeared to be partly constrained. I suggest this because the children a) appeared to be playing hurriedly, and b) looked in Mrs Tanveer's direction a number of times during these – with Masood pausing to do this. A further constraint was that when the children seemed to be getting into their play, they had to abruptly stop when the educator requested it. Here, Aahid and his group looked to be discouraged, as after they quietly dismantled the constructions they left the carpets altogether – telling me it was because they did not have the space to play.

During the instance when Mrs PPA alone was present however, one could suggest that the children's play and endeavours were enabled, since the educator did not enforce the rule. Here, I observed that the children a) appeared to be playing unhurriedly, b) did not break from their play to look in the adult's direction, c) not only made the largest construction that I had seen over the entire school year, but also did this by including all of the large resources, two sets from C2 and one from C1, and d) played for the longest amount of time out of all of these instances –

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[68] In the former, a cover teaching assistant who was present asked Aahid and his group to dismantle the construction.

namely, fifteen minutes. What is more, whereas the children's play involved pushing various vehicles along the track and on the tubes or ramps the two times Mrs Tanveer allowed them to play; here, whilst they started with the former, their episode evolved into play with the farm animals (C1's resources) travelling on and around the large resources, and then into a game about flying and crashing animals, farmers and vehicles.

7.5 Discussion

In bringing this chapter to a close, I reflect on the main themes that are discussed in – and which have emerged from – the discussion. The first is that there appeared to be many similarities between Asli, Fadila and Yelda's talk and endeavours in connection with the no-play dough, and the children's in relation to the no-crawling and no-building rules. As, not only did Aahid and his group also consider their resistances of the rule to be entirely judicious because they had thought of a way to compromise with the reasons behind it – and actively tried to realise this; but also, all of the children used many of the same tactics though in slightly different ways, which, too, were according to an (individual or shared) adult risk register. Whilst it is not possible to say exactly why the children used these tactics – viz. adult surveillance, calculated movements and pace – it is, however, quite apparent that the main factor they were all taking into account when trying to realise these play-related interests and endeavours were the educators. Specifically, how Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer enforced these rules; and within this, if they were present, where they were located and what they were doing during each situation.

Secondly, several points can be raised about the fact that the children resisted the no-building rule much less than they did the no-play dough and no-crawling rules. For one, this shows that in the case of the latter two, the children were perhaps aware that their tactics would enable them to keep their endeavours covert – and therefore they were less likely to be seen. But, because they were not able to do this with the former, they were therefore not only more likely to be seen, but also reprimanded. Here, then, it appears the children were perhaps both a) continuously assessing how risky their resistances of the rules would be, and b) always aware, perhaps afraid of and trying to avoid being reprimanded[69]. With respect to point 'b' here, it can also be said that, ultimately, it was the fear of reprimand which drove the children to keep their endeavours in connection with the latter rules covert; and made them apply the former rule. Indeed, Aahid and Masood's efforts to deal with the various issues they faced on C2 and the RA over the year show how they – like the children in Chitty, 2015, p.143-144 – tried to apply the rule and manage their

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[69] This excludes Masood's endeavours in connection with the no-crawling rule.

frustrations; as, if they decided to resist the rule instead, the consequence would have been 'punishment'. Whilst this, on the one hand indicates that when Mrs PPA alone was in charge, they were making the most of these 'openings' or 'propitious circumstances' (Archer, 2003, p.6) – and this is in connection with all of the rules discussed to this point; on the other, it begs the question: How much would the children have resisted the rules if reprimand were not a consequence?

Thirdly, Aahid and his group's talk and actions during their resistances of the no-crawling rule reveal much not only about how they worked strategically as a team to keep their endeavours covert, but also how, in each instance, they were always – and to varying degrees, 'oriented' towards the past, present and the immediate future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Before leaving the carpets, for example, they looked around the classroom to see where the educators who were most likely to enforce the rule were located; this shows that, here, they were mainly oriented towards the past (iterational), as they were recalling their 'simplifying models' (adult risk register) which comprised their experiences of how each adult had enforced the rule (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.979). At this stage (mainly oriented towards the future: projective), the children were also imagining multiple 'trajectories' of action[70] (going behind Mrs Tanveer's table may keep her from seeing them: Aahid); 'alternative means-end sequences' (going via tables five and one would hide them from Mrs Tanveer's view and enable them to get to C1: Hamza); and either 'anticipating' the constraints, which may 'impede' their strategy (Hamza believes going behind Mrs Tanveer's table is risky), or anticipating the 'ease' with which it may be realised (Aahid however thinks it will be easily realised as they will go behind her and he will be watching) (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.988-990; Archer, 2003, p.6). Furthermore, their orders to the others to move 'fastly' during their travels, and to pretend to be playing (mainly oriented towards present: practical-evaluative), show how, in their unfolding situations, they a) thought about and used past actions that had been successful in order to decide how to 'proceed', and b) not only recognised the latter as 'problematic circumstances', but also 'responded' to these by deciding that 'something must be done' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.998-999). The group's resistances of the rule also show the creative ways in which they – like the three children in Chapter 6 (e.g. asking a peer, turn-taking and saving) – did this; namely, by working as a team, forming a train, having a leader and one or more designated adult observer(s).

Fourthly, whilst in 7.2.1.1, I explained that the children were using the tactic of performance; upon closer consideration, it appears Aahid and his group and Asli and the others (in connection

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[70] See excerpts in 7.2.1 and 7.2.1.1.

with the no-play dough rule) all were. All of these children were trying to keep up the 'impression' that they were not resisting the rules but actually playing in accordance with them (Goffman, 1959). The children's discussions about their tactics, for instance, all took place in the 'backstage' (Goffman, 1959, p.114); it was either in hushed voices or whispers, and quite a distance from where the educators were located. Additionally, in spite of the fact that they were aware of each other's resistances they did not inform the educators – and therefore, helped keep these from them. And, although their endeavours were occasionally 'detected', it can be said that since Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer never learned about how often the children were resisting these rules, in what ways and partly why: the children were largely successful in maintaining their 'front stage' performance (Goffman, 1959, p.109).

At various junctures in the preceding discussion, I considered the ways in which the rules – by virtue of the educators' enforcement of these – shaped and impacted on the children's play-related endeavours and experiences. What I did not discuss, however, was that the educators, too, looked to be navigating these rules, but this was by negotiating the 'vested interests' (Archer, 1995, p.282) which came with their roles as educators, and their own – perhaps partly linked to the former – 'desires' for the children to be able to play as they wanted. Mrs Tanveer's shifting enforcement of the no-building rule, for example, revealed that she was perhaps trying to fulfil her responsibility of making sure that the children's safety was not compromised; but at the same time, trying to allow them to play because she had seen they were 'enjoying' themselves. Her comments to me on both occasions revealed that she perhaps considered her decision(s) to be justified, as she could see that the children were safe. In this sense, it can be said that the educator was, like those in Hansen *et al*. (2017, p.245), 'caught' between realising her duties and her own 'preference'.

Likewise, it can be said that Mrs Terry was also trying to negotiate her own responsibilities with the children's need for space. For Mrs Terry, however, it appears the rule had to be enforced at all times; and this was likely for the reason that, as the teacher, she was ultimately responsible for the children's safety. During the fieldwork year, then, whilst this was her 'ultimate concern', which she had inherited in virtue of the 'role', she negotiated it by allowing the children to build on and between C2 and the RA (Archer, 2003, p.120). A further two points can be made about the latter point. First, in doing this, Mrs Terry was using the 'powers' that she had on account of her role; second, she was exercising these powers to realise the children's – and accordingly her own – concerns (Archer, 1995; Archer, 2003).

The other way in which Mrs Terry tried to ensure the children were able to realise their play interests was by rearranging the classroom's layout. However, this was not during the fieldwork year. When I met the educator in January 2018 she told me that, before the commencement of the 2014-15 year, she had moved half of the construction-type resources from C1 to C2; and removed the non-storage furniture that was on C2 to C1. This was to a) reduce the amount of times that the children crawled between the carpets, b) increase the space available on C2 for the children to play comfortably, and c) so they could combine the small and large resources, and build more elaborate structures:

> I was tired of asking them [2013-14 cohort] to stop moving on the floor. They did it when you were there too. There were trains of them moving up and down, so I thought they would like it if they had some of the construction on the smaller carpet [C2]. I made more room for them.
> …
> They like that [cohorts since then], they [2017-18 cohort] have the blocks out all the time and other things; and they make all sorts of wonderful structures; they've got more space to move now.

(FN: 01.2018)

Although the present (2012-13) cohort's endeavours did not lead to a transformation of either of the rules, then, they did – in combination with the following year's cohort's (perhaps similar) navigations of the rules – lead Mrs Terry to make changes to the classroom's layout in order to accommodate the future cohorts' interests whilst ensuring their safety. Structural elaboration, then, was in the form of morphogenesis, and over a period of two years (see Figure 2).

Presence of rule (Year One 2012-2013; Year Two 2013-2014)
_____
T1

    Year One and Year Two's agential endeavours (Sept 2012 - July 2014)
        _____
        T2   T3

        Classroom rearrangement (beginning: Year Three 2014-2015)
        (morphogenesis)
            _____
                T4

Figure 2. Structural elaboration: no-crawling rule (2014 onwards)

A number of points can be made about the above. The first is that whilst Mrs Terry's later endeavours demonstrate how educators' observations (as recommended in the EYFS; DfE,

2012, p.10; DfE, 2017, p.13) help them to 'understand' children's interests – and then use this knowledge to enable them to realise these: these also show how reliance on this tool alone may not be suitable. This is for the reasons that, as mentioned in Chapter 6 (see 6.4), children may not reveal their interests to educators for fear of reprimand. Secondly, it was not because the children had voiced their concerns to the educators that drove Mrs Terry to make these changes, but rather their occasional failures to keep their endeavours covert, that did. Thirdly, and following on from the second point, whilst the present cohort's (fieldwork year) efforts – though occasionally enabled – were often constrained by the rule; it was owing to the 'unintended aggregate effects' of their (and the following cohort's) 'collective' resistances that Mrs Terry's future cohorts' play-related needs and interests were perhaps enabled.

CHAPTER 8:

Navigating the role-play pegs rule

In the previous chapter, I looked at Aahid and Masood – and partly Asli and Fadila's – navigations of the no-crawling and no-building rules. In this chapter, I present and discuss how Asli, Fadila and Yelda navigated the pegs-only rule, which limited the total number of children who could play inside the role-play at one time to four. The children's endeavours in connection with this rule, as the discussion shows, are quite different to those related to the no-play dough, no-crawling and no-building rules; as firstly, there appeared to be very little use of tactics, and secondly, these did not involve circumventing the rule but rather acting in accordance with it. The discussion also shows that the children's navigations of the rule, over the majority of the school year, was a somewhat double-edged pursuit with both successful but also limiting consequences. This is for the reason that, although they were able to engage in role-playing with their peers whenever they wanted during the free play sessions (unless called to take part in an adult-led activity; see Chapter 10), and this was irrespective of whether they had possession of a peg or not: there were a number of occasions when their play was disrupted as a consequence of their navigation.

8.1 The pegs-only rule: reasons and understandings

No more than four children were permitted access to the role-play at one time. If the children wanted to play inside it, they were to take a peg from the entrance and clip it to their clothes; if there were none available, they were to wait for one to become free. This pegs-only rule was created three years prior. Before its introduction, although the role-play was located in the same spot (see Appendix 11), since it was not 'enclosed' there was not a limit on how many children could play inside it at one time. During the 2009-10 school year, however, Mrs Terry inherited a wooden partition, which she then decided to use as a way to contain the play area. This, she believed, was useful for two reasons: it opened up the rest of C1 for the children to engage in other activities – namely: using the interactive whiteboard (immediately outside role-play); building with construction-type resources (around a metre from the role-play); the puzzles (near the far left of C1); and the tablets (far left of C1). Equally, it kept the area from becoming overpopulated, and therefore enabled those who had access to engage uninterrupted play with space for manoeuvre:

…it was much better with the partition [2009-10]; the others had more room to build their structures…and there was room for them to use the whiteboard. And, we got the puzzles that year, so they could play with them; shortly after we got the tablets, so there was more space all-round.

(FN: 01.10.12)

For crowd control really because if you've got eight children in there…it's just not really possible to play satisfactorily, so I had to have some way of rationing it…there's room now, they can play without squabbling…and there are enough resources to go round.

(FN: 05.11.12)

When I asked Asli, Fadila and Yelda what the reason for the rule was, all three seemed to understand it was because the role-play area was small:

Fadila: No space…then there's too many children.
Asli: We can't be more…have to be four because that's little.
Fadila: But we can put more children…(*laughs*).
Asli: No! There's no space!

(OBS: 13:00, 14.01.13)

Yelda: Mrs Terry say 'there's no space!'.
Asli: We can't play then because there's too many children.
Fadila: She said we can't play nicely then.

(OBS: 14:20, 07.01.13)

8.1.1 Children's reasons and motivations

In this sub-section and the next, I respectively look at the reasons and motivations behind the children's endeavours, and what appeared to be their perspectives on the rule. Here, I look at what the children did with the role-play's resources – and the reasons behind these endeavours, which were noted over the *majority* of the year. This is because, as the discussion will show, during their first two weeks in Sunflowers the children navigated the rule in an altogether different way to how they did over the months that followed (see 8.2). When they spoke about the reasons behind their endeavours at the time, these were mostly about the fact that they could not access the role-play (and its resources) if they did not have a peg on; as, they were not yet aware that they could play with the role-play's resources outside of it – irrespective of whether they were in possession of a peg or not.

Overall, and like the children's reasons which are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, Asli, Fadila and Yelda's actions appeared to be largely driven by their play-related 'needs' and 'interests'. Their central interest was role-playing; and within this were their interests in acting out essentially family-themed storylines in various settings. That is, they enjoyed creating and engaging in many role-play episodes, which largely revolved around the interactions of various family members, cousins and relatives; and which took place in different locations within walking distance of 'home' (somewhere on C1) (e.g. park, shops, kitchen, doctors, vets, hairdressers and their relations' homes; somewhere on C1, C2 and/or the RA). Their *needs*[71], though several and largely to do with gaining access to the role-play's resources, seemed to be connected to one overall 'desire': to have the space and resources to engage in uninterrupted role-playing with their peers. For, much of their talk with regard to the role-play pegs and resources – and this was with their peers and myself – was centred on and around the following concerns, specifically: needing the resources to commence or continue their play, and to engage in role-playing with their peers; space to play with their peers; and, time to play. Here, there also seemed to be a motivation that they all shared, and that was: to have ample space and the role-play's resources, so that anyone who wanted to engage in role-playing – or to join an ongoing episode – was able to.

In the below excerpts, for example, the children mention some of the reasons that I mention here – and the motivation. Since these conversations took place when I was asking them why they were bringing the resources outside of the role-play to play with (discussed further in 8.3.2), there is much talk about space; their use of the words 'here' and 'there' are respectively references to the spot immediately outside the role-play, and the role-play:

> Fadila: We like it; we can make a big party….all the people can come.
> Asli: We can make big cakes!
> Me: And there? (*Point: role-play*).
> Asli: (*Shakes head*)…that's small; this one is bigger.
> Me: Fadila, Can you have all the people in there…(*point: role-play*)?
> Fadila: No!
> Odessa: You can only have four children in there!
> Asli: Silly girl!
> Odessa: Yeh Shabana; silly girl. It's so small!
> Fadila: All the children can play because there's all this space…see…(*waves arm around C1*).

(OBS: 14:10, 10.12.13)

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[71] The word 'need' was not the only one that the children used, but also 'want' and 'have to have'.

Fadila: We just bring these…then we can all play here.
Yelda: We can have all the aunties.
Me: But you may not have enough dishes to go round.
Fadila: Yeh! Look…(*waves at plates and bowls on floor*)…we have these…we all can eat.
Yelda: (*Nodding*)…everybody guna eat: we making dinner for everybody. All the children can sharing it.

(OBS: 14:50, 14.01.13)

8.1.2 Children's perspectives

In general, the children appeared to agree with the reason that the rule was there to keep the role-play from becoming overcrowded, as in their conversations with me (see e.g. above excerpts) they often highlighted that the role-play was too small for a larger number of children to play inside it at one time. Indeed, if all of the pegs were taken, whilst the children did go inside it to collect a resource (see 8.3.2) they did not remain inside and play. This, it can be said, was because they could play with the resources outside of the role-play, as mentioned above, which they did for most of the year (see 8.3.2).

There were, however, a small number of times when the children appeared to be frustrated – and perhaps disagreed – with the rule, and this was either when a) they could not play with the role-play's resources if their peers, who were in possession of a peg, wanted to take these into the role-play (see 8.3.2.1), or b) when they were role-playing with the resources outside it, but their episodes were disrupted owing to conflicts with other children who were engaging in other activities on C1 (see 8.3.2.2). With regard to the latter, it can be said that, here, the other reason behind Mrs Terry's use of the wooden partition and the rule – namely, so children had the remainder of C1's space to engage in other activities, came into conflict with the fact that she also allowed the children (peg-wearing or not) to engage in role-playing outside the role-play (I see this as a constraint relating to the rule, see 8.3.2.2). On two occasions, when the children had a peg-wearing peer take one or more resource(s) from them, then, they told me that they needed more pegs (see former excerpt below); and during a number of those in which they were dealing with conflicts over the space on C1, they complained that there was not enough space – and they needed more. In fact, during one of the latter instances, Fadila and Yelda even proposed that either the whole of C1 ought to be for role-playing alone, or it ought to be moved to the RA (see latter excerpt below):

Asli: We don't have more pegs!

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Me: Do you want more?
Asli: (*Nods*)...we need more; then more children's can play.
Me: You can tell Mrs terry, right?
Asli: (*Shakes head*).
Me: Mrs Tanveer?
Asli: (*Shakes head*)…they guna shout.
Me: Why?
Asli: (*Shakes head*)…they will say 'no!'.
Me: Why?
Asli: Guna shout.

(OBS: 11:10, 14.01.13)

Fadila: We can have that all here [C1].
Yelda: And there…(*points: RA*).
Fadila: Yeh, or there.
Me: Why don't you tell Mrs Terry…
Yelda: NO!
Me: Why not?
Fadila: They will shout!
Yelda: And make me be the sad side.
Fadila: (*Nodding*).
Me: Maybe you could tell them about the pegs.
Fadila: No…we have to keep them!
Yelda: We can't do…they shouting then.

(OBS: 14:40, 13.02.13)

What is perhaps striking in these conversations that I had with the children is that they were afraid to raise these concerns or suggestions with the educators. Certainly, I never once saw them do this during my time in the classroom; and when I asked the educators if the children had spoken to them about these, they told me that they had not. As can be seen from the above excerpt, the children's reluctance was partly for the reason that they were afraid they would be reprimanded. But also because, as the below excerpts show, they believed their concerns would be met with passivity on the part of the educators; as – in their views – they did not 'care' or 'listen' and would simply tell them to return to their play:

Me: Why don't you tell Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer?
Fadila: (*Shakes head*).
Me: Why not?
Fadila: They're not guna listen to me.
Me: Why not?
Fadila: They don't care.

(OBS: 14:40, 13.02.13)

Me: Why don't you ask Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer if they can make more room?
Yelda: (*Shakes head*)…nooo they shouting.
Fadila: 'No you can't; go and play!'.
Me: How do you know? Have you asked them?
Fadila: (*Shakes head*).
Asli: No, they're guna shout at me…all of us!
Yelda: They not listening.
Fadila: They will say 'no, go play' enit?
Children nod.

(OBS: 11:15, 04.02.13)

Another reason, which can also be suggested here, is that the children perhaps believed it was the adults – as both adults and educators – who had the authority to decide the rules; whereas they, as the children – and pupils – a) had no say in these, and b) were not permitted to question the former's decisions, but instead required to apply or act in accordance with these. This is as, when I asked them who made the decision that only four children could access the role-play, they told me that it was the 'teachers' because they were both the former and 'big'; the children did not, for they were the former and 'small'. Below is the latter part of the conversation:

Yelda: They do's that, they choosing that. Shabana…(*appears surprised*)!
Me: What? Why?
Fadila: Because they're the teachers, enit?
Others nod.
Me: But you're in the classroom too.
Yelda: We the children's.
Asli: (*Nods*).
Fadila: Children don't do that.
Me: Why not?
Fadila: …we're small.
Asli: They are the big…ladies…the teachers.

(OBS: 11:15, 04.02.13)

In this main section, I have looked at what the children's understandings of one of the reasons for the rule were, and explained that they occasionally appeared to partly disagree with the rule for reasons related to space and access to the role-play's resources. In the next main two sections (8.2 and 8.3), I respectively discuss how they navigated the rule during their first two weeks in the classroom, and over the majority of the school year.

8.2 Accessing the role-play: beginning of term one

Whilst, throughout the majority of the school year, whenever there was not a role-play peg available, Asli, Fadila[72] and Yelda either brought the role-play's resources outside the role-play to play with, or had their peers do it for them (discussed in 8.3.2); during their initial weeks in the classroom, they waited for a peg to become free. Although, between them, they did this in slightly different ways, in the main: first they negotiated with a peer, and then they waited for a peg to become free. This is not to say that the children stopped trying to get hold of pegs at other times, as there were several instances observed over the course of the year (see 8.3.1); these, however, were 'one-off' instances, during which Asli or Yelda tried to get a peg in order to have access to the newly themed role-play[73].

When looking at the children's play – or attempts to play – during their first two weeks in Sunflowers, it can be said that their endeavours and experiences were largely constrained owing to their efforts to apply the rule. The two points that stand out the most are first, how much time – or there lack of, the children had to play on some occasions; and second, how limited their play episodes were when they were able to engage in role-playing. This was for three main reasons, all of which were the consequence of the children's strict application of the rule. The first being, whenever Asli, Fadila or Yelda sought a peg but there was not one available, they would spend much of their time waiting immediately outside the role-play. On these occasions, Yelda would sit on the shelving unit (on C1) next to me, and wait for one to become free. As she waited, she did not play with any of the resources that were out on C1, and she very rarely spoke to her peers – unless she was asking for their peg. The below excerpt is an example of one such instance:

> Yelda: Hello. I can have that?
> Anisha: No.
> Yelda: I can have five minutes?
> Anisha: No.
> Yelda: I can have it […] finish?
> Anisha: I'm not finishing.
> Yelda: You finish the other then?
> Anisha: No.
> Yelda: I sitting there…(*points: shelving unit. Sits down*).

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[72] Since Fadila was not a participant in the study at the time, the instances that are discussed between the months of September and December are those that were noted during my observations of the other participants.

[73] The only time that the children did not try to get hold of a peg soon after the theme was changed was when it became the hairdressers towards the end of the school year.

Although Asli and Fadila would also wait for a peg to become free, unlike Yelda they would often engage in some kind of activity in the interim. However, on all of the occasions that I saw them doing this, their play seemed to be quite fragmented. This is as firstly, a large portion of their time was spent either looking in the direction of their peg-wearing peers and the role-play; calling out to their peg-wearing peers whenever they exited the role-play; and/or, walking to the entrance and asking when a peg would become free. Secondly, they appeared to be repeating the same motions with the resources that they had in front of them – i.e. buttoning and unbuttoning a puppet's jacket; adding or removing the same object in a bowl; or, placing one block on top of another. The children also spent quite a bit of time waiting – at least on the occasions that I saw them do this. The longest time observed was nearly one hour (Yelda), and the shortest was approximately fifteen minutes (also Yelda).

The second reason was to do with disruption. Whenever one of these three children was in possession of a peg, much of their role-playing would be intermittently interrupted during one episode. Whilst this was occasionally because they were asked to take part in an adult-led activity or administrative task (see Chapter 10): by and large, this was due to their peers' requests for their pegs. In the same way that Asli, Fadila and Yelda would inadvertently disrupt their peers' play when waiting for a peg, their play was also interrupted for the same reasons. During one fifteen-minute episode – for example – and for a total of nine times, five peers tried to negotiate access to Asli's peg as she tried to play in and around the role-play.

Thirdly, on the four occasions that I saw the children playing – or attempting to play – with the role-play's resources when without a peg, which they had found outside the role-play: they appeared to be reluctant to be seen doing this by an educator. Two of these instances involved Asli; one, Fadila and Yelda; and the third was Fadila alone. This is for the reason that, as soon as an educator – and this was not only Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer – arrived on C1 or was in the vicinity of it, they instantly exercised the tactic of *abandon resource* (see 6.3.2). Since both the children and I were new to each other, and we were in the early stages of our 'researcher-participant' relationship, I was hesitant to ask them about the reasons behind their actions. The brief interactions that I did have with them at this time, however, indicated that they were perhaps 'afraid' of being seen because they believed it was only the peg-wearers who were permitted to play with the role-play's resources. For, when I asked Fadila and Yelda why they had done this after one such instance, they told me the following:

Me: What were you doing with the bowl?
Fadila: Mixing the fruits.
Me: What about you?
Yelda: (*Looks down*).
Fadila: Holding plate for me.
Me: Why did you come here?
Fadila: We can't play with them.
Me: With the dishes?
Fadila: (*Nods*).
Yelda: (*Nods*).
Me: Why not?
Yelda: They have it…(*points: role-play*).
Fadila: We don't have a pegs.

(OBS: 10:45, 24.09.12)

In September and early October I also observed Asli using another two tactics. The first, *snatching*, involved taking a peg from a peer who rejected her appeals for it; I discuss the second, which was *saving*[74], in 8.3.1. The former was used twice on the same day in early October. The first instance took place in the morning; when Masood refused to give his peg to her, Asli pulled it from his top and clipped it to her tunic. Masood told Mrs Tanveer and Asli was asked to return the peg, which she did right away. During the second instance, Asli asked Mary for her peg; when Mary rejected her request, again, she pulled it from the child's top. This time Yelda, Aneesha and Sabah joined Mary in asking Asli to return the peg. To begin with Asli refused, but then returned it when Mary threatened to tell Mrs Terry.

In this section I have looked at how the children's strict application of the pegs-only rule during their initial weeks in the classroom resulted in their play being constrained. I have also explained how Asli twice used the tactic of snatching when her peers refused to give her their peg. The three children's navigation of the rule after these two weeks – and therefore their play experiences and endeavours, however, were in stark contrast. I discuss these over the next main section.

8.3 Accessing the role-play and role-play's resources: majority of year

In this main section, the discussion turns to how the children navigated the pegs-only rule for the majority of their time in reception. To start with, I look at how Asli and Yelda used another two tactics occasionally over the course of the year; and then at the main way in which all three of

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[74] This is because Asli also used this tactic occasionally over the course of the year, as did Yelda but in a different way.

the children made sure they could engage in role-playing *with* the role-play's resources without resisting the rule. Whilst the latter approach enabled them to realise their play-related needs, interests and their shared motivation (see 8.1.1), there were a number of times when these were constrained as a corollary. In the final two sub-sections, then, I look at the two main reasons why this was the case and how the children tried to deal with these.

8.3.1 Saving pegs and educator involvement

Over the course of the year, on several occasions I observed Asli and Yelda exercising the tactic of *saving* (which is what the children called it); and Asli the tactic of *educator involvement* twice. First I discuss the children's use of the former, and then Asli's use of the latter. The tactic of *saving* involved the children trying to keep a role-play peg when they were asked to participate in an adult-led activity or administrative task (see Chapter 10) – plus additional literacy[75] in Asli's case, so that they could access the role-play when they returned; they both employed it in different ways. Each time I saw the children do this, I noticed that it was within a week of when the role-play had been transformed (change of theme)[76]. Indeed, when I asked them about their endeavours during these instances, they said it was because they wanted to play in the newly themed space.

When she was called, then, Asli tried to save the peg by keeping it. On one occasion, for example, when she left the role-play, she kept her peg on her tunic; and on another, she took it off and put it in her pocket. The former was when Mrs PPA asked her to participate in an adult-led activity, the latter when she had to leave for additional literacy. Both times, her peers demanded that she returned the pegs. Yelda also tried to 'save' her peg on several occasions and this was together with Sabah – perhaps in the way that some of the children did in Rogers & Evans (2008, p.80-81). The four times that I saw them do this was when the one who had the peg had to leave, and the other – who did not – sought one. On all of these occasions, the peg-wearer asked the other to give it back to her when she returned, and the other agreed; both children kept to the agreement. During one such instance, when I asked them why they did this, they told me it was because they both wanted to play in the (newly changed) 'dressing-up' themed role-play:

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[75] Twice a week, Asli and a peer – who were both 'above average' in literacy – left the classroom to do additional literacy with a small group of children from the other reception classrooms.

[76] In addition to using the tactic of saving, around this time they were both also seen trying to negotiate access to peers' pegs.

Yelda: Mrs PPA want me.
Sabah: I save the peg for her.
Me: Why?
Sabah: She want to play there.
Me: But you could play in there tomorrow.
Yelda: No I want to play there today.
Me: Why?
Sabah: She like the clothes dressing.

(FN: 13.02.13)

Asli exercised the tactic of *educator involvement* – which involved trying to get Mrs Tanveer to request a peg from one of the children for her; again, I observed both within a week of when the role-play was transformed. During both of these, Asli had returned from taking part in additional literacy; prior to leaving, she had been inside the role-play with a peg. And, before approaching the educator, she had first tried to negotiate a peg from a peer but her efforts were unsuccessful. Both times, however, the educator told her to 'find something else' to do. When Asli did this in December, on the day that the role-play was changed to the 'doctors', she told me the following:

Asli: I like doctor surgery…I didn't play there…I was there…then I went to […]. Then I didn't have a turn. I came'd back but they didn't give me a peg…Aneesha didn't.
Me: Was Aneesha supposed to give you a peg?
Asli: (*Nods*)…she was playing all the days…and I didn't play…I played just small time.
Me: Why do you want to play in there today?
Asli: I want to be in the surgery; I didn't have my turn.

(OBS: 13:20, 18.12.12)

Whilst it is apparent from the excerpt presented that Asli used this tactic because she wanted to play in the newly transformed role-play, and because she felt she had not had enough time to play in there[77]; this does not reveal why she used this particular tactic, and why – apparently – with Mrs Tanveer only. With regard to this latter point, here, one could suggest that perhaps she was – like the children in Arnott (2018, p.960), drawing on – and using – her knowledge of Sunflower's 'hierarchies of authority' to realise her own play agenda (Ólafsdóttir *et al*. 2017). To elaborate, when her peers' refused to give up their pegs, she may have realised or decided that eliciting the educator's authority would aid her endeavours; as, children had to do as adults' requested – irrespective of whether they wanted to or not. However, it is difficult to explain why she chose to approach Mrs Tanveer over the other educators – or even an educator to begin

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[77] In Chapter 10 I discuss how the requirement to participate in adult-led activities and administrative tasks impacted on the children's play episodes – and how the former and additional literacy did on Asli's (see e.g. 10.3).

with, as I very rarely saw the former ask a child to give up their peg; the exception being, when a child had taken another's peg without permission.

8.3.2 A solution

When I arrived in Sunflowers during the third week of the school year, I noticed that the children's endeavours in connection with the pegs-only rule were quite different to those I had noted during their first two weeks. This is because they had become aware of the fact that they could play with the role-play's resources outside the role-play irrespective of whether or not they were in possession of a peg. Indeed, whenever I asked them about their activities during this third week and at other times spread over the year, they each told me that the rule was to do with playing inside the role-play only and did not prohibit them from playing with the resources outside of it.

For the majority of the school year (aside from the few times that they sought a peg when the role-play's theme was changed), then, whenever Asli, Fadila or Yelda saw that there was not a peg available, they neither appeared concerned nor tried to get hold of one. This is likely to have been because all[78] of the children, who had access to the role-play at some point during the day (by virtue of having a peg), brought some or a large amount of the resources to the spot immediately outside the role-play; and, whilst there were times when they would do this later on in the morning, in the main this was soon after the morning and afternoons' whole-class formal learning sessions had ended. Playing with the role-play's resources outside the role-play, then, became an everyday common occurrence. If the participants arrived at C1 and the resources were out, they would join their peers' play with these; if there were none out, they would ask those who were inside it to either pass some to them or bring these out so they could play with these together.

The fact that the children could do the above, then, not only meant that the children were able to engage in the role-play themes and episodes that I described in 8.1.1, but it also enabled them to act in accordance with the rule throughout the year. This is perhaps most poignantly demonstrated by the fact that if the children wanted a resource that was inside the role-play, they would ask a peg-wearing peer to pass it to them or bring it out; and, in Yelda and Sabah's approach, which was to take the peg from the one who had it – in order to retrieve a resource – and then give it back upon their return. This is not to say that the children did not go inside the

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[78] This includes the other children in Sunflowers too.

role-play when without a peg, as there were numerous times that they did; here, though, they would only do this if their peg-wearing peers said they could. When I asked the children if – and if so, why – they could do the latter, their responses indicated that they believed their actions were justified, as they a) were not breaking the rule – it prohibited them from playing inside the role-play, not from fetching these, and b) had permission from their peg-wearing peers. It therefore appeared that the children had not only given careful consideration to the reason for the rule, and as a result discovered a 'loophole' (Arnott, 2018: p.959) that they then took advantage of. But also, interpreted it in a way that authorised them to a) establish a hierarchy in which the peg-wearing peers had the power to make decisions about entry – which therefore allowed them to circumvent the rule, and b) use the former to, at once, justify and excuse their access to the role-play when peg-less.

Whilst, for the most part, the children's endeavours enabled them to engage in the kinds of play that they wanted to whenever they wanted, and together with their peers; there were, however, two caveats, which intermittently impacted on the quality of their play episodes. The first can be best described as individual peer's conditions and decisions, which were almost entirely connected with access to and the use of the resources; the second was to do with the sharing of the space that was available on C1. In the next two sub-sections I discuss these respectively.

8.3.2.1 Resource-related disruptions

Over the course of the school year there were a few occasions when the participants had to agree to or abide by a peg-wearing peer's conditions – when asking for the role-play's resources and when playing with these. If they rejected these, or accepted but did not follow through, most of the time their peers would tell them that they could no longer play with the resource(s) and then take these from them. During two of these former instances, when the children refused to hand over the resource(s), their peers threatened to inform an educator; in response, the children instantly did as their peers were requesting. Upon closer examination of all of these, two points can be noted: first, it was the same three children who were seen deciding and enforcing these conditions – namely: Aneesha, Nosheen and Umina; second, and in some cases, the conditions were changed – both slightly or considerably – during a play episode, and/or a decision was made to take some or all of the resources back to the role-play. These conditions, then, were mainly to do with how long the children could play with one or more of the resources – e.g. Aneesha wanted the stethoscope returned after five minutes; and in part, where or how the children were to play with these – i.e. they had to remain on C1 or only one of them could play with a certain resource. On one occasion in late November, however, Umina interrupted the

children's play to inform them that they could keep the role-play's wooden spoon on the proviso she became the 'mom' and had her own baby. When the children turned down her offer, and Umina went to take the resource but Mary refused to let go of it, she threatened to tell a 'teacher'.

In the instances when a resource was taken from them, most of the time the children were able to continue their play. During these, for instance, they would carry on playing with the role-play's resources that they were left with, and others that they had brought from elsewhere – e.g. puppets (RA), PD (designated-table) and some dishes (C1). There were, however, three times when they were unable to do this. During two of these (involving Yelda in one and Fadila in another), it was because their peers (Umina and Aneesha respectively) took the resource(s) that appeared to be central to their play episode. In the former this was the dog teddy that the children were bandaging; in the latter, the first aid kit, which the children were using to treat their babies (puppets). In both of these, although the children did eventually commence role-playing this was not a continuation of their former play and involved other resources. In the third instance, it was for the reason that when Fadila, Yelda and Sabah managed to convince peg-wearing Umina to return the hair brushes to them, both Fadila and Sabah had to leave for an adult-led activity.

In their discussions with me Asli, Fadila and Yelda offered different reasons as to why the said peers set conditions, and appeared to be frustrated with their decisions to create these. They also said that when they themselves were in possession of a peg, they did not do the same because they wanted all of the children to be able to play with the resources if they wanted to – and together with them. Below is an excerpt from one of these conversations:

> Me: When you have a peg, do you take the spoons and the dishes back?
> Yelda: (*Shakes head*)…Noooo, we all have it here!
> Me: But…you can have it in there.
> Sabah: No we playing here; play together.
> Yelda: We want to play together; they didn't want to have it here.
> Sabah: We don't take it there…(*points: role-play*)…we sharing.
> Yelda: (*Nodding*)…all playing.

> (OBS: 11:00, 26.11.12)

It needs to be mentioned here, however, that there were only a few of these instances observed across the duration of the school year; there were many times when Aneesha, Umina and

Nosheen brought the resources out for them and the others to play with, with no conditions attached.

8.3.2.2 Space-related disruptions

In addition to occasionally abiding by their peers' resource-related conditions and decisions (and dealing with interruptions to their play), there were a number of times when the children had to negotiate and work around space-related issues with others. To elaborate, when the children played outside the role-play, their play was disrupted by other children who were also using C1's space but for different activities. Although C1 was the largest of the three carpeted parts of the classroom, since it was regularly used for three other 'fixed' activities – and sometimes for at least two to three more – as well as for role-playing: when all of the children were indoors during a free play session, the space was almost always heavily populated. Likewise, whilst, on average, there would be approximately eight to ten children on C1 at one time, on a number of occasions I counted upwards of fifteen children using it – and this was excluding those who were mostly inside the role-play. To offer some context, immediately outside the role-play (to the left) was the interactive whiteboard; in front of the former and approximately a metre down C1 was where the construction-type resources were often placed; a metre down from these was where the children worked on their puzzles; and next to the puzzles, were the side tables, chairs and tablets. Children also used C1 for other activities, like: pushing vehicles (from C2 or self-built); writing, drawing and colouring; reading books; and, oftentimes there would be two groups of children competing to complete their puzzles.

The main bulk of the disruptions that took place when the children played outside the role-play were when with the children who were playing with the construction-type resources believed the role-players were either jeopardising their constructions, or preventing them from using the space as they wanted. Over the course of the year, the role-players tried, tested and reached several compromises with the construction-builders. The most commonly reached and perhaps most effective compromise was to move the construction-type resources to the middle of C1 and keep the role-playing contained within the space immediately outside the role-play. For the most part, this compromise was reached after some conflict – and therefore disruption of play (on both sides), and negotiation between the two parties.

A second compromise was to move to the middle or far end of C1, so that the construction-builders could have the space immediately in front of the role-play; and the role-players, the other parts of C1. Whereas, in some cases, this was a successful endeavour – in that the

children would go on to play free from interruptions, there were times when this would cause conflict with those who were working on puzzles. On three occasions when the latter took place, I saw the role-players exercise a third compromise, which was to relocate to the RA. On one of these though, they eventually returned because the group of children who were working on a construction there convinced them to leave – citing reasons related to the need for space. Here, then, they went back to the spot immediately outside the role-play and re-commenced their negotiations with the construction-builders who were there.

An alternative solution, which the three children were seen exercising a few times, was to tidy away the construction-type resources when it seemed no children were playing with these, and instead take out the dishes. However, although they then had half of C1 to carry out their role-playing (from immediately outside the role-play through the entire centre), there were some instances when other children would take the construction-type resources back out. When this was the case, either the participants and the other role-players would try to compromise with the construction-builders by sharing the carpet space, or they would put the majority of the dishes away. In fact, aside from when the role-play was a kitchen at the start of the year, and when it was the hairdressers at the end: the children almost daily took some of these dishes out to play with. When I asked them why they did this, the children mentioned the lack of space, and that they both needed and liked to include these in their role-playing. Although Mrs Terry knew that the children took the dishes out, which meant that there were more than three sets of resources on C1 at one time, she did not say anything to them because:

> It's just a few dishes…(*lowers voice*)…I don't say anything...they're not taking the whole set are they? It's fine. They put them back when it's time to.

> (FN: 18.12.12)

When taking into account the children's experiences and endeavours that are discussed in this main section, two overall points about enablement and constraint can be made. With regard to the former, it can be said that Mrs Terry's decision to allow the children to play with the role-play's resources, enabled Asli, Fadila and Yelda to realise their play-related needs, interests and their shared motivation – and this was for the majority of the year. Furthermore, since it enabled them to fulfil the former, this meant that a) they did not 'resort' to resisting the rule but instead largely acted in accordance with it, and b) accordingly, they did not pause their play many times to exercise various tactics in order to keep their endeavours covert. With respect to the latter, it can however be suggested that because the children had to deal with a number of interruptions

to their play episodes when they navigated the rule in this way: at times, this was also a constraining factor.

It appeared, then, that Mrs Terry's decision to enable the children to realise their interest in role-playing in this way, conflicted with her other decision behind the rule – which was to open up the remainder of C1 for the children to engage in activities unrelated to role-play.

8.4 Discussion

In bringing this chapter to a close, I reflect on the main themes that are discussed in – and which have emerged from – the discussion. The first is that, if we exclude the times when the children went inside the role-play to fetch the resources when without a peg; throughout the year, they applied and acted in accordance with the rule. This is a noticeable difference when considering the fact that I observed the same three children – and Aahid and Masood, respectively resisting the no-play dough and no-crawling rules many times; and four of them occasionally resisting the no-building rule. When looking at why this was the case, it can be suggested that this was essentially because the children could play with these resources outside the role-play – and therefore, there was an alternative way in which they could realise their play-related needs and interests, together with their shared motivation. Since there did not appear to be other ways in which the children could fulfil their needs and interests in connection with the three rules I discussed previously – i.e. to play with the PD, crawl on the wooden floor, and build large constructions with the room to play with these; it can be suggested that they perhaps resisted those rules because they believed those were the only way(s) in which they could do so. Indeed, as mentioned in 8.1.2, it was only when Asli, Fadila and Yelda were unable to engage in their role-playing, that they appeared to voice their frustrations with the rule. Likewise, the children's main complaint about each of the three rules discussed in the preceding chapters, was that these prevented them from fulfilling their interests and wants – and in some cases, their overall motivations. In view of this, it can be said that if teachers offer children alternative ways in which they could follow certain interests, which may be prohibited and/or constrained by a rule, they may be more likely to act in accordance with it.

Secondly, the children's shared motivation appeared to be the same as one of the reasons behind the four children's resistances of the no-building rule; specifically, for the children to be able to play with the given resource(s) if they wanted to, and for all of them to be able to play together. In fact, one could suggest that this was also one of the motivations behind the children's resistances of the no-play dough rule. As, during all of the occasions when I saw one of the participant children or a peer join other children's play – irrespective of whether or not they

had been involved in the initial efforts (i.e. bringing the PD to C1, or the role-play's resources outside of it): I noticed that not one child rejected their participation. This is not to suggest that the children *always* allowed their peers to join their play, or that they *never* objected to sharing 'their' resources (the children's navigations of the 'we share' BE are discussed in 9.4); rather that, in connection to these three rules, I neither observed the children asking another to leave, nor saw them block their peers' access to the resource(s).

A third theme that can be observed, and this is between Chapter 7 and the present, is that whilst Mrs Terry did make changes to the classroom's layout (I discuss those in connection to the pegs-only rule immediately below), though this was not during the year that this fieldwork took place but before the commencement of the 2014-15 school year: this was, again, owing to the 'unintended aggregate effects' of the children's (viewed as primary agents in this set) agential endeavours (Archer, 1995, p.259). That is, and in relation to the no-crawling and no-building rules, it was not due to the fact that the children had voiced their concerns or preferences to Mrs Terry (corporate agent in this set) that led her to make the changes to the classroom's layout, but rather it was owing to their occasional 'failures' to keep their endeavours and activities covert (viz. in realising the objective of *avoiding detection*). Similarly, although Asli, Fadila and Yelda (and their peers) did not ask her to expand the role-play, to move it to the RA, or to remove the rule (although this was what they wanted): in observing them bring the role-play's resources out on a daily basis (and seeing the children in the following year's cohort doing the same), Mrs Terry decided to make a number of changes. When I met her in January 2018, she told me that prior to the commencement of the 2014-15 school year, she decided to remove the rule altogether; re-locate the role-play to the RA (books were moved to C1); and, she had stopped using the wooden partition:

> I had the four pegs but we no longer have that. Now we don't have the pegs, they regulate it themselves; and they all use it now. The boys and the girls, they're all in there. It's next to C2 now; they can come in and out of it, so it's much more mixed.
> …
> At the time I had the role-play in the corner, I don't know why I had it in the corner, I think it sort of contains it a little bit but since you've done the study, I've moved it a bigger area [….] the whole of the area by the door, so a much bigger area…
> …
> It's much bigger; they're much happier.

(DISC: 01.2018)

Structural elaboration, then, was in the form of morphogenesis, and, again, over the period of two years (Figure 3). What is more, Mrs Terry told me that because her current cohort (2017-18) kept placing the role-play's resources on the ramp to the outdoor play area – as part of their barbecue-party play; recently, she had decided to allow them to do so in spite of the fact that it was 'may be' a health and safety issue, as she 'knew' that the children made sure not to leave the resources unattended.

Presence of rule and role-play in C1 (Year One 2012-2013; Year Two 2013-2014)

—————————————————
T1

       Year One and Year Two's agential endeavours (Sept 2012 - July 2014)

         —————————————————
         T2   T3

             Removal of rule and role-play in C2 (beginning: Year Three 2014-2015) (morphogenesis)

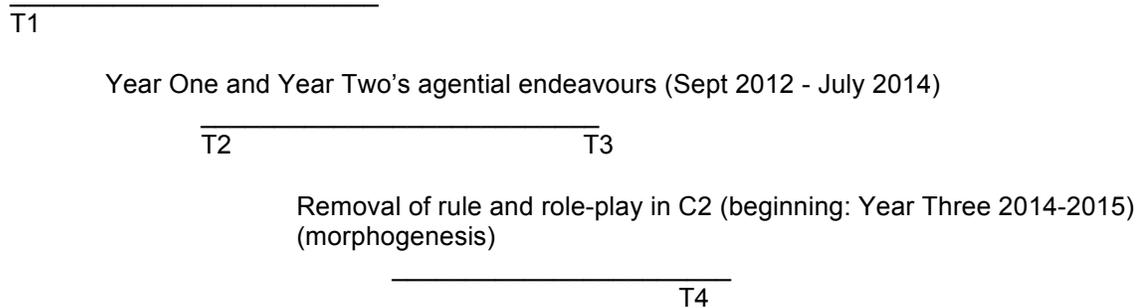   —————————————————
                        T4

Figure 3. Structural elaboration: pegs-only rule (2014 onwards)

Again, and as I suggested in Chapter 7's discussion, Mrs Terry, like the children, was also trying to navigate the 'vested interests' (Archer, 1995) that came with her role as reception teacher, so that she could afford the children the space, choice and relative freedom to follow their play-related interests. To be specific, in creating the rules of no-play dough (PD on rugs as health concern), no-crawling (forgotten resources as safety concern), and no-building (as latter), she was adhering to both the school's health and safety policy and the safeguarding requirements outlined in the EYFS (see e.g. DfE, 2012, section 3; DfE, 2017, section 3); but, and at the same time, in making the changes to the classroom layout and in 'allowing' the children to play on the outdoor ramp (2014-15 onwards), she was using the 'powers' that the role afforded her to do what she could 'for' the children. Here, then, it can also be suggested that the structure of health and safety was, by way of constraint, impacting on the children's play-related interests, experiences and endeavours through Mrs Terry's creation of the rules, and Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer's efforts to enforce these.

Fourthly, whilst the rules aspect of the play provision, in virtue of the educators' – and, indeed, the children's (e.g. no-building and pegs-only rules) – application of these, did shape and

constrain the children's play-related experiences and endeavours, other aspects of it enabled these. That is, it was owing to the various 'conditions' that Mrs Terry had created that the children were able to navigate the rules in the ways that they did whilst negotiating their play. For instance, they: had the time to strategise and execute certain actions because of the extended free play sessions; travelled around the classroom and between spaces (collect PD, crawl) because they did not have to remain at one activity (relative *freedom*); worked in collaboration and played with their peers because they were not required to play with certain peers (*autonomy* and *choice*); and, they brought the role-play's resources out because there were allowed to (relative *freedom*; *autonomy* and *choice*). It can therefore be said that the play provision was both enabling ('conditions') and constraining (rules).

Lastly, although the children were not able to build the large constructions that they wanted to, and their play was often disrupted for various reasons related to their application or navigations of the rules (e.g. no-building and pegs-only respectively: space related conflicts): it can be said that the process of trying to realise their needs, interests and motivations (again, because they had the time to) enabled them to apply, practise and develop a range of skills. For instance, in regulating their own behaviour (apply rules, ensure not seen) (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012); managing and resolving conflicts (C1 role- playing) (Fisher, 2008; Ramani, 2012; Moyles, 2015); problem solving, thinking about and realising compromises (the rules, and with peers) (Sylva *et al*. 1974; Levy, 1992; Moyles, 2015; Chilvers, 2016); negotiation, persuasion and collaboration; and planning and analysing (e.g. how to move, where to move, who to avoid) (Whitebread, 2010; Moyles, 2015; Whitebread *et al*. 2015; Bredikyte & Hakkarainen, 2017).

CHAPTER 9:

Navigating the classroom's behaviour expectations

In the previous chapter, I looked at Asli, Fadila and Yelda's navigations of the pegs-only rule. In this chapter, I discuss how each of the five children navigated Sunflower's five BEs. The discussion in this chapter is presented in a different way to the preceding three. This is because, whilst all of the children actively endeavoured to apply all of the BEs over the school year, some of them appeared to struggle with two of these during their initial weeks in reception. I begin the discussion by looking at their perspectives on the former three first, together with their perspectives on these and the reasons behind their endeavours; and then separately look at how they applied the other two, whilst also considering their perspectives and their reasons.

Before commencing the discussion, it is important to offer the reasons why I decided to look at the children's endeavours in connection with the BEs. The first reason is that, since these were 'prescriptions and or prohibitions of behaviour' Jordan *et al*. (1995, p.340) and displayed in the classroom, I considered these to be explicit rules. Secondly, the children and educators treated these as the classroom's rules – i.e. in the same way that the educators would re-state a rule to a child if they were seen circumventing it, they would take the children to the BEs board and remind them about these (or the one in question). Thirdly, some of these, like the rules pertaining to the play provision that were discussed in the preceding three chapters, did appear to shape, enable and constrain the children's play-related experiences and endeavours.

9.1 The behaviour expectations

The BEs that the children were encouraged to practise were: we *walk indoors*, we use our *inside voice*, we are *kind*, we *tidy* and we *share*. Although these were pre-decided and had been a part of Mrs Terry's reception class for many years; in week one, she had the children 'suggest' these. This was through an activity that she had also conducted with her previous cohorts, which involved steering and prompting the children to propose these:

> I talk to them about what we would consider – what *would* be good behaviour; what *would* they like to do and what would they like to see *other* children do. And, I sort of guide them and *steer* them so they suggest these themselves.

> …they're more likely to follow them if they've suggested these, and they know that they're there and *why* we have them.

There were a number of reasons why Mrs Terry chose to have these; namely, they encouraged the children to: regulate their own behaviour(s) as well as those of their peers'; to respect the classroom space and resources; be considerate of their peers; and, their application of these enabled a smoother running of the classroom:

> …they take care of the resources: put them away when they're done, so the classroom doesn't become a mess! They self-regulate…and remind each other of them. They're reminded to be kind to each other, because that's one thing I won't tolerate is unkindness, so make sure they know they have to be kind…
>
> …It just makes it easier too: they make it a calm – and you know, just a smoother day-to-day running of the classroom. So they *like* being here, and they respect the resources and they respect each other.

<div align="center">(DISC, 24.09.12)</div>

To encourage the children to practise the BEs, all of the educators reminded them of these throughout the year. This was especially during the initial days and weeks that followed their 'creation'. During this time, Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer would somewhat loudly and enthusiastically acknowledge instances when the children were seen trying to follow these; during the morning (pre-dinner time) and afternoon (pre-home time) carpet times, single out and praise those who had been seen applying them; and, reward them with a tick on the happy side (see Appendix 8). If the educators believed a child was not acting in accordance with one or more of these, they would be taken to the board and reminded of the given expectation(s).

All of the children, though perhaps not Masood to start with (discussed below), were aware of the expectations and agreed with the reasoning behind each one; and, each of them tried to apply these for the majority of the year. In the proceeding sections, first I look at how they navigated three of these, and then I separately look at their activities in connection with the 'we *tidy*' and 'we *share*' expectations.

9.2 We *walk* indoors, we use our *inside voice*, and we are *kind*

Out of all the expectations, 'we *walk* indoors' and 'we use our *inside voice*' were practised by almost all of the children throughout the year. During the initial weeks of the first term, Masood,

Amir and Ishaq ran several times; each time that they did, the educators and/or their peers walked them to the board and reminded them of the expectation. Near the end of October, all three had ceased running. This is not to say that all of the children walked at all times, as there were times when they ran briefly. These instances, however, did not seem to be driven by their interests or linked to their play, as during these they were trying to do something quickly – i.e. to put away a resource before everyone congregated on the carpet, or when arriving late for registration. Likewise, the children very rarely raised their voices. The few times that they did were when they were involved in an activity or endeavour and seemed to momentarily forget about the expectation. During these instances, either or both the educators and their peers would remind them to lower their voices, which the child(ren) immediately did.

It appears the children's endeavours in connection with these two BEs were driven by the following reason and motivations: they understood and agreed with the reasons for these, and preferred it if the children did not run or shout in the classroom:

> Asli: When the children are shouting, I tell them 'stop'.
> Me: Like or dislike?
> Asli: I like it…I don't like the noisy classroom.
> Aahid: We don't shout; it's too noisy.
> Masood: I not shout.
> Me: What's this one?
> Masood: Walk!
> Aahid: Walking is safe.
> Asli: We have to walk: running is not safe….I like walking: I don't fall.

(DISC: 01.07.13)

> Fadila: Walk is because we don't like running inside.
> Yelda: We run in the playground only.
> Me: Agree or disagree?
> Yelda: Agree.
> Fadila: Agree. I don't want the children to run.
> Me: This one?
> Yelda: We don't shout…it's too loud. I don't like the children shouting.
> Fadila: When everybody's shouting I get headaches!

(As above)

Whereas it is not possible to say when exactly the children were actively practising the 'we are kind' BE, as they did not announce the reason or motivation behind their actions each time that they engaged in a 'kind act': it is possible to suggest that there were many times when they were. This is because I regularly heard them use the term 'kind' to describe their own

endeavours and activities and those of their peers; and, they either reminded their peers of the expectation and/or mentioned it together with the 'we *share*' expectation when encouraging or persuading their peers to be mindful of others' feelings.

Whenever I asked the children about their perspectives on this expectation and if they applied it, they all seemed surprised with my questions – and this was each time. This was perhaps because they saw it as an essential and important part of the classroom. As, they all said it was how children and adults ought to be treated; and that they both liked to be kind to each other – this included the adults, and when others were kind to them. They also often highlighted that it made them 'happy' when they, their peers and the educators were kind to them and others.

The 'kind' acts that the children practised over the year were wide ranging – e.g. they consoled peers who were visibly upset or claimed to be 'sad' by physically comforting them, remaining by their side, and listening or trying to work through the issue that was upsetting them; offered to help – i.e. cleaning on their behalf, finishing a task, or putting on an item of clothing; spoke firmly to those they believed were acting unfairly or being hurtful to others; offered to participate in an adult-led activity so they could continue playing; and, shared resources and reminded others to do so too.

9.3 We *tidy*

There were two main times when the classroom had to be tided: before dinner time and before home time (see Appendix 2). The former involved putting resources in their respective containers; the latter, placing all resources in their respective containers, and then returning them to their appropriate storage. Both times, an educator would play the 'tidy-up' track to signal its commencement. The other times that the children were required to tidy were a) if they wanted to take out another tub of resources, they had to put away the one that was already out, and b) when they were done playing with or using resources that they had taken from the shelving/storage – i.e. stationery and clipboards.

Like the BEs discussed to this point, all five of the children practised the 'we *tidy*' expectation on a daily basis, and seemingly without hesitation. All of them felt strongly about following it: if they saw peers not putting away resources, they would remind them to do so; if their peers refused, they would then inform an adult. The few times that I sought their perspectives on this expectation and asked if they applied it, they all said that they did and offered a number of reasons as to why. Their responses seemed to fall into three commonly mentioned themes,

namely: the maintenance of resources; the maintenance of orderliness; and to keep the classroom tidy. Below are some excerpts from these conversations:

> Me: Why did you tell Mrs Tanveer Ishaq wasn't tidying?
> Asli: He didn't…he have to!
> Me: Why?
> Asli: Then…we didn't have our tidy classroom…it be's dirty. But he didn't tidy them (cars).
> Me: Do you like tidying?
> Asli: (*Shakes head*)…I want to play.
> …
> Yelda: They be broken.
> Me: What does?
> Yelda: Them…(*points: resources*).
> Me: Why?
> Yelda: We do that…(*stamps on floor*).
> Me: What if you tided them?
> Yelda: Not broken.
> Me: Do you like tidying?
> Yelda: Don't want to.
> Me: Why not?
> Yelda: (*Shrugs*).

> (OBS: 11:10, 17.12.12)

> Fadila: Because we…our Sunflowers has to be tidy.
> Me: We?
> Fadila: The children…and the teachers.
> Me: Do you like tidying?
> Fadila: (*Shakes head*)…I wanna...everybody to do it for me! I don't wanna to…(*grinning*).

> (OBS: 11:10, 29.04.13)

> Asli: We have to put them away…then we can have the other toys…and later…and when we didn't do it, we didn't know where it is…it's gots lost.

> (OBS: 14:35, 03.06.13)

> Aahid: Umm…I don't know…I don't want to…I want to play.
> Masood: No! I playing there…(*points: C1*).

> (OBS: 11:10, 10.07.13)

The children's talk and endeavours over the year, then, seemed to indicate that they applied the expectation largely because they believed they had to in order to keep the resources intact and the classroom in order, but also that they did not see this as an individual endeavour: rather it

was a collective one which required all of the children to put the effort in. Furthermore, if everyone did not tidy when they were supposed to, they all risked having damaged resources and an unclean and disordered environment. Their talk also showed that it was not an activity that they were particularly fond of (see above excerpts). Indeed, there were a number of times when the children seemed frustrated and expressed their disgruntlement when the time came round. All of these instances were in some way connected to their play – that is, either when they believed they had not been able to play with the resources they had been waiting for, or when they wanted to continue playing. Irrespective of their occasional and apparent vexations, however, for the majority of the year all of the children made sure that they applied the expectation whenever they were required to.

Although the above was the case for most of the year, during their initial weeks in reception, each of the children navigated the expectation in slightly different ways. Masood's activities during this time were in sharp contrast to those of his peers; on each Monday that I visited the classroom during this time, I saw that he did not tidy. During week one and two's (17.09.12 and 24.09.12) tidy-up times, he physically pushed and elbowed his peers away from the containers; took out the resources that had been tided; and refused to sit on the carpet when the music stopped. Each time, either or both Mrs Tanveer (in Sylheti) and Mrs Terry (in English) tried to persuade him to come to the carpet, but he did not; instead, he played on C2 or at one of the tables. Whereas, his activities during these first two weeks indicated that he was perhaps not tidying because a) he was unaware of and did not understand the expectation, and b) he wanted to continue playing: his actions during the third week did not seem to be for the same reasons – at least, not entirely. On this Monday (01.10.12), he did not tidy both times; but when the music came on, he clasped his hands behind his back and walked around the classroom looking at the children tidying. Whilst, again, this may have been because he wanted to play, it is also quite possible that on this day he was aware of what the music signified and what was expected of him, but instead decided to observe the activities of others. When the music stopped, Masood sat on the carpet both times.

Masood's activities the following week were in stark contrast. On both occasions, as soon as the music came on, he began tidying. During home time tidy-up, he tried to encourage and/or remind Amir to join him. In this instance, he tugged at Amir's arm and pointed to the tub; when Amir refused, he told Mrs Tanveer. Mrs Tanveer told me that Masood's activities were perhaps due to Mrs Terry's efforts; the following passage is from my fieldnotes:

…early last week, Mrs Tanveer said that Mrs Terry had Masood tidy with her. Each time they finished tidying a set of resources Mrs Terry cheered and encouraged him to do the same again. At the end of both sessions, she put ticks next to his name; and at the end of the day, she stamped his book. Mrs Tanveer said he was 'grinning from ear to ear' when Mrs Terry 'made a fuss' of him. The next two days, the educators gave him ticks after each session and stamped his book.

(FN, 08.10.12)

It was difficult to appreciate the reasons behind Masood's actions because he did not yet understand English. It needs to be mentioned here, however, that whilst it is quite possible that Mrs Terry's encouragement and use of the reward system may have encouraged Masood's activities, one could suggest that these may have been due to the combination of several influencers, explicitly: the reward system; the encouragement he received from both the educators and his peers alike; and, his observations of others tidying. It is also quite possible that because the classroom, routine and timetable, school environment – and even England and the English language, were new to Masood, it took a while for him to understand what the expectation was, and what exactly was 'expected' of him.

The reason why I suggest that the children's encouragement may have also contributed to Masood's eventual grasp of the expectation is because during the first two weeks Asli, Fadila and several others asked him to tidy with them, and explained what they were doing as they put the resources away. Although Masood shook his head during these times and did not join in, he did observe their actions. When I asked Fadila why she had asked him to tidy with her, she told me it was so that he could learn how to do it:

I was teaching him. He doesn't know how to tidy because he's new.

(OBS: 11:10, 24.09.12)

Aahid's navigation of the 'we *tidy*' expectation was quite different to Masood's. During the first three weeks, when the music came on he stopped what he was doing and proceeded to tidy. A possible reason why this was the case, is that Aahid, along with Fadila and Yelda, were familiar with the music and the process as they had attended the school's nursery – where music was also played during these times – prior to reception. In the fourth week however (08.10.12), Aahid did not tidy during the afternoon's tidy-up. Instead, he held a construction that he had made out of the clogs and wheels and looked around the classroom. When I asked him why he was not tidying, he told me it was because he did not want to 'break' it.

The following week (15.10.12), when the music came on during afternoon tidy-up, I saw Mrs Terry speaking with Aahid, Masood, Amir, Hamza and Nazir; all five children were holding similar creations. The following morning, Mrs Terry showed the children four laminated cards that she had placed on the side table (C1); the cards displayed a hand with a red cross over it. Mrs Terry explained to the children that when they were required to participate in an adult-led activity or when it was tidy-up time, they could place their 'small' creations behind the cards[79]. Throughout the week they could retrieve these, but on the Friday of every week they were to dismantle these and return the pieces to the rightful storage. From this day onwards, Aahid followed Mrs Terry's advice and tided whenever it was time to.

Asli and Yelda's application of the expectation was changeable to start with. On their first day (17.09.12), during home time tidy-up, Asli, Fadila and Yelda tided. The following week (24.09.12), Asli and Yelda did not tidy during both tidy-up times. In the afternoon, Asli sat inside the role-play and watched her peers tidy; during home time tidy-up, she poured herself a cup of water and looked around the classroom whilst sipping it. During the first tidy-up, Fadila, Yelda and Sabah walked slowly to C1 whilst talking, then sat down and continued talking; in the second, Fadila and Yelda followed Sabah as she returned PD to a table, then the pair walked to their personal trays and talked about the items that were in each of these until the music stopped.

On week three, Asli and Yelda tried to 'impress' the educators to receive two ticks before the day was over. During dinner time tidy-up, for example, Asli first put away the large Lego on C1, then she went to Mrs Terry and told her that she was tidying; she was told to keep tidying. After this, she went to table two and put several magnets in a tray before informing to Mrs Tanveer that she had been tidying; this time she was given a tick. During home time tidy-up, she acted in a similar fashion. Yelda's endeavours were similar to Asli's. On this day, I also noticed that, after receiving their tick(s), they did not return to tidying – instead, they did one or more of the following: look at the reward chart; talk with peers about each other's ticks/stamps; sit on C1; or, observe others tidying. When I asked about their activities, their talk indicated that, at this time, their endeavours were perhaps driven by a twofold motivation: to perhaps please the educators, and to pursue their own objective of eventually getting a prize. To illustrate, below is an excerpt from my conversation with Asli during this time:

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[79] Large constructions were to remain on the carpets.

Me: Why did you get a tick?
Asli: Mrs Tanveer gave me…she like tidying, Mrs Terry…Mrs Tanveer.
Me: Is that why?
Asli: (*Nods*)…I get a tick!
Me: Do you like getting ticks…or not really…(*shake head*).
Asli: (*Nods*)…then I will get another tick; when I have two ticks…I can have a stamp; then ten and I will have a prize!

(OBS: 11:15, 01.10.12)

The following week, Asli and Yelda tidied during both tidy-up times, and approached the educators when the music was about to end; Asli did this in the morning only, Yelda did it both times. On the same day, Yelda trialed another two approaches seemingly, again, to receive ticks. During the morning's free play session, she encouraged Asli, Mary and Sabah to tidy the role-play with her; then she and Asli told Mrs SENCO what they had done. Mrs SENCO told them to 'play'. In the afternoon, Yelda stood at the reward chart and looked around the classroom for approximately 15 seconds, and then added a tick next to her name. Straight after, she saw me observing her; we did not talk about the event.

Whilst Fadila was not part of this study from the beginning, since she was often present in others' observations, I have snippets of her activities during tidy-up times; based on these, it is likely that her application was much like Aahid's. As, aside from the two times that she and Yelda did not tidy (on 24.09.12): in all other times that her activities were briefly noted, she was doing so. In fact, during the third week (09.10.12), when Yelda went to the educators twice to tell them she was tidying, Fadila was observed putting away the role-play's (and later construction) resources, and first asking Yelda why she was not tidying, then later telling her that it was time to do so.

9.4 We *share* (and we are *kind*)

The 'we *share*' and partly the 'we are *kind*' expectations were perhaps the most drawn on by the children; and, it appears, the two that had the most impact on their play. Whilst the 'we are *kind*' expectation was generally practised in the form of care for one another, occasionally the children would use it with the 'we *share*' expectation to remind those who were claimed not to be sharing, to do so. With regard to the 'we *share*' expectation itself, although, when asked, the children gave similar explanations for why it was 'created' and how it was to be practised, and there were some similarities in the ways that they applied it: each of them appeared to navigate it in different ways over the school year.

Masood's application of the two expectations changed dramatically over the three terms. At the start of reception, he appeared to find it difficult to share with other children. This may have been for many reasons: he was perhaps not aware of the expectation; he was not familiar with the sharing of resources with others who were of a similar age to him because he had not spent much time in the company of similarly aged persons[80]; the resources were new and exciting for him; and, he did not yet have the verbal capacity to communicate his views and feelings to others, or to appreciate theirs. Throughout his first four to five weeks in reception, then, in every observation that Masood was present, some form of disagreement took place between his peers and him; these were often to do with the sharing of resources, and all involved a degree of physical struggle, which he largely started. If Masood were playing with a resource that a child wanted access to, for example, he would shout and elbow or push him/her away; if he wanted a resource that another child had, he would snatch or tug at it – and if he were unable to get hold of it, a physical dispute would ensue.

From mid to late November onwards, Masood seemed to slowly start to understand and actively practise both expectations. For first, the amount of times that he physically struggled with a peer reduced dramatically, from early April through to the end of reception, I did not observe any such instances take place; second, there were a number of times when he was seen either waiting for a resource, or looking for approval when he took one that he thought a peer may have been playing with; and lastly, he appeared to actively try to include, support, console and share with his peers – and, often smiled when doing the latter.

But, one cannot assume that it was his awareness of these expectations alone that fuelled the change in his following of these; as, it is also quite possible – if not more the case, that the gradual change(s) may have been due to the combination of several factors. For example: the development of his language (and therefore use of); his 'desire' to be included in the play of his peers (discussed below); his observations – both of how the children responded to his actions, and how they interacted with an responded to each other; and lastly, the adults and other children's explanations and modeling of what was acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. With regard to this last point, in the same way that some children tried to 'teach' Masood to walk and tidy-up, there were several times when they made a concerted effort to explain and show him

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[80] According to Mrs Tanveer, Masood had lived with his elderly parents in a small village in Bangladesh; prior to moving to England, he had, had very little contact with other children, and with other adults.

how to share and 'be kind'. Whilst the majority of these instances took place when the children saw him physically struggle with a peer, a number of these did not.

What was particularly significant here was that during a large portion of the first term, the majority of the children – including the other four participants – 'labeled' Masood (and Amir, Ishaq and Mary) as one of the 'naughty' children; this was because a) he (and they) did not practise the expectations, and b) he (and they) did not listen to the educators and children. But, whereas the children in Chitty (2015, p.127) saw certain peers as 'deviants' because they did not take the rules and regulation(s) into account, and suggested that they should be educated elsewhere in the school: in Sunflowers, many[81] of the children tried to 'educate' and/or help those they said were naughty. When talking to the children about Masood, it appeared that their actions were, on the one hand, based on their knowledge of the fact that he did not speak English, as he had arrived from another country; on the other, motivated by their hopes for all of the children to apply the expectations consistently:

> Asli: I showed him to do sharing… he doesn't knows.
> Aahid: (*Shakes head*)…no.
> Me: Why's that?
> Aahid: He's naughty…he doesn't talk English.
> Asli: He's Bangladesh; we showing him.
> Me: What will he learn to do?
> Asli: Sharing…and tidying…be kind. And listen all the teachers…and me!
> Aahid: He will listen to everyone!
> Yelda: We have to tell them…they didn't know, then the Sunflower not be kind.
> Aahid: We have to do it, then everybody will be nice every day.
> Asli: We…I want all the children's do's it.
> Aahid: Everybody don't shout! Don't be naughty…don't be…run, don't…you have to share!

(OBS: 11:10, 17.10.12)

For the most part, all of the children – and this includes Masood during terms two and three, tried to share the classroom's resources with each other; and in general, there were a few similarities in the ways that they did this. When a peer asked to have or use a resource that one of the participants had, for example, in general the participants would either give the resource straight away or after a short while, or share the resource between them. Equally, if more than one peer asked to have or use a resource that one of the participants had, typically the children would – at some point – give the resource to the peer who asked for it first. They all (the participants), also,

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[81] The reason why I say 'many' here is because Aneesha, Umina and Nosheen – and Aahid's group barring Aahid, often called Masood naughty (including, Amir, Ishaq and Mary) during this time and actively avoided playing with and/or near him.

allowed peers to join their new and/or ongoing group-play[82], and endeavored to share the resources involved with them. But, not all of the children did the above from the start of the school year, and not all of them did the above all of the time. I now look at how some of them navigated the 'we *share*' expectation during the first and second terms, and occasionally over the course of the year.

At the start of the year, there were several occasions when Fadila chose to share a resource with her 'best friends' over the child(ren) who had asked for it first. When she became a participant in the study from January, however, I never saw her do this again. In its place, she would try to give the sought-after resource(s) to the child she believed had asked for it first. Although it is difficult to say exactly which, perhaps combination of factors led to this change, one could suggest that this may have been partly or largely due to the following reasons. First, it may have been because she no longer saw selected peers as her best friends. As, in November, she told me that Aneesha, Anisha, Sabah and Yelda were her 'favourite' friends; but when I spoke to her in February and June, she told me that all of the children were. Secondly, Fadila may have been influenced by Yelda's (and others') application of the expectation, as Yelda often gave it to the child who had asked first – and the two children often spent quite a bit of time in each other's company. Lastly, this may have been owing to her own experience(s) of asking for a resource but not receiving it first, and then reflecting on how others may have felt when she had done the same.

Similarly, on two occasions, Asli and her best friend Odessa kept a resource to themselves; and during both, when a peer asked them to share it they either rebuffed her appeals, or told her that they were in fact sharing. In February, for example, they passed one of two red markers (the other did not work) to each other, and did not give it to Hania who repeatedly asked for it. When Hania threatened to inform an educator, however, Asli and Odessa instantly handed it to her. Here, then, it appears the two children knew that, in not giving the resource to Hania, they were not acting in accordance with the expectation in the way that they were supposed to; namely, to share resources with all children and not just between themselves and certain peers. But, and as Fadila did during term one, to realise their own needs, which were perhaps to maintain their friendships: they exercised a form of 'partial acceptance' or 'balanced compliance' by partly applying the expectation (Rogers & Evans, 2008, p.80-81; Markström & Halldén, 2009, p.119); and to avoid reprimand, they tried to convince Hania that their actions were judicious. However,

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[82] 'Group-play' here encompasses and refers to the types of play or resources that one person could play with alone if they chose to (and occasionally did), but which were predominantly enjoyed collectively e.g. puzzles, role-play, card games and construction.

because they gave the resource to Hania when she threatened adult involvement, this shows that they not only recognised the 'supremacy' of the expectation, but also that the educators 'held the most authority in validating' the 'enforcement' of these (Arnott, 2018, p.960).

Another way in which Asli would apply the expectation – when more than one peer was asking for a resource that she had – was by basing her decisions on her observations of their activities and behaviours, either on the day or in general. As she told me one day when she chose to give a marker to Aneesha over Nosheen and Umina:

> Me: Why did you choose Aneesha?
> Asli: She was colouring nicely, and waiting nicely.
> Nosheen: I was waiting first.
> Asli Yeh…she was waiting (Nosheen), but Aneesha was waiting nicely and colouring nicely.
> Me: Did you look at who is colouring and waiting nicely?
> Asli: (*Nods*)…and…being good…and nice…and kind…and who's being kind and playing smart all the days.

> (OBS: 10:50, 25.03.13)

A number of points can be made about Asli's navigation of the rule here. First, it can be said that she was 'challenging' the expectation by making her own 'rule' (Ólafsdóttir *et al*. 2017, p.832; see also, Löfdahl & Hägglund, 2006) – not to include or exclude certain peers because she was seen doing this with many children, but perhaps as a way to gain some control over her own activities and decisions. Furthermore, her endeavours here and in the way that she managed to partly avoid giving the resource to Hania above, demonstrate her 'competence' in navigating the expectation without 'breaking' it (*Ibid*., p.833). Secondly, she may have seen the expectation as a 'guide' that could be 'interpreted, manipulated and adapted' (Arnott, 2018, p.989). Lastly, it could have been that Asli was perhaps somewhat mimicking the educators' activities in Sunflowers, as she was 'rewarding' her peers' 'good' behaviour, which is what the adults did (and said) when awarding children ticks on the happy side.

During the first few weeks of her time in the classroom, however, Asli struggled to apply the expectation. On several occasions, when she was playing with a resource (or more) and a child tried to access it, she appeared to find it difficult to share it with them; and, many times, she would ignore her peers' requests and/or silently continue with what she was doing (as children did in Markström & Halldén, 2009; Skånfors *et al*. 2009; Ebrahim, 2011). During most of these, her peers involved an educator who then reminded Asli of the expectations (viz. *kind* and *share*); in all of these instances, she responded by allowing her peers to have full access to the

resource(s), but then abandoning her activity soon after. After those weeks, Asli seemed to be very aware of the expectation, and appeared to make a concerted effort not to reject her peers' company or requests. The few times that she did this; almost immediately after that she either included them in her play, or gave them the resource. In the former period, then, it appears that when an adult reminded her of the expectation, Asli was perhaps a) unhappy with their and her peers' activities and decisions, but b) managing her emotions and regulating her own behaviour – like the children in Chitty (2015). And, in the many months that followed, she continued to do the latter, as she was perhaps a) more aware of the expectation(s) – and therefore trying to act in accordance with these, b) to some extent concealing her emotions, and c) it can be suggested, trying not to avoid being reprimanded for not applying it.

There was, however, one child that Asli seemed to find it difficult to share with – and occasionally 'be kind' to: namely, Hania. At the start of the year, Asli – partly overtly, but mainly covertly – rejected Hania and Mary's requests to join her play and/or to have a resource that she had the possession of. After two months, she began to accept Mary's appeals to play and actively tried to share with her; but not much changed with Hania. When I asked Asli why the former was the case, she told me that it was because Mary was no longer 'naughty', but when I asked her about Hania, she chose not to talk. It is therefore quite difficult to understand why she rejected Hania in this way, and why her specifically.

In the first few weeks, then, Asli would either silently ignore Hania's (and Mary's) appeals by: turning away from her; remaining silent; continuing to talk to her peers; talk over her; or walk away. She would also openly and verbally turn her down. Over time, she started to do this covertly. If Hania asked for a resource, she would tell her to wait – then either not give it to her, give it to someone else, or let her have it but for a few seconds. If Hania asked to join her play, she would nod and allow her to be present, but then exclude her from the play; this was by, for example, actively keeping her from assuming a role. Asli's rejections over much of the year, then, were quite similar to those that the older girls exercised when rejecting Maja's requests in Löfdahl & Hägglund (2006); as, although it appeared as if she was practising the two expectations, she was – one could argue – either making minimal effort, or doing neither. In doing this 'under the radar', one could suggest, she was able to subtly circumvent the expectation(s) without the educators realising; as, I never once saw an adult speak to her about these.

Out of the five participants, Aahid and Yelda seemed to practise the 'we *share*' expectation in the three ways mentioned earlier, and this was all of the time. Whilst most of the time – and this was

especially during group-play – their endeavours seemed to be unproblematic, as they resulted in an almost seamless giving and receiving of the resources: they both experienced the occasional hindrance to their play owing to their perhaps 'strict' application of it. For example, there were a small number of instances when Yelda (soon after possession) handed a resource to a persistent peer on the premise that it would be returned shortly, but either received it much later or not at all. For Aahid, the main issue was that he was regularly unable to engage in play without experiencing some disruption during it, and this was as a result of his attempts to share, include, and 'be kind' to Masood. For the majority of the school year, several times a day Masood would try to join Aahid's play (this stopped almost entirely by term three); and this was irrespective of where Aahid was playing and/or with whom. During these instances, Aahid would allow him to join the play but avoid engaging with him, or he would continue playing silently and ignore his endeavours; he never once rejected his attempts though there were times when members of his group did. Over the year, however, there were several instances when Aahid decided to leave owing to Masood's persistence to join his play. Whilst some of these instances took place when Aahid was playing with other resources, most were when he was participating in a puzzle-competition [83]. During many of these, then, Masood joined Aahid's team and inadvertently impeded their progress by keeping hold of pieces, which inevitably led to them losing. In their attempts to minimise the likelihood of losing, Aahid and other team members would tell Masood where to place the pieces or try to persuade him to release these; on a few occasions, some members tried to get ahold of pieces by tugging at them.

When asking the children about their perspectives on the expectation 'we *share*' and more generally about their application of it, whilst they largely spoke about the fact that they acted in accordance with it because everybody 'had'[84] to share, and they liked it when they and others did this; occasionally they mentioned another two points that were striking. The first, which Aahid and Yelda stated twice each – and Asli and Fadila once each, was that they had to apply the expectation; as if they did not, their peers would inform an educator who would then reprimand them. Also, all of them but Asli complained that the adults did not 'listen' to them, and that all of the former was 'unfair'. To exemplify, below is an excerpt from my conversation with Aahid:

> Me: What's not fair?
> Aahid: He doesn't listen…Mrs Terry doesn't listen!

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[83] Puzzle-competitions involved two teams of children competing to complete a 46 or 50-piece puzzle each. These were brought to the classroom in November; Mrs Terry ordered them because the children 'really enjoyed' playing with those that were already in the classroom.

[84] See i.e. Aahid's comments in the first excerpt of this sub-section.

Me: No?
Aahid: She said I have to 'share'. I am sharing…he's not sharing!
Me: What would happen if you decided not to share?
Aahid: She will shout.
Me: Why?
Aahid: She's going to say 'be kind with Masood'. I was…but he isn't…he doesn't share….It's not fair.
Me: Mmm.
Aahid: I can't play now…he doesn't go away!

(OBS: 14:10, 19.11.12)

It can be said, then, that Aahid and Yelda's – and in part Asli and Fadila's – play episodes and endeavours were constrained during these instances; on the one hand because of their 'strict' application of the expectation(s), and on the other owing to their fear of being reprimanded if they did not.

The second point was that the children were somewhat afraid of raising their concerns with the educators when they believed that their decisions were 'unfair'; specifically, when an adult had given a resource to a child although another had asked for it first. When I asked the children why they were not voicing their contention(s) with the educator in question, each of them revealed the same, several reasons. Namely, because the educators a) would 'shout' or put their name on the sad side, b) were not going to 'listen', and c) were 'big' and/or the 'teachers', whilst they were 'small' and the 'children' – and so, the children had to both listen to and not challenge the educators. As can be seen from the below two excerpts:

Aahid: Noooo, I can't…she's going to shout at me.
Me: Why?
Aahid: I can't do that.
Me: You can say, maybe that…
Asli: Nooo we can't do's that.
Me: Why can't you?
Asli: We the children's we have to listens to the teachers.
Aahid: (*Nods*).
Fadila: Because they're big enit?
Aahid and Asli nod.
Asli: We small. We the children we have's to listen.
Aahid: Just they can do that; children have to listen.

(OBS: 11:00, 20.05.13)

Yelda: We not do that.
Me: We? You?
Yelda: (*Nods*)…and all the children everybody.

Masood: Me be good that day.

Asli: She not asking that Masood…the children can't says that to the teachers because they guna shout and be sad.

Yelda: (*Nods*)…I didn't say it…Mrs Tanveer be shouting at me.

Fadila: When the teacher says you have to share it, then you have to give.

Me: But you thought Mrs Tanveer's decision was unfair earlier…but you didn't tell her.

Fadila: Because I have to listen because she's the teacher.

Yelda: Children small then, they be the sad side.

Asli: The big teachers will shout then.

(OBS: 13:10, 22.04.13)

9.5 Discussion

In bringing this chapter to a close, I consider the main themes that can be noted – some of which are linked to the previous chapters' discussions. The first point that can be highlighted is that upon close examination of, on the one hand, Mrs Terry's reasons, intentions and motivations behind the creation of the BEs; and on the other, the children's endeavours and talk in connection with these: it can be said that whilst there may have been a number of reasons and motivations driving the children's efforts, these were, it appears, made up of a combination of both their own and Mrs Terry's. To elaborate, whilst the BEs were created for several reasons (see 9.1), Mrs Terry's overall motivation was for the children to regulate their own behaviour(s) and those of their peers'. Since the children actively tried to act in accordance with these (and encouraged their peers to do so too) throughout the school year, it can be said that Mrs Terry's approach was successful as her motivations were realised. Indeed, as can be seen from some of the excerpts presented, when talking about the BEs the children often referred to the classroom as theirs (e.g. 'our classroom', 'our Sunflowers'), and highlighted that all members had to apply these (e.g. 'everyone has to', 'have to'). These were the terms that Mrs Terry used throughout the year when encouraging the children to consider the BEs (and in general), but especially during the activity where they 'created' these and the initial weeks that followed.

When looking at the reasons and motivations that were behind the children's endeavours, then, it can be said that Mrs Terry's approach and efforts created and fostered a 'vested interest' that the children shared and actively – both individually and together – tried to realise. However, whilst they were influenced by the teacher's motivation: each child considered the reasons behind each expectation, and managed their own feelings, wants, and behaviour(s) to make sure that they were practising these as members of the classroom. For instance, Aahid and Yelda tided though they did not want to, and tried to exercise their patience when their peers did not share in the ways that they expected them to; and, all of the participants tried to 'teach' those

they believed were 'naughty' (at the start of the year) how to apply the BEs. In view of this, it can be said that each of the children navigated their personal and social preferences, and decided to 'personify' their 'member' roles in their own 'particularistic' ways (Archer, 1995, p.726).

A second point that can be observed is that the changes in some of the children's application(s) of the given BEs were the result of their concerted efforts; accordingly, they were each active in the process of their own 'becoming(s)' (Lee, 2001) as contributing members of the classroom. That is, they intentionally acted and behaved in the ways that they believed would keep the resources intact, maintain orderliness in the classroom, and ensure they were being kind to and sharing with each other. For instance, from week three onwards Masood was both learning and choosing to tidy in the classroom; by the end of the year, he had become, in this regard, an active 'tidying' member of the classroom.

Thirdly, it appears the children's observations and experiences of being seen and/or positioned as 'becomings'[85] (Qvortrup, 1985), was one of the reasons why they were reluctant to a) challenge the educators' decisions, and b) approach them about matters related to the rules. Their use of the term 'big' to refer to the adults, for instance, and both 'small' and 'children' to refer to themselves (see also 8.1.2), indicates that they saw the adults as the powerful decision-makers in Sunflowers and themselves as the powerless decision-receivers. The other reason, which can be connected to the first, was that because the educators were the 'teachers' and they the 'children', they were not to call their judgements into question – at least not openly. But, one could also suggest that their reluctance may have been due to a combination of reasons, explicitly: the adults were 'big' and therefore had the final say; they were the 'teachers' – children had to listen to teachers; and, the teachers had the power to 'shout' to and put their names on the sad side. In doing this, it can be suggested that the children were both perpetuating and maintaining their own positioning in Sunflowers. That is, in not speaking to the educators about their concerns, they were enabling the educators – or rather Mrs Terry, to make the decisions; and in turn, positioning themselves as the decision-receivers, who had no say or intentional influence on these. Mrs Terry, then, remained the 'corporate agent' in this set, who tried to realise the vested interests that came with her role as teacher; and the children, the 'primary agents' – who only influenced the former's decisions through the 'unintended aggregate effects' of their collective actions (Archer, 1995, p.259-260).

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[85] It is unclear if they were only referring to the relations between the adults and the children in the classroom here, or if this is what they believed was the case irrespective of the context.

Lastly, a common theme that runs across Chapters 6, 7 and the present, is that all of the children believed Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer would reprimand them if they were seen resisting the rules or expectations. This factor, it can be said, both shaped and constrained the children's play-related experiences and endeavours. For one, whilst this did not deter them from resisting some of the rules, it did, however a) lead them to do this covertly through the use of tactics, and b) affect their play episodes as they broke from these many times to do the former. It is also another reason why the children did not voice their concerns to the educators and make any suggestions that they believed would allow them to engage in the kinds of play that they wanted to. As a consequence, the children often dealt with interruptions to their play episodes (no-crawling, no-building and pegs-only) – which sometimes even resulted in them altogether abandoning these; and, with feelings of frustration.

Here, it can be suggested that the reason why the children believed the two full-time members of staff would shout is perhaps because they had seen Mrs Terry 'shout' and use the sad side on three occasions (Mrs Terry also told me that she had shouted during these). This is because although these instances[86] took place early on in the year – specifically October and early November, and were unconnected to the rules discussed to this point: a) the children recalled these events, and b) these were connected to the 'we are kind' BE. It needs to be mentioned here, however, that in using the term 'shout' (or shouting) the children were perhaps referring to any one or more of four 'events'. The first was perhaps 'shouting' in the actual sense – i.e. when Mrs Terry shouted during the above instances, as the children used the term when talking about it to me. The second was perhaps to refer to a 'raised voice', as when Mrs Terry or Tanveer occasionally raised their voices to be heard over the children, the children used the term. The third may have denoted the 'enforcement' of rules; for instance, when the children said Mrs Tanveer 'sometimes' shouted and Mrs Terry 'always' did in relation to no-building rule, they appeared to be using it (in place of enforce or apply, for example) to explain this to me. The fourth was perhaps referring to a 'firm tone', as I also often heard the children use the term when referring to instances when Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer spoke to a child in this way.

It needs to be mentioned here, however, that the children perhaps also did not feel 'comfortable' in speaking about the rules – or anything connected to these, because there was not a 'system' in place (e.g. a class council) whereby they could communicate their perspectives and preferences to the educators. This is not to say that the children had no say in the classroom, as

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[86] Instance one (early October) Amir and Masood were seen fighting in the classroom; instance two (mid October), a dinner lady said Asli and Fadila had been swearing at each other in the playground; instance three (early November), Amir threatened to punch a child.

they voted on which role-play themes they preferred, and, occasionally Mrs Terry would suggest two options and ask the children to vote on the one they preferred (e.g. which book to read). Rather that, because they were never asked to vote on the rules, for example; and their perspectives about these were never sought: this, their impressions of the classroom's hierarchy, and the structure that was the classroom's behaviour management system, led them to believe that the said consequences would follow if they raised any of their concerns.

CHAPTER 10:

Navigating participation in adult-led activities

In the previous chapter, I looked at the children's navigations of the classroom's five BEs with a particular focus on 'we *tidy*' and 'we *share*'. In this final analysis chapter, I look at the children's experiences and endeavours in connection with the requirement that they had to participate in adult-led activities and administrative tasks when called. The data is presented and discussed largely in the same way that it was in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. I begin by looking at what the 'reasons' for the requirement were and the children's understandings of these; the reasons and motivations behind their endeavours; and their perspectives. After looking at how the children navigated the requirement at various junctures over the school year; in the final section, I discuss how they tried to negotiate their play episodes when it seemed to constrain these by way of disruption(s).

10.1 The requirement: reasons and understandings

During the morning and afternoon's free play sessions, Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer (and Mrs PPA when in charge) would lead activities – adult-led activities – which were designed to help the children meet certain learning outcomes in the subjects of literacy, numeracy and occasionally science (see 6.1). During these, the children's progress was also monitored and assessed; this was in connection with the EYFS, for their EYFSPs (largely later in the year) and the school's own progress monitoring system. When the educators called the children during the free play sessions, then, they were required to immediately leave their play episodes or other activities to participate in these. This requirement also included other administrative tasks – that is, if called to change their reading books or review their stamp books, the children were expected to do the same.

Mrs Terry said that she preferred this approach – specifically, to have adult-led activities taking place during the free play sessions – over others (see 2.3 and 6.1), and had been applying it for 'nearly ten years now'. This was essentially because it enabled her to offer the children 'extended' free play sessions, which therefore meant that they both could – and had the time to – a) initiate and engage in their own play episodes, b) 'really get involved' and immersed in their play, and c) follow their interests, experiment with the resources and play out various themes with their peers. Also, and in part, it not only gave her and Mrs Tanveer the time to conduct the

adult-led activities, but also to a) observe the children's learning and development (for EYFSPs and school's own progress system), b) carry out administrative tasks, and c) occasionally support the children's play and learning at the tables.

When I asked the children what the requirement was exactly and about the reasons behind it, they mainly spoke about the adult-led activities (not the administrative tasks) and told me that they 'had' to go to these because they were for 'learning'. If they did not, the 'teachers' would be 'sad' and 'shouting' – however, aside from the start of the year (discussed in 10.2), they had not actually seen them do this because they had never challenged the requirement. Indeed, aside from earlier on in term one when Mrs PPA made some 'concessions' (also discussed in 10.2); whilst Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer did allow the children to 'quickly' make a trip to the toilets beforehand or to put away what they had been working on, they very rarely allowed a child to remain at their activity (the exception was Masood during term one; discussed in due course).

10.1.1 Children's reasons and motivations

In this section, I look at the reasons why all of the children abided by the requirement for the majority of the year. I say 'majority' here because during their first few weeks in Sunflowers, Asli, Fadila and Masood did try to navigate the requirement in various other ways (I consider these endeavours and the apparent reasons behind them in 10.2). Whilst I also discuss the children's perspectives in the following section, since the reasons and motivations behind their application of the requirement were largely to do with the fact that they 'liked' participating in the adult-led activities, I will not separate the two. In the following section, then, I mainly discuss the times when the children appeared to be frustrated with – and even appeared to dislike – the requirement and why.

As mentioned above, then, for the majority of the year, whenever the educators called the children, they would leave their play or other activity and immediately make their way to them (the adult-led activities almost always took place on table three; the tasks, on various tables or the RA). When I asked the children why they did this, whilst they cited several reasons; overall, it appeared this was because they enjoyed participating in these. Specifically, they all said that they 'liked' learning and playing the various 'games' that were on offer; and, all five of them but Aahid also said it was because they 'liked' spending time with Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer.

What perhaps 'demonstrates' that the children enjoyed these activities, then, are the following three observations. First, in addition to immediately stopping what they were doing, I also often

saw the children smiling as they made their way to the educator(s). Secondly, when the children would scout what the educators had put on the tables; when looking at what was on offer on table three – and another[87], which also had a clipboard with a list of the children's names on it[88], they would ask the educators what the activity was going to be. On many occasions, they asked if they could be one of the first children called to participate[89]. Lastly, on each of the days that I visited the classroom, during the free play sessions at least one or more of the participants – at some point – would undertake a literacy or numeracy-related activity on their own accord. Whereas some of these appeared to be the same as, influenced by or an extension of those that they had participated in during an adult-led activity or the morning or afternoon's post-registration sessions (either on the day or previously); others looked to be new and fashioned entirely by them.

During these above-mentioned self-initiated pursuits, then, the children agentially acted on or 'engaged' with the concepts that they were trying to work with or through (partly like the children in Reeve & Tseng, 2011, p.264 did). This was by starting from the beginning and breaking these down into more understandable parts – sometimes modifying their approach by using a different one that they had thought of or their peers, the educators or me; and then working their way through these, often asking for help from other parties once again; and testing themselves, having someone test them, or testing each other. In this way, they were, as Moyles (2015) stresses is just one of the benefits of engagement in play for children: able to think about, reflect on and work through concepts that they had recently learned or come across, and this was at their own pace, free from external pressures connected with time and the educators' gaze. But also, one could suggest, cultivating in themselves a sense of resilience, as there were several instances when they were not able to work through a challenge but nonetheless persevered (Sylva 1976; Moyles, 2015). When I asked the children why they were creating and engaging in these activities, their responses indicated it was because they a) wanted to learn or 'get better' at what it was that they were doing, and/or b) enjoyed it; as can be seen in the below excerpt:

> Fadila: Because I want to write, I like it. I can do four-letter words now.
> Asli: Because I like it as well, I do's it in [additional literacy].

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[87] This was either where Mrs Tanveer was also carrying out the same or another adult-led activity, or when she was assessing the children in a certain area.

[88] The adults used these to keep track of the children who had participated in the activity.

[89] When I asked the children why they did this, they generally said it was because they 'wanted' to and highlighted an aspect of the activity that seemed to take their interest; cooking and card games appeared to be the most popular.

Fadila: You like it Fadila? I like it.
Asli: We do the writing because we want to learns bigger and bigger words!
Fadila: And I want to do spellings.

(DISC: 01.07.13)

A further but nonetheless important point, which can also be mentioned here is that, when I asked them what they did during adult-led activities and what they did when they were not participating in these; amongst other points, the children's responses appeared to show that they liked the fact that they had the opportunities to – and therefore could – engage in both kinds of activities. That is, they liked the adult-led activities for the reasons mentioned above, and they enjoyed initiating and engaging in their own play episodes. Their talk also indicated that, whilst they did make a distinction between the two, they did not view the former as 'work' (as many have found or suggested, namely: Wood, 2010a; Moyles, 2013; Moyles, 2015; Quinn, 2017), but rather as subject/content-specific learning oriented activities or games. Furthermore, whereas Aahid and Fadila suggested that these activities occasionally included play, they appeared to view it as learning oriented play – not play as such. Their understandings, then, seemed to loosely fit what is defined as planned and purposeful play or educationally framed activities (see i.e. Wood, 2010a; Moyles, 2013, pp.27-28; Wood, 2013; Moyles, 2015). Indeed, the children's explanations were somewhat 'accurate'; as Mrs Terry told me that whilst these did involve an 'element of direct teaching', they were largely play-based, which is what she both aimed and preferred for these to be.

Equally, when explaining what they did during the free play sessions, when not participating in an adult-led activity, the children said that they 'played'; and their talk appeared to echo some of the points that were considered in Chapter 2 regarding what 'true' – or child-initiated play – is, and what it affords children with – i.e. a self-chosen pursuit driven by the child's interests; child chooses what to play with, where and with whom (see 2.2). To exemplify, some of the points I have raised here can be seen in the below excerpt:

What do you do in the classroom when you're not with the 'teachers'?

Aahid: Make a star ship…and a big bridge, tunnel….go there…(*C1*)…there…(*C2; RA*)…there…(*laptops*).
Yelda: I play there…(*role-play*)…all the classroom!
Fadila: Playing…everywhere…and…writing…I like writing…(*points: big chair; C1*)…and reading stories to the children.
Aahid: I play…all the children are playing.
Fadila: There…(*points: Mrs Tanveer*)…we do the learning…sometimes playing.
Me: Is it the same as the playing you do everywhere else?

Aahid: …learning.
Fadila: Learning-playing…enit?
Aahid: (*Nods*).
…
Masood: Play my cars...(*points: C2*)…play me Amir.
Asli: Playing.
Me: Do you play with the teachers at the tables?
Asli: (*Shakes head*)…writing…and…games.
Me: Are these games, playing…or are they something else?
Asli: Mmmm…something else.
Me: Can you describe them?
Asli: …teacher games…(*shrugs*).

(FN: 13.05.13)

10.1.2 Children's perspectives

Whereas, for the most part, the children did not appear to be concerned about the requirement, there were a number of times when all of them but Masood expressed their apparent frustrations with it. This was a few times over the course of terms one and two, essentially when the children experienced a number of disruptions to their play episode(s); and especially during the final term, when they experienced the former more often, as they were called away from their play episodes more than usual. During term three, this was because Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were observing and assessing the children for their EYFSPs, conducting the usual adult-led activities and helping them with their phonics in preparation for Y1.

When looking at the specific reasons why the children appeared to be frustrated, then, these appeared to be either one or more of the following three, namely, they 1) had not had enough time to play, 2) had not been able to play with a certain peer – or certain peers, and/or 3) their play had been disrupted (I discuss their experiences further in 10.3). Indeed, during all of the instances when the children voiced these to me, I had observed that either they and/or their peers had to leave; or, they and/or multiple peers had to. In the below excerpt, for example, one can note Fadila's frustration(s) during one of these instances – some of which I have mentioned here:

Yelda: I didn't play. I do that quickly [writing], but I didn't play.
Me: When?
Yelda: Mrs Tanveer call me. I didn't play…Sabah don't want to play now. She's writing; where's Mary?
Me: There [table one].
Yelda: All them not playing me now.
Me: How about later….when they're free?
Yelda: Noooo…is snack now. Mrs Terry tell me.

Out of all of the children, Aahid was the only one who seemed to insinuate that he had to fulfil the requirement too often. Whilst he (see excerpts in 10.1.1) often said that he enjoyed the adult-led activities; during one of the conversations that he had with me in term one, he also added that he did not want to participate in these 'all the days'[90] because he would rather be playing instead (see excerpt below). This, however, was not the only time that he mentioned this, as in May of the final term he said it once more. Here, it was when he returned from an adult-led activity with the intention to commence the puzzle-competition that he and his group had been planning before his departure, but found that Aqeel and Hamza had also had to leave.

> Me: Do you like some of the other things you do…or not?
> Asli: (*Nods*)…different games…other days…yes.
> Aahid: (*Shakes head*)…I don't want to do them all the days; I want to play.

(DISC: 08.10.12)

10.2 Navigating educators' calls

In the above main section, I looked at the children's understandings of the requirement; what appeared to be the reasons and motivations behind their navigation of it over the majority of the year; and their perspectives. I now look at how the children navigated the requirement over the three terms of the school year, as there were some subtle and more obvious differences between the ways in which some of them did this.

In September and early October, I saw Asli, Fadila and Masood exercise three tactics. The first one, which was *delay participation*, was exercised by all three of them several times, and involved one or more of the following: slowly putting away resources; talking to peers for a while; and, walking leisurely to the educator – sometimes stopping to talk to peers en route. Whilst I only saw Asli and Fadila do this when Mrs PPA called them, Masood did it with the said educator and Mrs Terry and Tanveer. Since Masood did not seem to understand (much of) English at the time, I was not able to ask him about the reasons behind his actions (below, I discuss the possible reasons why). Asli and Fadila both told me they did this because they wanted to continue playing (not leave their play); they did not say why they did this with Mrs PPA only.

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[90] This is a phrase that most of the children used; it appeared to be used in place of 'every day'.

Asli and Fadila used the second tactic – *postpone participation* (much like 'balanced compliance' (Rogers & Evans, 2008) and 'negotiation' and 'partial acceptance' (Markström & Halldén, 2009)) – twice each[91]. This involved asking if a peer could go in their place (sometimes suggesting a name), or if they could participate in the adult-led activity later instead. Again, this was only when Mrs PPA called them. During the second instance here, Fadila did this first and then Asli straight after her; both were role-playing on C1. When I asked them why they had done this; once again, they said it was because they wanted to continue playing (not leave their play). When I asked them why they did this with Mrs PPA and if they had done this with the two full-time members of staff, their responses revealed that they did this with the former educator because she a) did not 'say anything' (refuse their proposals), and b) allowed them to remain playing. But they did not exercise the tactic with Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer, as the adult would reject their suggestions. However, this was based on their anticipations of what the two educators would do, as neither child (which they told me) had actually tried to compromise with them when called.

Evading participation was the third tactic, which I saw Asli, Fadila and Masood employ several times each. Here, in the same way that the children in Markström & Halldén (2009) and Ebrahim (2011) 'ignored' their educators' calls: the children remained silent and either continued playing (all three), remained inside the role-play (Asli and Fadila), or moved into the role-play soon after being called (Fadila). Once more, for Asli and Fadila this was only when Mrs PPA requested their participation. I did not ask Asli or Fadila why they did this, as the children were new to the classroom (and Asli and I to the researcher-participant relationship) and I did not want to 'bombard' them with my questions during this settling in period. When looking at Masood's actions during this time, it can be said that there were perhaps two overall reasons behind these. First, his evasion may have been largely due to the fact that he did not understand what he was required to do, as he a) was new to the classroom context, b) did not seem to understand English at the time, and c) did this with all of the educators. Secondly, like Asli and Fadila, he perhaps also wanted to continue playing – which he was doing on each occasion.

For the remainder of the year barring one instance in July (final term), like Aahid and Yelda, the three children abided by the requirement. In this one instance, Fadila tried to *postpone participation*. Here, she was practising her spelling by copying three-to-four letter words from the

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[91] It may be that Fadila used this tactic more times, as these two instances were noted during my observations of Asli and Yelda.

spelling board[92]; covering these and trying to spell them; and then checking how she had done. When Mrs Terry asked her to 'do some spelling' with her, Fadila appeared confused to start with and told the educator she was already doing this. Mrs Terry told her to come anyway, as she could return to her activity when she was done. However, she then seemed bemused when she arrived at the table and saw that she would be spelling the exact same words; and retrieved her sheet to show Mrs Terry this. A number of points can be made about this instance. Firstly, this perhaps demonstrated to Fadila that irrespective of what she was – or indeed other children were – doing beforehand; when they were called, they had to do as they were required to. Secondly, adult-led activities, administrative tasks and assessments took precedence over all else. Thirdly, the former was perhaps another reason (see others in 10.1.1) why the children acted in accordance with the requirement – and Asli, Fadila and Masood had stopped evading or postponing Mrs PPA's calls. But, one could suggest this may also have been because they understood that the 'teachers' had to assess them in order to demonstrate their progress to others in the school. I say this because when I asked Fadila why she had to go to Mrs Terry, she said it was a) because 'teachers' had to 'write it' (assess), and b) so that they could 'show the teachers' how many 'tricky words' she could 'write'.

Although the children did not resist the requirement over the majority of the year, this is not to say that they did not try to somewhat circumvent what the adults expected from them. For, once in October – and primarily in the third term (end of year), they told me that they were 'quickly' doing what they had been asked to, when participating in the activities (as the children did in Gawlicz, 2009). In the former, as she complained to me that she did not have the 'time to play' with her peers – because upon her return she learned that she was required to go outdoors (for break, together with half of the children): Fadila revealed she had traced her name (in the activity) 'quickly' so that she could re-join the role-playing episode she had, had to leave. With regard to the latter, on a number of occasions in June and July, all of the children but Masood told me that they had rushed their activities in order to return to their play sooner. This can be seen, for example, in the second excerpt (from June) that I offered in 10.1.2, where Yelda tells me she did her writing 'quickly'.

In navigating the requirement in this way, then, it appears that the children's frustrations had led them to think of – and therefore exercise – a tactic, which enabled them to, on the one hand, act in accordance with it; but on the other, covertly circumvent a part of it. This, it seemed, was

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[92] Located above the side table on the far end of C1, this board was put up towards the end of term one. The educators would add words between one and four letters in length, which the children would often – on their own accord – try to spell during the free play sessions.

because they were aware that if they navigated it in any other way – i.e. ignore of evade educators' calls, or refuse to participate when at the table – the educators would become aware of what they were doing. However, and in doing it in the way described, they were able to both avoid reprimand and realise their own needs, which was to return to their play. As, during this time, when I asked all of them (but Masood) why they did not simply turn down the educators' requests, the children told me the adults would be 'sad' and/or 'shout'. When asked if the adults were aware that they were rushing, the children said they were not. It also needs to be mentioned that the children's endeavours here are concerning. In this final term the educators were trying to 'push' the children's learning in preparation for the Y1 PSC and assessing their learning for the EYFSPs. If the children were indeed hurrying through these activities[93], they may have unintentionally compromised their own learning and perhaps even spoiled or skewed the educators' assessments of their progress.

10.3 Negotiating play when encountering disruptions

As mentioned in 10.1.2 the main time(s) that the children expressed their frustrations with the requirement were when their play was disrupted many times. Indeed, I observed it constrain their play episodes on a number of occasions[94], particularly during the final term. In fact, it was – in line with the Rogers & Evans' (2008) findings – arguably the main factor affecting both the length and the quality of the children's play episodes.

Before I explain how and why this was, however, it is important to highlight that this was not the case each time a child or their peer(s) had to leave for an adult-led activity or other task. That is, although, when a child was playing or undertaking an activity on their own (as in Fadila's case in 10.2), their concentration was disrupted as they had to leave; whilst there were some occasions when they were not able to return to it immediately after, they often did pick-up what they had been doing – at the time, later in the day or on another occasion. Equally, in general larger groups of children were not as affected. For, the children who left were able to immediately re-join the activity upon their return; and those who did not, continued with what they were doing in the interim. During one instance in March, for example, when Asli, Fadila, Yelda and five other children engaged in a role-play episode, first Nosheen (auntie) had to leave for an adult-led activity, and then Asli (mommy two) for additional literacy. Nosheen's departure did not appear to

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[93] I say this because although I did try to see if they were hurrying through these activities or tasks, I was unable to determine if this was the case or not.

[94] As several studies have also noted, see i.e. Cleave & Brown, 1991; Adams *et al.* 2004; Rogers & Evans, 2008.

affect the group, as they continued playing and did not openly acknowledge that she had left – perhaps because there were two aunties present. When Asli had to leave, they paused their play to discuss who would take her place, which took approximately 10-15 seconds to decide, and then continued playing.

The main times that the children's play experiences were constrained, then, were when a) a child had to leave more than once, b) two children were playing together and one of them had to leave, and c) a smaller group of children were engaging in a play episode – and either one or more children had to. Point 'a' was the case for Asli a number of times during the year; and very occasionally for others during the final term when the children were required to participate in various activities and tasks more often. At least twice a week, Asli had to leave for an additional literacy sessions; on these days, then, I saw that she often had to leave her play twice – once for the former and once for an adult-led activity. During the March instance that I mention in the above paragraph, for example, when I started the observation (14:10), Asli joined the group's planning and preparations upon arriving from an adult-led activity. Approximately fifteen minutes into the play (14:25) she had to leave for additional literacy. She was at the adult-led activity for twenty minutes, and spent roughly the same amount of time at the second. When she returned from the latter, after approximately a minute of observing the group's play and perhaps figuring out what was going on, the tidy-up music came on. In the case of point 'b', here the remaining child would either try to continue the play or activity alone or ask a peer to join them (e.g. working on a puzzle or testing each others spellings); however, there were times when they would either immediately – or eventually – stop what they had been doing and move on to something else.

Point 'c' – children's small group play episodes – seemed to be particularly constrained by the requirement. Certainly, it was one of the main times that the children voiced their frustrations to me, and when they told me they had rushed during an activity or task in term three. It was during these episodes that I saw the children put in the most effort to keep their play going; though, and especially in the final term, their play often stagnated or ended. As a result, those who left were often unable to re-join the play when they returned; and those who remained either waited for their peer(s) to return, or eventually left for another activity. To offer an example, I discuss one instance in October; it is typical of the kinds of interruptions experienced and efforts made.

Here, as soon as Fadila (big auntie), Yelda (mom), Mary (auntie's baby) and Sabah (mom's daughter) were about to start their role-playing, Fadila had to leave. Before departing, Fadila and Yelda quickly decided Mary would assume the role of the auntie. However, the play did not take

off, largely because Mary did not yet have the 'requisite' social, cognitive and linguistic capacities to play the role of auntie, communicate in character or to keep the overall enactment going (Bennett *et al*. 1997, p.73). To remedy this, Yelda directed Mary and Sabah; but stopped approximately two minutes later, after trying but failing to keep Mary in character. The children then, at Yelda's direction, came out of character and arranged the dishes, food and puppets in preparation for Fadila's return. Three minutes later, Yelda decided they would commence their play; though this time Sabah was to provisionally assume the character of the auntie, and Mary of mom's daughter. As soon as the children commenced their play, however, Mrs Tanveer called Sabah. Over the next three minutes or so, Yelda sat slumped next to me; tried but failed to convince Aneesha and Nosheen to role-play with her; and re-arranged the food and dishes silently. When Fadila did eventually return, Mrs Terry announced it was 'snack time'.

But the increase in the amount of times that the children were called to participate in adult-led activities and other tasks did not only appear to impact on the children's play in the ways described above, as it also seemed to 'deter' – or prevent – the children from creating and engaging the self-initiated pursuits I discussed in 10.1.1. This is because I noticed there was a significant decrease in the amount of times I saw them undertaking these in the latter part of term three (May-July). Whilst I did not ask the children why they were not creating these as often as they had previously; I suggest two reasons why this may have been the case. First, since they were spending more time learning and demonstrating their progress in the subject areas of literacy and numeracy, they were perhaps consciously or unconsciously feeling less inclined to do more of this when not at the former. Second, they may have found there was less time to do this. Lastly, and in connection with the former, it may have been because they were prioritising – and therefore trying to realise – their need to engage in play with their peers, as these play episodes were the most affected. The observations discussed here – namely, children rushing, dealing with many disruptions to a single play episode, and the reduction in self-initiated pursuits – are concerning. Not only because these highlight how much of an impact the final term's demands were having on their play; but also as, in part, their learning and development was perhaps also being affected.

10.4 Discussion

In bringing this chapter to a close, I consider a number of themes that were not only mentioned in the discussion, but which have also emerged from it; and, others that are related to some of the concerns raised. This discussion is split into two parts. Here, I mainly look at the children's endeavours and experiences in connection with the requirement. In the next part, I present and

discuss Mrs Terry's experiences of navigating the various demands and pressures that came with her role, during the fieldwork year; and relatedly, the more recent concerns that she raised when I met her in January 2018.

The first point that can be highlighted here is that, in the main, the children acted in accordance with the requirement. Whilst this was partly because they 'liked' engaging in the 'learning-play' or 'games' that were offered, it was also for the reason that these enabled them to further their learning. As, a) these activities involved an 'element of direct teaching' and often the testing of learning, and b) the children's self-initiated pursuits involved little to no play, but mostly the learning and/or processing of 'tricky' and difficult concepts. Indeed, their talk shows that they both understood and agreed with the reasons for the requirement; and their endeavours – i.e. asking to be the first called to participate, smiling as they walked to the table(s) – that they often eagerly participated in these and enjoyed doing so too. This was in spite of the fact that they were also occasionally – but particularly towards the end of term three, frustrated with the fact that it disrupted their play. Their efforts and activities during these interruptions, however, reveal the various ways in which they tried to navigate the requirement so that they could continue playing; namely, by a) going to the educators even though they perhaps did not want to at the time, b) quickly doing what they were asked to during these – as overt resistance would have resulted in reprimand, and c) trying to keep their play going in their peers' absence.

Secondly, it can be said that the children were each active in the process of their own 'becomings' as participators, learners and more knowledgeable persons. For instance, in not employing the various tactics after mid-October, Asli, Fadila and Masood – and indeed Aahid and Yelda – became active participators, complying with the requirement at all times. Furthermore, in both actively participating in the adult-led activities and engaging in the other self-initiated pursuits, they were trying – and managing – to further their own learning. Certainly, the children's talk and activities show they were aware of what they knew, which areas they needed to improve in, and were monitoring and evaluating their own progress; and, they were proud of the progress they were making. The latter was particularly the case when it was something they had been struggling with, or if they knew that it was the next step (see 10.1.1; Asli and Fadila's talk on spelling four-letter-words).

In view of the above, then, one could suggest that, firstly, the children had considered how their 'projects' to learn would be enabled by the adult-led activities and the play provision's conditions – and, had imagined the benefits of realising these projects for their immediate future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Archer, 2003); and were, therefore, using these to further their learning.

Secondly, whilst some aspects of the context positioned the children as becomings (e.g. rules to protect and safeguard; activities to learn, develop and make progress; observations to monitor learning and developmental needs – and learn about interests) (Qvortrup, 1989; Moran-Ellis, 2010); the other various aspects of the play provision enabled them, as capable beings, to realise their play and learning-related interests and projects (James *et al*. 1998; Leonard, 2016). To elaborate on the latter point here, the reason(s) why the children were able to fashion and engage in the various activities, was because of the (relative) *freedom*, *choice* and *autonomy* they were afforded (see section 6.1) during the free play sessions; and, equally importantly, because they were given the *time* to do the former.

10.4.1 Navigating various pressures and demands

In this section, I look at how various structural factors pertaining to the larger structure of primary education were, according to Mrs Terry, shaping, enabling and constraining her play provision, her involvement in the children's play, and the children's play experiences.

In this chapter, I have mainly highlighted how the requirement constrained the children's play by way of disruption(s). What I have not considered yet is how the children's play experiences – and therefore, their social and other skills, and learning and development – may have been limited owing to the lack of adult involvement in their play episodes. This is essentially because the focus of this chapter is primarily on the children's experiences and endeavours in connection with the requirement. However, I briefly consider this matter here because a part of this research's focus is on how various structural factors pertaining to the larger structure of primary education shape, enable and/or constrain the children's play experiences and endeavours (see sub-question 6); and, whilst the various pressures and demands that Mrs Terry was trying to navigate did impact on the children's play in the ways described to this point, these did prevent both the educator and Mrs Tanveer from participating in the children's play.

Throughout the course of my time in Sunflowers, then, I saw that, during the free play sessions, there was very little adult involvement in the children's play episodes which took place on the carpets – i.e. their role-playing, or play with construction and transport resources. In the main, Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer divided their time between the adult-led activities, working one-to-one with a child (e.g. helping them catch-up if they had been away), or assessing children's on an aspect of their learning (e.g. counting or phonics). When not doing the former, they would observe the children for their EYFSPs or undertake administrative duties. If, on the rare

occasion, Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer were not doing any of the former, they would generally move between tables and join in the children's talk and activities.

This is not to say that there was never any involvement in the children's play on the carpets or in general. At the start of the year, Mrs Tanveer would sit at a table for between thirty minutes to an entire session and help particular children practise certain skills – e.g. cutting with scissors; and on some occasions during the year, when a new game or set of resources were offered, she would show the children how to play with these. During the initial weeks of the year, one of the two educators also briefly sat on C1 and facilitated the children's play with the puzzles. On several occasions across the year, I also saw a student sitting on C1's shelving unit; during these, the children told her what to do as a character in their role-play. In general, the only times that Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer spoke to the children in connection with their play on the carpets was either when they were observing them or for behaviour management purposes.

Whilst it is the case that, in general, the children's play developed and evolved over the course of the year; and that each child's social skills developed, including many of their cognitive and language capacities: it can be said that there were times when they may have benefitted from the educators' involvement. For instance, when role-playing, Asli, Fadila and Yelda would a) often use the exact same words, b) repeat the same sentences, c) pronounce the same words incorrectly, and d) make the same grammatical mistakes[95]. Here, through assuming the role of a character, an educator could have sensitively used the 'correct' pronunciation and grammatical form, and introduced new vocabulary (as Whitebread, 2012; Wood, 2013; Bredikyte & Hakkarainen, 2017 advise). Furthermore, from the beginning of the school year through January, the three children played the same characters. Yelda was *always* the mother; Asli often 'mommy number two'; Fadila *always* the auntie; Sabah the daughter or cousin; and Hania and Mary together with the puppets, the babies. In *all* of their episodes, the mother(s) would make *all* of the decisions (including the course of the play); *sometimes* the aunties were second in command; and the remaining characters largely followed the formers' directions. When one or more of the decision-makers had to leave, the remaining children struggled to keep the play going. Here, for instance, an educator could have encouraged the children to swap roles (to challenge or extend their play and thinking), and helped Hania, Mary and Sabah to initiate, develop and maintain their play (as i.e. Bennett *et al*. 1997; Brooker, 2000; Wood 2010b advise).

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[95] For example: a) 'baby', 'mother' and 'cousin' (alternatives: newborn, toddler; parent(s); relatives, family member); b) 'I will go there' and 'my baby's sick' (alternatives: I travelled there, my baby is unwell or poorly); c) 'horrible' as 'hollible' or 'squirrel' as 'scribble', and d) 'I go'd there', 'didn't come'd here.

In a passing conversation that took place early on in the final term, Mrs Terry told me she 'knew' that she was not participating in the children's play episodes; the reason being, she did not have the *time* to (see excerpt below). This was owing to the various pressures and demands that she was navigating, which therefore meant that she spent much of her time during the free play sessions involved in the activities I mentioned above. Whilst this 'bothered' her – and here she appeared to be referring to her enforcement of the requirement and its possible impact on the children's play too: she was reassured by the fact that a) the children were able to engage in sustained play, and b) return to their play episodes after participating in the adult-led activities or other tasks. However, the reason why the children were able to do the latter was because she had been able to keep the extended free play sessions with the HoFS's support – although the LA had 'advised' the HoFS that the reception teachers ought to incorporate more direct teaching. Indeed, on another occasion early on in the year (February), Mrs Terry told me that she disliked having to call the children because she 'knew' that it 'broke' their play; however, she did this because she 'had' to.

> I know I don't have the time to play, especially now [end of term]…that does bother me, but…I know they have sustained play…I've made sure they have the time for it…and they can go back to it when they're done. You know the LA are *suggesting* we extend or have more teaching time? HoFS said I should carry on with what I'm doing; she supports all of us. They [LA] want us to do more literacy and numeracy but…we're doing quite a bit of it already! I'm happy I can keep the routine – how I do it; I've had it like this for nearly ten years now…so they have quite a bit of time to play, so that keeps me from getting mad.

(DISC: 29.04.13)

In July, which was the final month of the third term, she explained the reasons why she did not have the time to participate in the children's play; and in doing this, why there had been an increase in the amount of times the children were called away from their play. Essentially, this was owing to the various demands and pressures that she was experiencing. Namely, because a) she had to make sure the children were making certain progress in literacy in preparation for the Y1 PSC, and in literacy and numeracy in preparation for the end of Y2 SATs – and accordingly end of Y6 SATs; b) and in connection with the former, Ofsted inspectors looked at the children's progress from reception through end of Y6; and c) she had to complete the EYFSPs. To exemplify, some of these points can be seen in the below two excerpts from the interview:

Time? I don't really have time, there's *so much* to do – too much! You know Ofsted are looking at the whole school now…and that does affect what we do here. We have to make sure they're doing well so they do well there. And, they look at Year Two's results so…

I spend all my time making sure they're learning in literacy…and numeracy too. And they *have* to be at certain levels, most of them, otherwise it has a knock-on effect on the rest of the results. Then there are the EYFSP's…that takes up *so much time*! I'm forever observing and evidencing and assessing…I spent most of my time teaching to them and assessing the learning in them. So much work!

(DISC: 10.07.13)

In view of the above, then, it can be said that whilst these various pressures and demands, connected to the school readiness approach (see Chapter 2), were impacting on the children's play and development (viz. disruption, little adult participation); since Mrs Terry was using the powers that came with her role, to offer the extended free play sessions, and create the various conditions within the play provision: these were enabling them to follow their interests, engage in sustained play (most of the time) and exercise their agency. Furthermore, whilst Mrs Terry's play provision (calling children from play) and time were constrained by these structural factors, the school's hierarchy enabled her to realise the former conditions.

However, whilst during the fieldwork year, Mrs Terry was able to do the former, when I met her in January 2018 she told me that 'things' had 'worsened'. The notes that I made, which I discuss here, are offered in Appendix 13. When comparing Mrs Terry's concerns during the fieldwork year to those that she raised at this time, a number of points can be observed. First, the amount of time the children have to play overall had decreased by almost an hour, and the amount of time dedicated to formal learning in connection with literacy and numeracy increased; this echoes the concerns that many have raised in the recent past (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; SCM, 2013; TACTYC, 2017). Secondly, the pressures and demands appeared to have increased. Namely, whilst she also recorded the children's progress via the school's system in 2012-13, now she had to record much more and monitor it regularly (Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016); and, whilst she continued to feel the pressure to ensure the children reached certain levels in their literacy owing to the Y1 PSC, this had now increased because Ofsted inspectors (previous year's inspection: 2016-17) highlighted that the children were not making sufficient progress in their writing by the end of Y6 (KS2 SATs) in comparison to their progress in reading and mathematics (Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016). Furthermore, in addition to completing the EYFSPs, she now had to also complete a separate assessment, which detailed the children's learning in literacy (particularly phonics), for their prospective Y1 teacher. Third, whilst, in 2012-13, the school's hierarchy supported the extended free play

sessions, in 2018 the new HoFS – owing to pressure(s) from the LA and head teacher – had asked Mrs Terry to increase the amount of formal teaching offered. Indeed, in preparation for the soon-to-be statutory RBA; in addition to considering the previous cohort's EYFSPs, the LA had asked Mrs Terry to assess each child during the first two weeks of the school year (using a baseline assessment of their own), and then used these to predict and set expected GLD targets (Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Roberts-Holmes & Bradbury, 2016). Lastly, Mrs Terry's concerns that the children – especially those who were summer-born – were not ready to participate in formal learning or undertake certain tasks and needed time to play, mirror those many have raised (Sykes *et al.* 2009; Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; SCM, 2013).

A final point, which can be suggested here is that – and this is in relation to the fieldwork year too – whilst Mrs Terry's agency, play provision, and time were being constrained and enabled by the various sets of agents 'above' her (primary and corporate: HoFS and LA, HoFS and head teacher, head teacher and LA, school and Ofsted, school and national policy) (Archer, 1995): she, like the children during the fieldwork year, was continually imagining and anticipating the various constraints and enablements that her own projects (linked to her vested interests) may experience; and, owing to the powers that she had in virtue of her role, doing what she could to ensure that a) she afforded the children relative freedom, choice and autonomy in Sunflowers, b) the children's play during the free play sessions was not bound by learning outcomes, and c) the adult-led activities were playful.

CHAPTER 11:

Conclusions, reflections and directions for future research

In the preceding five chapters (6-10), I have presented, discussed and analysed how five young children navigated some of the rules they encountered, over the course of the year in a reception class. In bringing this thesis to a close, in this final chapter I consider my main research findings in connection with the overarching and sub-research questions (listed in 1.1.2). I also reflect on various aspects of the research process; raise several concerns that have emerged from the discussion; and suggest directions for future research.

11.1 Addressing the research questions

Whilst there were some specific themes that were noted in the children's endeavours and experiences in connection with each of the rules considered, there were also a number that ran across these. In this section I highlight and discuss these in relation to each of the sub-research questions, which are an aggregation of the overarching question. This is in no way to suggest that the children's reasons, perspectives and endeavours are unconnected; on the contrary, these are inextricably intertwined. Rather, I take this approach because it allows me to, on the one hand, separately underline the key and other themes that were noted in each of these areas; and on the other, demonstrate how each question has been addressed. Where the matters discussed overlap – or are closely linked to – another question's subject matter; to avoid repetition, I consider these under the one that these are more connected to.

Question One

In offering the children's understandings of – and perspectives on – the reasons for the classroom's rules, my study contributes to the body of work that has looked specifically at young children's navigations of rules during their play episodes in EYE contexts. For, as I highlighted in Chapter 3, this is a) an aspect that appears to be absent in these works, and b) when sought, these can enable us to better appreciate the possible reasons behind children's endeavours. Indeed, my study not only shows that when children appear to be resisting a rule, this may be because they do not yet understand the reasons behind it; but also, how much attention they pay to the reasons – and the effort that they put in to make sure these are respected.

With regard to the former, it highlights the difference between the ways in which some children navigate rules during their initial weeks in reception in comparison to the majority of the year; as, at the start of the year they are in the process of learning what the rules are, how they are required to apply these, and what they can and cannot do. Namely, and respectively, Masood did not appear to know what the BEs were; Asli learned how and why she was expected to share; and the three children were not aware that the pegs-only rule did not prohibit them from playing with the resources outside the role-play.

With respect to the latter, first it reveals how, on the one hand, children try to make their peers aware of classroom rules and the reasons behind these, and how to apply them; on the other, how quickly they learn and apply rules – and encourage others to do so too. For instance, Asli, Fadila and several other children not only helped Masood to learn about three of Sunflower's BEs, but also how to apply these; and, Masood both listened to and observed the children's applications of these, actively began applying these and reminded others whenever he believed they were not doing so. Secondly, when children find that certain rules conflict with or prohibit them from realising their play-related needs, interests and overall motivations; they carefully consider the reasons for the rules, and then – irrespective of what their perspectives are on these – find and actively exercise compromises. These compromises, then, enable them to realise their 'projects', whilst also ensuring the reasons are respected.

Question Two

Since, in the current body of empirical work that has looked at young children's navigations of rules in EYE settings, instances of when they acted in certain ways are presented – either to exemplify how a strategy was exercised or to illustrate the overall themes that were noted: in these, it is not possible to a) understand how individual children may have navigated each of the rules they encountered, or b) if the ways in which they did this changed over time or indeed during certain situations. It is also difficult to appreciate what factors the children may have taken into account when deciding when or how to act, as these – from their own accounts, are noticeably absent. My research contributes to this body of work by offering further insight in each of these areas.

It shows how each child navigates rules in different ways. For instance, how they resist some rules to start with but later start applying them (e.g. Masood; BEs); occasionally resist or circumvent some over the course of the year (e.g. Asli 'we *share*'; children no-building rule); or strictly apply these throughout irrespective of whether they are new to the classroom or not (e.g.

Aahid and Yelda, 'we *share*'; Fadila, 'we *tidy*'). Aahid and Fadila, for example, strictly applied the 'we *share*' BE throughout the year – partly because they were afraid the educators would reprimand them if they did not, but also because they agreed with it; and, four of the children started circumventing the requirement in the third term because they wanted to return to their play.

It also offers great insight into how children resist certain rules, which they believe prohibit them from realising their play-related needs, interests and overall motivations. The children, for instance, used several tactics – many that were similar in nature, and others that were only employed by some; and either exercised these alone, together in pairs or in a group. What is significant here is that children do not act spontaneously; there can be much thought, deliberation and effort that is put in each time. That is: beforehand, when deciding whether or not to resist a rule – and if so, how; during their resistances, when deciding which tactics to exercise, when and how – and if the plans need to be altered or aborted owing to any changes that take place; and on many occasions afterwards too, for instance, when deciding if they need to hide for a time – and if so, where.

However, children do not use tactics every time they resist rules, and they do not exercise all of these each time that they do. As my research shows, if, when and how the children decided to act depended greatly on which educators were in the classroom at the time. In fact, this was the main factor that they took into account during such instances. That is, the children's conversations revealed that they had ranked how much of a risk they believed each educator posed to their strategy – and this was based on their past experiences and observations of how each of them had enforced the rule; and their endeavours – and talk during these, showed how they drew on these 'risk registers' during each instance. Mrs Terry appeared to be at the top of all of these risk registers; Mrs Tanveer at the top for two of the rules and somewhere in the middle for the no-crawling rule; and Mrs SENCO and Mrs PPA were always at the bottom. For example, whilst for Asli it appeared Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer's presence was too risky, as she stopped resisting the no-play dough rule during terms two and three whenever they were in the classroom: the other children, when resisting this or the no-crawling rule, were not deterred when either or both educators were present. During these, however, they exercised several tactics and resisted the rules either once or twice only. In direct contrast, all of the children – including Asli – exercised either little or no tactics when Mrs PPA alone was in charge, and often resisted the rules multiple times during an observation window.

Furthermore, and this is in connection with the above two rules and the no-building rule, whenever either or both Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer were in the classroom, the children re-exercised the same tactics – often in the exact same ways. This shows that children both recall past 'schemas' (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p.975) when deciding how to act during unfolding situations, and repeatedly use those that have enabled them to realise their projects.

Question Three

What is perhaps striking when looking at the body of empirical work mentioned above is that, aside from a select few, in the majority of these the children's own reasons are noticeably absent. This is another way in which my study makes a contribution. As, the overall reasons why the children navigated the rules in the ways that they did, and – where it was possible – why they decided to exercise certain actions over others during their resistances, are offered. Accordingly, we are able to better understand the reasons and motivations behind their endeavours, which would have been impossible to appreciate through observation alone.

This research shows that, whilst these may be shared between them, there are many – and indeed, often different – reasons why children decide to navigate each classroom rule in the ways that they do. To elaborate, where rules to do with expected classroom behaviour(s) are concerned – namely, the BEs – for several reasons, children make great effort to apply these; namely, because they care about the maintenance of resources, about order in general, and how both they and others are treated. They also readily leave their play episodes – and even ask to be the first called – to participate in adult-led activities, as they both 'like' and want to further their learning. Indeed, although I had noticed these via my observations of their talk and activities, it was through their conversations with me that I learned of the other two reasons; specifically, they also enjoyed being in their educators' company, and the playful element of these was a popular favourite. The children's own admissions were also the reason why I was able to find out that they were rushing through these (and other activities or tasks) in term three, and why.

Whilst the children's resistances of the play-specific rules is not a 'new' theme, as this also runs across the current body of empirical work: my study's contribution here is in offering the children's own reasons. This allows further insight into why they may decide to resist rules in the first place. Here, the children's reasons reveal that they do not simply resist rules for the sake of resistance, but only when they believe there is no other way in which they can play with certain resources in the way(s) they want to. Primarily – and this is a notable theme that runs through

their reasons – these resistances are driven by their objectives to realise their play-related interests and needs. Furthermore, an overall motivation, which was not apparent to me when looking at their earlier activities in connection with the first three rules (Chapters 6-7), was for all of those children – who wanted to – to be able to access and play with the resources in the ways that they wanted to, together with their peers.

A further aspect of children's resistances, which this thesis also reveals, is the reasons behind the actions they chose to employ. These not only offer an insight into how much children consider the ways in which they can realise their play-related projects, but also – and perhaps more significantly – why they decide to exercise certain actions over others when in the company of certain educators. Specifically, how they appear to be – to varying degrees – oriented towards the past, present and future, before and during each instance of resistance; drawing on their knowledge and past experiences – that is, their 'simplifying models' which comprise their impressions of how each educator has (and therefore may) enforce(d) the rule; and re-exercising 'schemas' (tactics) that have previously, successfully enabled them to realise their intentions (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Namely, when Fadila said she moved quickly, as this meant the educators did not 'catch' her, and Aahid crawled down the far end of the classroom because the tables 'blocked' him from Mrs Terry's view.

The various ways in which the children navigated the play-specific rules (including pegs-only), and some of them the we-*share* BE and the requirement, demonstrate how much effort children put in – and the lengths they are prepared to go to – to both play in the ways that they want to and engage in sustained play episodes. It is perhaps also one of the main reasons why resistance is a common theme noted in the current body of empirical work.

Question Four

In showing how classroom rules shape, enable and/or constrain children's play-related experiences and endeavours, and offering the children's perspectives on these: my research makes a further contribution to two bodies of work. Namely, the research literature that has looked at and/or raised concerns about reception play provision (see Chapter 2); and, the body of empirical work mentioned above.

This thesis highlights the extent to which rules can constrain children's play experiences – even where the teacher has allowed them to play on, or in other spaces with the resources; and, this is during times when they try to apply or to resist these. With regard to the former, for instance,

when the children tried to build on or between C2 and the RA, their play was often broken, as they had to deal with issues or conflicts over space and access to resources. This was also the case when the three children and their peers tried to play with their role-play's resources on C1. With regard to the latter, it shows how, in their efforts to play with the resources in the ways that they wanted to, the children constantly broke from their play episodes to think about the ways in which they could do this without the educators finding out that they were resisting the rules. Indeed, the requirement that children were to participate in adult-led activities and other tasks when called, was arguably one of the main reasons why they were unable to engage in sustained play – with this often resulting in their play episodes ending.

However, it also shows how rules can and do enable children to realise their play-related (and other) needs, interests and overall motivations; and this is even where there are times when these disrupt or impact on their play episodes. For instance, although there were times when the children became frustrated with the requirement because it disrupted their play episodes: they liked applying it because the adult-led activities enabled them to further their learning. Likewise, whilst there were occasions when they believed they could not play as they wanted to, owing to their (and/or their peers') application of the 'we *share*' and 'we are *kind*' BEs: the children said they agreed with – and liked – acting in accordance with these, as it meant the resources were shared between them and all of the children were kind to each other.

What my study also reveals, however, is that if there is not a system in place whereby children can voice their concerns about any aspect of a rule with the educators – i.e. a practical solution or its constraining impact: they are likely to refrain from doing this. This can then a) greatly influence how they decide to navigate these, and partly owing to the former b) the 'quality' of their play experiences (see Chapters 8 and 9). For instance, because the children were reluctant to tell the educators that there was not enough space on C1, they continued to bring out the role-play's resources – and accordingly, deal with the interruptions that ensued.

Question Five

Whilst the resistance of rules is a common theme that runs across the current body of empirical work; aside from a select few (i.e. Critchlow, 2007; Gawlicz, 2009; Chitty, 2015), in the majority of these there is very little mention of whether or not these led the educators or schools to maintain, and/or reconsider the rules by either amending or removing them. For, if either one or more of the former take place, children's experiences and endeavours could change as a result – i.e. increased or continued resistance (maintenance); decreased or no resistance

(amendment); or no resistance and more sustained play (removal). My study's contribution here is in showing that, where it is possible for an educator to do this: children's frequent resistances can – and do – influence them to try and accommodate future cohorts' prospective play-related projects.

As I have highlighted in Chapters 7 and 8, the reception teacher made several changes a year after the fieldwork took place. These were influenced by her observations of the following year's cohort repeatedly resisting the same two rules, and navigating the third by playing on C1 (pegs-only) – and this was apparently in similar ways to how the children did during the fieldwork year. To reduce the likelihood of other children engaging in these activities in the future, and so they had the space to play in the ways that they wanted to: she rearranged the classroom's furniture and resources, and removed one of the rules altogether. Whilst these changes may have enabled the teacher's future cohorts' play endeavours; certainly, the fieldwork children were not able to experience or 'benefit' from these.

The above events and the points that I discuss at the end of Chapters 6, 7 and 8 are linked to a concern that I raise in this thesis. That is, if there is not a system[96] in place whereby children can communicate their concerns on any aspect of a rule, and their interests – which they believe a rule is prohibiting them from realising: it is likely that educators may never learn about these. This is especially if children try to realise these needs and interests by covertly resisting the rule(s). Equally, whilst the 'tool' of observation can be useful, as this is how Mrs Terry understood that the children liked crawling, building large structures and role-playing: in this case, as the main or only apparatus for educators to 'understand' children's interests (DfE, 2017, p.13), it is neither reliable nor suitable. For, as I emphasised in the said chapters, Mrs Terry only learned of the children's crawling and building needs and interests as a result of their occasional failures to keep these hidden from her. If the children had shared their suggestions or interests with her at the time, she may have made the changes sooner.

Question Six

Children's activities do not take place in a vacuum; indeed these are situated within various structures. Whilst, in a small number of the empirical works mentioned earlier, some structures are considered to varying degrees: in the main, this is not a feature that is discussed (see Chapter 3). My research contributes to this body of work, and to the research literature that has

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[96] For example, a class council or once-a-month 'meetings' where children can engage in dialogue with educators.

looked at and/or raised concerns about reception play provision. Indeed, the latter concerns provide the background to this study and the broad external context in which it is situated. Here, then, it is by showing how various other structures – in spite of, and together with the rules – shape, enable and/or constrain children's play-related (and other) experiences, endeavours and agency.

Children's fear of reprimand is a striking and notable theme that this research reveals; this, together with children's impressions of the unequal balance of power afforded to roles – and therefore their positioning – had a great effect on how they applied the rules, and accordingly their play experiences. If they were seen resisting any one of a number of rules, the children believed that the two full-time members of staff would reprimand them by way of shouting or putting their names on the sad side. This was also one of the reasons why they were reluctant to share their concerns or suggestions in relation to many of the rules with the educators; specifically, because they believed the resulting consequence would be reprimand. The other reason was because they saw the adults – by virtue of being 'big' (adults) and educators – as the powerful figures of authority who made the decisions; and themselves as the powerless decision-receivers, since they were 'small' children. These two concerns, then, were the main reason why, when the children resisted the rules, they did this covertly; and strove to maintain the impressions that they were acting in accordance with these (as the older children did in Juchtmans, 2014 and Chitty, 2015).

How educators decide to enforce rules is another way in which children's play experiences, endeavours and agency are enabled or constrained. As my thesis shows, when children know that certain educators will enforce a rule, which they believe prohibits their play projects: this can have a constraining impact. This is not only in the way mentioned above (viz. breaking play to strategise), but also when educators ask children to dismantle their constructions or return a resource to its designed place. However, when educators do not enforce rules, and children are both aware of – and make the most of these 'openings' – these can have enabling effects. As, not only did the children not break from their play episodes to strategise during these instances; but also, their play episodes were more creative, challenging and sustained (see i.e. 7.2.1 and 7.4.1).

Whereas, and on the one hand, this research shows how curricula-related demands – in part, together with the advice in the EYFS (DfE, 2017, p.9) that teachers offer a play-based provision made up of a balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities: influence and enable children to realise their learning intentions. It also highlights how, on the other, the former –

owing to children being called away from their play: constrain their play episodes by way of disruption (as Rogers & Evans, 2008 also found). Furthermore, and as the discussion in Chapter 10 reveals, due to various increased pressures and demands, children's play experiences are disrupted more often in the months leading to the end of the school year. For, and as was the case in the fieldwork reception class, children have to break from their play episodes for many reasons, namely to: participate in adult-led activities; one-to-one sessions to help them progress or 'catch-up' with their phonics learning – owing to the top-down pressure from the PSC; and to be assessed for the EYFSPs to demonstrate how much progress they have made. This is all also linked to the top-down pressures from the end of KS1 and KS2 SATs – and with that, Ofsted inspections (see i.e. 10.4.1).

However, whilst the above structures – and the rules – each to varying degrees have constraining effects on children's activities: this thesis also highlights how the various 'conditions' of a play provision greatly enables them to realise their play-related and other projects, and to exercise agency. In the fieldwork class, it was because of the relative *freedom*, *choice* and *autonomy* they were afforded; and, equally importantly, the *time* that the extended free play sessions offered, that the children were able to do the former (see i.e. 8.4 and 10.4.1). For instance, these enabled the children to: choose what they wanted to play with, where and with whom; control the direction(s) of their play; play with the majority of the resources anywhere in the classroom; fashion and engage in various activities to further their learning; return to their play episodes after participating in adult-led activities; and, strategise and execute various tactics.

11.2 Reflections

In this section, I reflect on several aspects of the research process, starting with the methodology and methods. The decision to use a broadly ethnographic methodology together with the concomitant traditional methods of observation and informal discussions; was, in my estimation, not only fitting given the research's focus, but also highly expedient. Visiting the class every week and for an extended period of time was useful both at the beginning of the study and throughout. For one, these regular visits enabled me to quickly build relationships of mutual trust and respect with the children (and adults) at the start of the year; by the third week, they were all trying to communicate their views and reasons with me, and asking what time I would be observing them. During these earlier weeks, I was also able to trial and find a way for Masood and me to communicate with each other; this was through the aid of his peers and support staff, who translated and interpreted for us. Over the course of the year these visits, together with the

observations enabled me to 'capture' details that would otherwise have been impossible to witness had I visited once a month or relied on interviews alone. For instance, I saw how the children's navigations of some of the rules evolved; the efforts that they made to ensure they and others were acting in accordance with – and respecting the reasons behind – the rules; and the various tactics that they used depending on which educators were present. The use of informal discussions – over interviews or questionnaires – allowed me to ask the children about the reasons behind their endeavours when or soon after these were noted; and meant that they knew what I was referring to, as opposed to forgetting owing to poor recollection. These also gave us the opportunities to bring up or discuss matters, as and when we wanted to.

For several reasons, I found the decision to use various other methods – in addition to observation and informal discussions – highly useful. These enabled me to construct 'other' data that I was not able to with the two main methods. For instance, I was able to obtain the children's own explanations and interpretations on their and their peers' activities (mutual collaboration; peer observers); ask questions that I had not thought to ask (informal interviews); and understand why the children used the tactics that they did when resisting the no-play dough and no-crawling rules (child-led tours). These also allowed me to communicate with the children, free from the usual distractions of classroom life – i.e. Masood's reasons, motivations and perspectives (informal interviews), and during the mutual collaboration sessions. Moreover, and in using these along with the other two methods, I was able to build a holistic picture of each child's views and activities in connection with each of the rules (see Chapter 5 for further discussion and reflection on each method).

It was in deciding to study the experiences of a small group of children in one reception class that I was able to both construct rich data and gain the insights that I did. This is not to say that looking at the experiences of more children and across various settings would not have been useful; on the contrary, this likely would have offered a greater insight into various children's experiences and endeavours within – and perhaps across – multiple enabling and constraining contexts. Rather that, doing the former enabled me to observe and note how each child navigated each of the rules, both during certain situations and over the course of the year. It also meant that I could observe the various and subtle ways in which they resisted certain rules – i.e. Asli holding the PD on the side that was not visible to Mrs Terry and Mrs Tanveer; and the fact that they used various tactics when either or both the said educators were present, but either very little or none at all when Mrs PPA alone was. Furthermore, since I did not have to spread my time between a larger number of children: I was able to a) devote ample time to building a

relationship with each child-participant, and b) engage in many conversations with each of them throughout the year.

My study also adds to the theoretical framing of work in the field of play provision by utilising Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) and Archer's (1995, 2003) theorisations, which together offer a useful conceptual and theoretical 'tool' to interpret, understand and describe children's agential endeavours. The former, for instance, helped me to explain the instances when they appeared to be drawing on past patterns of behaviour and actions (both their own and of others), and how they were planning their next actions; the latter was useful in looking at and explaining how the rules – and certain educators' enforcement(s) of these – enabled or constrained the children's plans, and in considering how the unintended consequences of the children's endeavours influenced Mrs Terry's decisions about the classroom's layout over time. The critical realist underpinning was also useful. First, it acted as a guide in deciding which theories would be practically useful (Sayer, 1992) in understanding and explaining the 'real events' that I observed – namely, the children's endeavours. Second, it reminded me to look at the possible 'causal mechanisms' (Sayer, 2000, p.14) that may have been influencing and/or shaping the children's endeavours – i.e. the children's own reasons and motivations, the educators who were present, and the 'conditions' of the play provision.

11.3 Directions for future research

Here, I suggest directions for future research in view of my research findings and accordingly the concerns raised. Whilst, at various junctures in the analysis chapters, I highlight it was owing to the *time* that the free play sessions afforded them, that the children were able to realise their play-related and other projects: in Chapter 10, I reveal this was not the case when I met the teacher in January 2018. As, owing to the increased pressures and demands that she was facing, she had extended the overall amount of time devoted to formal learning. The educator's concerns echo a number of those that have been raised in recent years about the impact the school readiness agenda is having on teachers' play provisions and time (Anning, 2015; Roberts-Holmes, 2015), and how much time reception children have to play overall (Bingham & Whitebread, 2012; Moyles, 2015). It is also a significant concern that I share and raise in this thesis.

If, during the fieldwork year, for example, the children had these 45 minute post-registration sessions and an hour less across the day to play, *and* had to participate in the adult-led activities and tasks during the free play sessions: I strongly believe that they would not have been able to

do much of what they did do. For instance, to problem-solve, work as a team, analyse their situations, and trial various courses of action (Aahid and his group); or to negotiate – or think about and actively fulfil compromises – with the construction-builders (Asli, Fadila and Yelda; C1). A further concern here is that, since there was a decrease in the amount of times the children fashioned and engaged in their own learning pursuits in term three – owing to the fact they were called more often: when children have less time to play overall, I ask, does this mean that they may not be able – or less inclined – to assimilate what they have learned in the adult-led activities? What is more, and as this thesis shows, these pressures and demands can and do reduce the amount of time that educators have to participate in children's play activities. Again, this is concerning, given that this is an area where children's learning and development can be further supported by adults in EYE contexts.

In view of the above, then, I suggest further research might consider how these demands may shape and impact upon teachers' play provision in the present times. As, although the EYFSP is set to become non-statutory from September 2020, and Ofsted are planning to 'look beyond data' (Ofsted, 2018b) in the coming years: because the RBA will become statutory from September 2020, and the PSC, end of KS1 tests (until September 2023), end of KS2 SATs and Ofsted inspections will remain – these, together, may shape, constrain and/or enable reception provision in different ways.

A limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one reception class. Further research looking at the relationship between children's play experiences and agency in a range of reception classrooms is therefore also recommended. Specifically, in classrooms where different or changing amounts of time are allocated to the two activities, for instance where: children spend more time at adult-led activities and less time playing; more time playing and less time at formal activities; there is a more or less balance between the two activities throughout the school year – or the amount allocated to adult-led activities increases. This would offer insight into how different approaches or changes in the 'balance' may differentially shape, enable and/or constrain children's experiences.

My research has shown how the conditions of a teacher's play provision enable children's endeavours – i.e. in following their interests, and navigating rules by way of negotiation and compromise. I suggest further research would be insightful. That is, research looking at how the various conditions shape, enable and/or constrain children's play experiences, endeavours and agency. The children in this study, for example, could play with the role-play's resources on C1; this then allowed them to both act in accordance with the rule and engage in role-playing

throughout the year. What do children do when they want to engage in role-playing but they are not allowed to take the resources out? If there is a system whereby children can communicate their interests, perspectives and suggestions: How does this shape, enable and/or constrain their play?

Summary

This research contributes to the current body of empirical work that has looked at or considered young children's navigations of rules in their EYE contexts; and, the research literature that has looked at and/or raised concerns about reception play provision. It shows the many, different ways in which children may – individually and/or collectively – navigate various play-specific rules in order to realise their play-related needs, interests and overall motivations; and, how – as well as why – they may actively apply other classroom rules, and encourage their peers to act in accordance with these too. It also highlights how classroom rules and various other structures, within which children's experiences are situated: shape, enable and/or constrain their play-related (and other) endeavours, experiences and agency.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Educators' details

Educator	Role	Education experience	Languages spoken
Mrs Terry	Classroom teacher; in every day	20 years nursery nurse; Reception teacher 22 years	English; understands French
Mrs Tanveer	Teaching Assistant; in every day	Classroom assistant (6 years school's nursery and reception assistant)	English, Sylheti, Bangla, Urdu, understands Hindi and Punjabi
Mrs SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator; every day term one, gradually decreased terms two and three	Foundation stage's learning support assistant for six years	English, Urdu, Punjabi, Pahari, understands Hindi and Sylheti
Mrs PPA-cover	Planning, Preparation and Assessment cover; every Monday morning (and when Mrs Terry is absent)	School's teaching cover for 18 years	English; understands Spanish

Appendix 2. Routine/timetable

08:55	Arrive classroom
08:55 – 09:10	Practise writing in personal books; playing
09:10 – 09:20	Morning registration
09:20 – 09:40 / 09:45	Whole-class direct teaching (largely literacy; occasionally numeracy)
09:45 – 10:15	*Free play + adult-led activities*
10:15 – 10:30	Half class or whole class outdoors
10:30 – 11:10 / 11:15	*Free play + adult-led activities*
11:10 / 11:15	Tidy-up time
11:30 – 12:30	Dinner time
12:30 – 12:40	Afternoon registration
12:40 – 13:00	Whole-class teaching (largely numeracy; occasionally science)
13:00 – 13:40	*Free play + adult-led activities*
13:40 – 14:00	Snack time
14:00 – 14:30 / 14:35	*Free play + adult-led activities*
14:30 / 14:35	Tidy-up time

14:45 – 15:05	Whole class on carpet; home time

Appendix 3. Children's profiles

Child	Age (at start)	Gender	Previous experience	Languages spoken (levels start of year)	Reason selected (based on observations, and conversations with educators)
Aahid	4 years 1 month	Male	Attended school's nursery	English (fluent); Pashto (fluent)	Popular with majority of peers; fluent in English; attended school's nursery; creative and largely likes playing with vehicles; confident; rule following.
Asli	4 years 9 months	Female	Attended a school's nursery	English (fluent); Somali (intermediate); Arabic (basic reading)	Popular with majority of peers; attended a nursery before reception; confident; outspoken; fluent in English; one of the older children in the classroom.
Fadila	4 years 8 months	Female	Attended school's nursery.	English (fluent); Somali (intermediate); Arabic (basic reading)	(Joined study January 2013) Shared the same interests as Asli and Yelda – and was present in many of their observations; outspoken; familiar with the research and requested to be a participant several times.
Masood	4 years 1 month	Male	Arrived from Bangladesh 2 weeks earlier	Sylheti (very basic)	Did not speak English, understood Sylheti but had very basic spoken ability; new to England, the English reception classroom, and an education institution; one of the youngest in the classroom.
Yelda	4 years 9 months	Female	Attended school's nursery	English (intermediate/fluent); Somali (fluent); Arabic (basic reading)	Very quiet, kind and 'well-behaved'; intermediate/fluent spoken English; one of the older children in classroom; largely liked role-playing; rule following.

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Appendix 4. Consent educators

Dear educator,

Thank you for taking the time to hear about my research.

On the first two pages of this document, I remind you about my research; on the third is the consent form. Please take the time to read this side (feel free to ask me any further questions) before indicating if you <u>do</u> or <u>do not</u> consent to your participation in this study; if you do, please specify which aspects you are happy to be involved in (*tick*) as well as those that you are not (*cross*).

What my research is about

The overall purpose of this study is to understand and foreground young children's experiences and perspectives. The main focus is on how and why four to five-year-olds navigate various aspects of the teacher's pedagogical practice (encompassing the classroom's rules) during their free play episodes.

This may or may not include: how they understand and respond to the various rules of the classroom; how they understand and respond to the requirement to take part in adult-directed activities during free play; if they act alone or with their peers; what they understand the educators' (or adults') roles to be – and how they feel about these; and perhaps, how they see themselves (as pupils and children) in relation to the educators (who are also adults).

What I will be doing in the classroom

- Observing the six child-participants' activities during free play; holding discussions with them on various aspects of their classroom lives; perhaps asking them to draw pictures for me.

- Making notes with pen on paper – using pseudonyms to refer to children and adults.

- Occasionally asking educators questions (some elaboration below).

What your participation may be in the research process

Whilst this research predominantly concerns the children's experiences, it is likely that when you are in the classroom (or in attendance but elsewhere), your location(s), activities and talk will be noted. For instance, when observing, I may: jot down a conversation that takes place between a child and you; indicate where you are sat when a child is also at the table; write what you say to a child when reminding him/her about a rule; or, record what you say to a child (or the children) during an adult-directed activity.

I may also ask for your interpretation(s) on part of an observation I have noted; for more information about child – e.g. who their best friends appear to be at the time, or what they said to you because I may have missed it; or for elaboration on an aspect that I would like to know more about – e.g. an activity, change of routine or an aspect of the classroom's pedagogy.

At the end of the school year, I may interview you. This will be a semi-structured interview (you may see the questions beforehand should you request to). This interview can be audio-recorded or recorded by hand – whichever you prefer. The purpose of this interview will be to understand how you feel – and what you think, about various aspects of early years education provision in England (though mostly to do with the reception year of schooling); about some parts of the present classroom's pedagogy; and, both free play in general, and the children's activities over the course of the year more specifically.

How I will handle and use the data

As stated in the discussion that I had with you about the present research, all children and educators – together with the school, will be kept anonymous. All participants will be referred to via pseudonyms (fake names), and any specific details about the classroom and school will not be included when writing about this research in the thesis – and in future publications or talks where the data collected is used. And, those that may need to be included – e.g. the reward system, will be altered slightly in order to maintain anonymity.

Also, all data will be kept electronically by me in a secure folder on the sole administrator account on my laptop, which is password protected. Audio-recordings will be transcribed immediately, and destroyed once this project is over.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this document.

Yours faithfully,

Shabana Yasin

*Please place a *tick* √ in the box to state YES

***OR**, a *cross* **X** in the box to state NO.

I *(print name)…………………………………………………..agree to take part in your research.

    ☐   I am happy to answer any questions that you may have over the course of the year

    ☐   I am happy to take part in discussions

    ☐   I am happy to offer my interpretations on extracts of observation data

    ☐   I am happy take part in a semi-structured interview towards (or at) the end of the year

(If you have stated yes to taking part in an interview, please indicate your preference below)

    ☐   This can be recorded ***both*** via notes on paper and an audio device

    ☐   This is to be recorded via notes on paper ***only***

    Signed ………………………………………………

    Date   ………………………………………………

<u>OR</u>

I do not wish to take part in your research.

    Name ………………………………………………

    Signed ………………………………………………

    Date   ………………………………………………

Appendix 5. Consent parents

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am a PhD student at the Institute of Education, University of London. For my thesis research, I am looking at young children's experiences in the primary classroom – specifically: how four to five-year-olds understand, experience and respond to various aspects of the teacher's pedagogical practice during their free play sessions. Within this, the kinds of questions that I am looking at are:

- How they understand and navigate the various rules of the classroom;
- How the classroom's rules effect their play episodes, and how they try to navigate these;
- What their understandings are of the requirement to take part in adult-led activities during free play – and, how they feel about this;
- What they recognise the adults'/educators' roles to be;
- And perhaps, how they see themselves (as pupils and children) in relation to the educators (who are also adults).

Data Collection

To do this, I will visit the classroom every Monday (for the whole day) – and Monday, Tuesday and Wednesdays before the school's timetabled holidays. For the most part, I will be observing (either with a handheld video camera or with pen and paper) your child's activities (and those of five other children) during free play. When your child is happy to talk, I will also be asking questions about the reasons behind his/her actions. These would be questions such as: Do you like playing with the trains? And Why? Why do you need a peg to go into the role-play? And, why do you have to tidy when the music comes on? How do you feel about tidying the classroom?

On some occasions over the school year, the six children will also take part in research-related activities with me during afternoon break – if they are happy to do so. For example, group interviews or discussions; watching back and discussing or analysing some of the video footage; or drawing their best friends, favourite resources, activities or types of play. These activities will be recorded largely via pen and paper; but on occasion – and only if the children agree, a dictaphone may be used.

Ethical considerations

Next week I will be asking your child if s/he would like to participate in this research. If s/he agrees but you decide you <u>do not</u> wish for him/her to, I will not include him/her. If you decide that you <u>are happy</u> for him/her to be a participant, in 3-4 weeks time I will ask him/her once more; if s/he is still happy with his/her decision, I will ask him/her to 'sign' a copy of the children's consent form. S/he will have a copy of this form to take home. If you would like to see this form before I show it to your child, do let me know and I will give you a copy.

Throughout the year, I will ask your child for permission whenever I see that s/he is uncomfortable, or if I use a method that s/he has not yet experienced – i.e. drawing and talking about his/her drawing. If, at any time, I sense your child is uncomfortable or simply does not feel like participating – either on a given day, or altogether: I will respect his/her wishes entirely.

The school, educators and children will all remain anonymous; all of the former will be given pseudonyms (fake names); and, all steps will be taken to ensure the school's identity remains concealed – e.g. specific details will either be altered or not included.

Dissemination

I will keep all of the data that is collected electronically and under pseudonyms. This data will then be transcribed, interpreted and analysed and discussed for my doctoral thesis. In the future, I may present and discuss my findings in journal articles, papers and books; and, I may present these at various talks – e.g. lectures, seminars or conferences. Again, all of the research participants (children and adults) and the school with remain anonymous.

All audio-recordings will be transcribed immediately and destroyed once this project is over. The video-recordings will not be shown to anyone; the data will be largely presented in text form in the thesis and perhaps partly as stills (photos). If the latter is the case, all of the children's and adults' faces will be **blurred**; any details that may compromise anonymity will be blurred, removed or not used. These stills will **only** be used in my thesis.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this document.

Yours faithfully,

Shabana Yasin

P.s if you would like to know more about my research, I would be very happy to chat with you. I will be in the classroom all day next Monday.

*Please place a *tick* √ in the box to state YES

*__OR__, a *cross* __X__ in the box to state NO.

I am aware that my child * (print name)……………………………………………………..has agreed to take part in your research.

- ☐ I am happy for him/her to be observed via video during free play sessions over the course of the year

- ☐ I am happy for him/her to be observed via pen and paper during free play sessions over the course of the year

- ☐ I am happy for him/her to take part in discussions and to answer any questions that you may have

- ☐ I am happy for my child's talk to be audio recorded during interviews/discussions/research-related activities

- ☐ I am happy for my child's talk to be recorded via pen and paper during interviews/discussions/research-related activities

- ☐ I understand that all data collected will be anonymised and neither my child's nor the school's identity will be revealed

- ☐ I understand that if my child decided that s/he no longer wants to take part in the research then s/he has the right to withdraw

I am happy to let my son/daughter take part in this research.

Signed………………………………………………parent/guardian

Please print your name……………………………………………………

Date   …………………………………………………

__OR__

I do not wish for my son/daughter to take part in this research.

Signed……………………………………………parent/guardian

Name…………………………………………………..
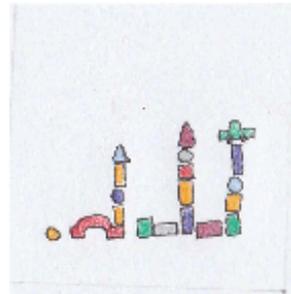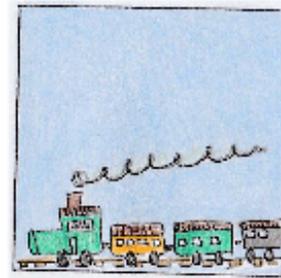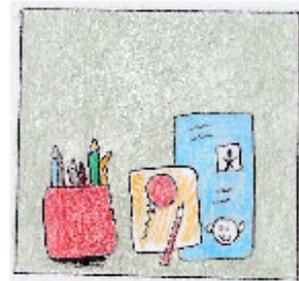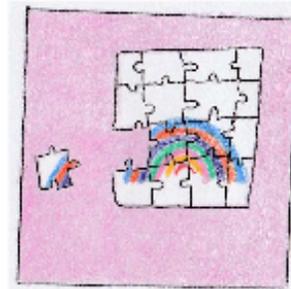
Date………………………………………………….

Appendix 6. Consent children

Hello, I am Shabana.

I am writing about children's play in the classroom for my university course.
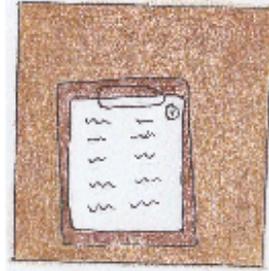
I would like to look at your play and learn about your time in reception.

Can I observe your play for the year?

Can I write down what I see?

How do you feel about this?

I would like to ask you questions about your play so that I can understand what you are doing and why.

For example:

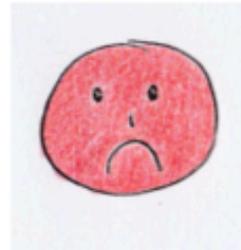Why were you were crawling on the floor with your cars?

Why do you like playing in the role-play corner?

How do you feel about me asking you questions about your play?

How do you feel about me asking you questions about your time in the classroom?

One day, if you are not happy with me looking at you playing, or if you do not want me to ask you questions – you can tell me and I will STOP!

If you do not feel like talking to me, you can show me your cards.

Would you like to help me with my research about children's play in reception?

YES

NO

Write or mark your name:

Name..

Date..

Appendix 7. Consent faces

Appendix 8. Behaviour reinforcement/reward(s) chart

Happy side

The happy side (left of board) comprised three stages. The first involved children placing a tick next to their names on the reward chart; when they received two ticks before the school day was over they moved to the second stage. The second stage was receiving a stamp in their personal stamp-book; this ceremony took place at the end of the school day when the children congregated on the carpet. When the children reached a total of ten stamps on a single page in their books, they reached stage three, which was to receive a prize. This involved 'blindly' picking a toy prize out of a selection from the prize tub.

Sad side

The sad side (right of board) also comprised three stages. The first involved children placing their name card on the chart; at the end of the session or day, Mrs Terry or Mrs Tanveer would speak with the child about the activities that led to his/her name being placed on it, and then have him/her remove it. If, whilst a child's name was on the sad side, s/he continued to display 'unaccepted' behaviour(s), s/he would be sent to one of the neighbouring reception classrooms for fifteen minutes or so; if there were no change in his/her behaviour, s/he would be sent to the HoFS.

Appendix 9. Observation schedule

Date

Morning

Children:
Adults:

Classroom layout

Carpet one:
Carpet two:
Table two:
Table three:
Table four:
Table five:

Directed

Additional notes

Child(ren) (total mins)	
TIME	ACTION
10.05	
10.10	
10.15	
10.20	

Afternoon

Children:
Adults:

Classroom layout (same/changes)

Carpet one:
Carpet two:
Table two:
Table three:
Table four:
Table five:

Directed (same/changes)

Additional notes

Appendix 10. Pilot

In July 2012 I conducted a pilot study in Mrs Terry's 2011-2012 reception class, and this was for two weeks. Although the physical classroom was different to the one in which the actual fieldwork took place; the timetable, routine and general set-up were largely similar.

The primary goal here was to figure out how best to conduct and record my observations and discussions as a participant. A field diary was kept to maintain an ongoing log of my reflections.

In the first week, I quickly realised that it was difficult – if not near impossible to do a free description/naturalistic/unstructured method of observation. Either I would get frustrated trying to write all that I was seeing and hearing – which is simply not humanly possible; or, much of what I was able to note, was lacking in detail. In the second week, I experimented with a sort of combined target child and 'interval recording' observation schedule; I observed methodically and at various junctures, and tested out three stretches of time. It was this method that I decided to use in the actual study (see section below).

I also found that on-the-go discussions seemed to work best with the educators – who were often busy; and, both informal discussions and semi-structured interviews seemed to work well with the children.

Appendix 11. Classroom layout
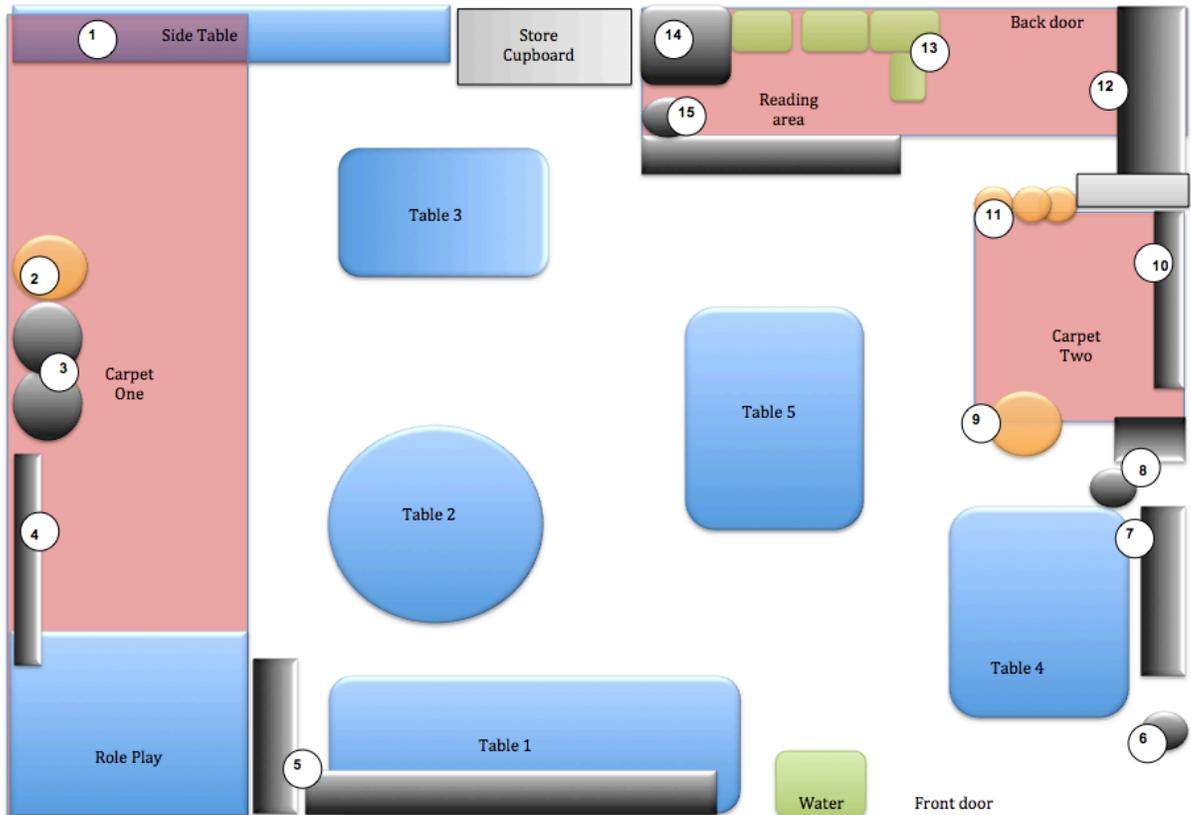
1. Three tablets on side table
2. Registration armchair
3. Desk and storage
4. Shelving unit (largely construction-type resources); interactive whiteboard on wall
5. Storage / shelving (largely stationery) and children's personal trays
6. Sink
7. Arts and crafts storage; rack for drying artwork
8. Storage and phonics board/easel
9. Armchair
10. Shelving unit (largely vehicles and transport-related resources
11. Soft seating
12. Storage and children's personal trays
13. Soft seating
14. Book shelves
15. Storage and puppets

Appendix 12. Collections for no-building rule

Rule	Case study (child)	Category (themes)	Overall theme
Educator(s) *Reason(s) created: Health and safety; decided previous cohort* Mrs Terry offering reading area, C1 and C2 (mixing larger resources discouraged) Mrs Terry did not allow play Mrs Tanveer allowed to play for a while Mrs PPA did not ask children to stop Mrs SENCO did not ask children to stop **Children** *Reason(s) created: Resource care; Children will fall.* *Perspective(s) / concerns:* Less space to build (large) constructions; for all play with these. *Activities/endeavours:* • Largely application of rule. • Smaller number instances. • Strategy, objective, and tactics. • Collaboration (larger number) Risk register *for all*:	**Aahid** **Strategy:** building-strategy **Tactics** Pace (quick) Adult surveillance Timing (Mrs Terry out; Mrs Tanveer sometimes present; Mrs PPA present). **Instances** 05.11.12 (12:50-12:55): group initiated (beginning of year, continued building) *TTP: dismantle near completion (teaching cover)* 04.02.13 (10:35-10:40): joined Masood and Fadila *TTP: 5 minutes (Mrs Tanveer)* 15.04.13 (10:50-10:55): initiated with group *TTP: 10 minutes (Mrs Tanveer permitted)* 13.05.13 (11:00-11:15): initiated building with Hamza *TTP: 15 minutes (Mrs PPA present; Mrs Terry arrived)* **Asli** 13.05.13 (11:00-11:15): joined Aahid, his group and others (*TTP as above*) 03.06.13 (10:55): joined	RULE BUILDING Pace Adult surveillance Timing Collaboration Negotiation Educator reminding rule Educator enforcing rule Building seen FEAR OF ADULT REPRIMAND **Consequences if seen** Presumed: sad side Presumed: shouting ADULT RISK REGISTER Mrs Terry Mrs Tanveer Mrs PPA & support staff CHILDREN: **Reasons / motivations** Interest / want Need Like – playing Extension of play / combine resources Playing together Playing selected peers Open access **Issues** Space issue Resource(s) issue No time to play No time to play peers EDUCATORS: REASONS **Safeguarding** **Ed: compromise** Classroom layout Resource access Space access Autonomy / freedom to choose	**DISRUPTIONS / SUSTAINED UNINTERRUPTED PLAY** Play interrupted by peers: space and resource(s) issues (when applying rule). *Total time playing.* **PLAY-RELATED NEEDS, INTERESTS AND MOTIVATIONS** **SCHEMAS / PAST PATTERNS OF THOUGHT** EM, 1998: simplified model (adult risk register) *Smaller number of instances.* **PROJECTS / STRATEGY; OBJECTIVE; TACTICS** AR, 2003: propitious circumstances **COLLABORATION** (Various empirical studies. Also, not informing teacher; communicating non-verbally) **ENABLED / CONSTRAINED** Play rushed; observing Mrs Tanveer; only C2 resources. Sustained & developed Mrs PPA's presence. *(Also no-crawling rule)*

Mrs Terry Mrs PPA Mrs SENCO & Mrs PPA	Masood and others (*TTP as below*)	Interests Compromise: rule enforcement	**MORPHOGENESIS** Structural elaboration. Change layout. (Current cohort and following year's cohort's actions).
	Fadila 04.02.13 (10:35-10:40): built with Masood and Aahid (*TTP, as above*)	**LATER CHANGES** Change layout **DISRUPTION** Space Resource(s)	**VESTED INTERESTS** (EDUCATOR) **Safeguarding** Compromise: rule enforcement – (Markström & Halldén, 2009; Chitty, 2015; Hansen *et al*. 2017)
	Masood **Strategy:** building-strategy **Tactics** Pace (quick) Adult surveillance Timing (Mrs Terry out; Mrs Tanveer sometimes present; Mrs PPA present). **Instances** 04.02.13 (10:35-10:40): initiated with Fadila (Aahid joined: *TTP as above*) 03.06.13 (10:55): initiated *TTP: 10 minutes (Mrs Tanveer permitted)* 10.07.13 (10:05-10:15): initiated *TTP: dismantle near completion (Mrs Tanveer)*	**CONSEQUENCE** Play abandon Dismantle Play end Total time play **BUILDING** Various / evolve	**CHILD-ADULT RELATIONS; POSITIONS; ROLES** Shouting
	Yelda No instances		

Appendix 13. Excerpts from informal meeting

We have to deliver a forty-five minute literacy session now. It's *just* too much; and we do literacy or numeracy in the afternoon. They shouldn't have to do it; they get restless; they should be playing! I have a very young class this year, and last year (September-December 2017), they found it so difficult. Now we're on forty-five minutes. We have to do it so they're ready for Y1 – they're under pressure too, they have the PSC…

It was in our Ofsted report: improve progress in writing. So now new HoFS's demanding more: more literacy, more numeracy. She gets it from the head, and she gets it from our LA mentor.

LA looked at last year's (2016-2017) EYFSPs, and this year's Baseline; told HoFS we need to do more if we want them to do well in Y1 and later. So I'm testing/assessing them when they're with me, and observing them, and I'm collecting evidence and keeping their folders up-to-date. We have a new system now: much more to do, and HoFS makes sure we're keeping it up to date *all the time*. There's *so* much to do!

Y1 need a separate assessment – we're assessing more so they have the levels for when they move up; it's non-stop. They don't get to play enough. Always calling them to 'do some work'. It was *much*, *much* better when you came, I didn't have time to play with them *but at least they got to play*!

(DISC, 01.2018)