

An Ethnographic Exploration of the Starting School Transition within an English school

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Liverpool John Moores University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2017

I dedicate this thesis to my late father, Phillip Thomas Connolly (1951 – 2007).

A man who never questioned that I could make a difference in this world.

I hope this thesis contributes to this dream in some way.

Thank you for always believing in me.

Abstract

This research aimed to investigate the starting school transition by exploring how the transition from home and/or nursery was being understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children. Furthermore, it aimed to explore the discourses that surround the transitional experience and gain an understanding of how they may impact upon the daily experience. It found that the parents and children socially constructed the transition using the discursive notion of a 'good' school child (Thornberg, 2009) which was understood to represent one who is able to follow the rules, carry out the work and listen to adults. Additionally, the parents appeared to be drawing on a number of discourses (e.g. 'good' parents and 'pushy' parents) that impacted upon their overall experience of the transition and which also impacted their understanding of what the concept was about. This is because the discourses meant that the parents were peripherally positioned (Davies and Harré, 1990; 1999) within the child's transitional experience, even though they are positioned within the wider schooling discourse as being equal partners (DfE, 2010b; 4Children, 2015)

During the transitional experience, three discursive practices were observed that helped the children understand what a 'good' school child was and how he or she was being constructed. These were the three R's of transition: the use of school *routines*, school *rules* and the reduction of the children's *rights*. These disciplinary tools (Foucault, 1982) were used in a manner in which they shaped the children's behaviour and expectations of the schooling experience. Finally, these tools also

allowed the children to be positioned and repositioned (Drewery, 2005) in a variety of ways. These positions were related to the 'good' school child notion entwined with this transition. However, the use of agency (Devine, 1998; James, 2011) in the uptake or refusal of these positions was also observed meaning the children had a choice in the position they were given by others or which they produced for themselves.

The research concludes by suggesting that the social construction of the transition by families and individual schools and their communities needs to be considered when anticipating the support required for this transition. Attention needs to be paid to the positioning of the parents and their ability to offer support to their child's experience and also to the positions made available within the classroom for the children to take up. A number of suggestions are made that will assist the overall experience stemming from the starting school transition.

Acknowledgments

Firstly, I would like to thank the children, parents and staff members that allowed me to enter their world, over such a long period of time and to make me feel truly welcomed. Sincere appreciation goes to the Head Teacher whose trust and confidence in me ensured that no restrictions were placed on any lines of enquiry. This research would not have been possible without your help and for that I will always be grateful.

Secondly, I would like to thank my wonderful supervisor's Dr Peter Wood and Dr Caroline Bath. Both of whom persevered with me when life made it difficult to prioritise the thesis. Neither gave up pushing me to reach the end and both of whom never let me forget what a wonderful piece of research I had, even when I did not think it was!

Thirdly, I must thank my family and dear friends for supporting me in this adventure. Special thanks to my Mum and Sister who were always there to help look after the children, if I needed to write. My beautiful and amazing children, 3 of which arrived during this research process. Daniel, Kyle, Isabel, Xander and Katie-Mai you are the air that I breathe, and I want to thank you for just being you. Never forget: "Today you are you, that is truer than true. There is no one alive who is youer than you". I love you all the world and back again! This brings me to my rock, my husband Jay, none of this would ever have been possible without

your love and support guiding me along the way. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for never underestimating me, **we** did it!

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Prelude: The PhD Journey

Becoming a mother has been one of the hardest forms of education I have as yet come across. I am a mother of five beautiful children (three of whom made delightful appearances during my postgraduate registration period). One lesson I have learnt from these experiences is that all the education in the world cannot prepare you for the journey that parenthood takes you along. Yet, strangely enough, as a parent we are expected to fulfil the role of becoming an educator without being given any formal training of any sorts as to what the role actually entails. We are expected to teach our children about the world, life and finally about education itself. This is where my research journey began.

My eldest child loved to read (or should I say to be read to), to complete puzzles, to learn new skills and this was before he had even started nursery. I had a few concerns about him starting school but thought that these were probably similar to the ones every mother had. I worried about things like him settling in, whether he would make friends with the other children, would he like his teacher, and whether he would like school in general. I confess to having these worries but never imagined they may become a reality. However, within a few months of him starting school he started to dislike books, he started to stop completing puzzles, and started to become irritated by having to learn new skills. This was the complete opposite of the little boy I had waved goodbye to on his first day at 'big school'. I became even more worried as this process continued month after month until he became a little boy who 'disliked' school and education in general.

Then, my second son started 'big school', and I had the same general worries about his experience. I am happy to report that there never really was a problem for him. He too had always loved to read or be read to, complete puzzles, draw pictures and generally learn skills or knowledge. After he started school he did not seem to change, he still loved to carry out all these tasks. He enjoyed the challenges set by attending a school and loved to come home afterwards and tell me all about them. However, this was a far cry from his older brother. He would always inform me that he had 'forgot' what he had done that day and therefore he ended any conversations I tried to start with him regarding his school day. I remember sitting there one day frantically trying to think of what may have caused this extreme difference in experiences for my two children. Logically speaking, they had attended the same school, entered and lived through the same classroom, with the same teacher for the same time periods. I wanted to understand why my sons had experienced schooling so differently and to do this I needed to delve deeply into the area, understand the current literature, and so my PhD journey began.

After reviewing some of the literature it became clear that this area had been investigated by many academics (e.g. Dowling, 1995; Griebel and Niesel, 1997; Fabian, 1998, 2002; Pianta and Cox, 1999; Dockett and Perry, 2001; Fabian and Dunlop, 2002; Ladd, 2003; Brooker, 2008; Gould, 2012) but that they all had differing ideas of what and how to investigate it. Some wanted to test the impact of transition on various variables (i.e. school grades, changes of temperament, changes in relationships etc) like Ladd and Price (1987), Meisels (1999); Kienig (2002), Carlson et al. (2009), and C4EO (2010). Whilst some wanted to

document the voices of children, parents, teachers and professionals (e.g. Dockett and Perry, 1999a, 1999b; Broström, 2002; Chan, 2012; Bateson, 2013). What I did not tend to find was a general documented experience of the starting school transition. What I mean by this is I wanted to know and understand what the experience of a transition was like for the children within the confines of a daily classroom environment. How did it feel, what occurred on the first day? How did the children come to understand what the transition was about? How did the parents come to understand these processes?

In other words, I wanted to be able to read about an experience of transition. I believed this would allow me to understand if transitions are experienced differently or whether they were essentially the same practice as is proposed by the numerous transition programmes that offer universal training programmes or advice for schools (Martin, Marshall and Maxson, 1993; Kohler et al., 1994; Dockett and Perry, 2001; 2003; Fox, Dunlap and Cushing, 2002; Benz, Lindstrom, Unruh and Waintrup, 2004; Fabian and Dunlop, 2006; Hemmeter, Fox, Jack and Broyles, 2007; Laverick, 2008; Bierman et al., 2008). It would help me to understand, in essence, whether one of my sons had not experienced the transition correctly. Or whether I should stop viewing transitions as having a correct or incorrect experience attached to it in the first place. As a parent, I knew that to me a successful transition would be for my child to come out at the other side of the transition enjoying school and education. However, the more literature I read the more aware I was that parents have different ideas of what they deem to be successful transitions (Dockett and Perry, 1999b, 2002; Pianta and Kraft-

Sayre, 1999; Russell, 2005; Griebel and Niesel, 2009; Shields, 2009; Chan, 2012).

The original aim of this research was to investigate what the term 'successful transition' meant as the focus of success appeared to change according to the role of the parent, or professional involved within the experience (Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; 2001). At the start of my PhD journey I had transitioned myself, from a quantitative based University to the University of Huddersfield which was more open to using a range of methods. Due to my previous knowledge and confidence supporting the notion of quantitative based research, I originally envisaged carrying out this study by incorporating questionnaires. However, my previous supervisors taught me that research must stem from your research aims / questions and not your methodological knowledge.

Around the same time, I also found the work of Michel Foucault (1977; 1982) which now forms the overarching theoretical and analytical framework for this project and it meant I could no longer see the topic of transition as I once had. This change in perspective followed on from a change in my ontological and epistemological stance which is outlined further in chapter 1. As Rose (1989) suggests, employing a Foucauldian theoretical lens (see section 2.2. for details) can help uncover an alternative perspective of understanding in relation to a concept by considering its surrounding discourses and their potential implications. He also acknowledged that Foucauldian concepts like Governmentality and disciplinary tools can help a researcher understand how

and who controls any conduct being undertaken. The culmination of these changes in my thinking led to a general aim for this research being devised which was to comprehend what we mean when we use the term 'transition' and what it means when we consider the starting school transition.

Research Aim:

- Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition

What I needed next was a methodology that would allow me to investigate this as naturally as possible. I wanted to be able to be a part of the process and experience the practices involved, alongside the children. This led me to look at ethnography for the first time. As stated earlier, I came from a very quantitative background and had very little knowledge of qualitative methods. I was surprised to find that I had never come across this word 'ethnography' and so I set about trying to understand and apply it within my project. This was more difficult than I had previously imagined. Initially, this exploration of methods meant that I had to question my own ontological and epistemological perspectives, and this became a major part of my research journey. I struggled to let go, at times, to the comfortable world of quantitative psychology that I was used to as I often wanted and tried subconsciously to quantify as much as possible within my project. I found myself using the terminology of a quantitative researcher and had to get to grips with the language of qualitative research. But, this transition in my own thinking had to take place to allow me to meet my research aim. Once I had made the shift, I found the world of qualitative research could offer me a world full

of rich, deep description that would allow me to investigate and explore the concept known as transition, and in particular the starting school transition.

Thesis Structure

Having unpicked my journey, I now wish to open it up and explain how this thesis is structured. I have positioned an ontological and epistemological chapter first as this was the very first item that I needed to wrestle with before I could move forward and plan the research. Therefore, Chapter 1, provides this background information and discusses the decisions I have come to make in relation to my ontological and epistemological stances. Chapter 2 reviews the discourses that surround the starting school transition from a macro level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In other words, it describes how the various research studies, Government and school policies have all helped to bring a notion into reality, concerning what the transition is about (Foucault, 1982). It also deconstructs some of the discourses like 'school readiness' that are firmly attached to this particular educational transition. Chapter 3 looks at the definitions that have been provided by the literature so that an understanding of how this concept is understood can be perceived. It then proceeds to outline some of the theoretical ideas connected with the notion of transition like Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). These theories were included to assist the reader in understanding how the discourse which surrounds the starting school transition has been developed and defined from a theoretical perspective. The chapter then moves on to highlight how these theories cannot provide a thorough understanding of the transition. It goes on to explain that an overarching Foucauldian theoretical and analytical framework that uses

Bronfenbrenner's and Lave and Wenger's ideas as conceptual tools can help the reader understand the starting school transition from an alternative perspective to that which has been given previously.

Having set the scene with chapter 1, 2, and 3, chapter 4 describes the methodological decisions I made and why. It provides a narrative as to why ethnography was the approach undertaken to investigate this topic. It also highlights the ethical considerations I made. Finally, it outlines the methods employed to collect the various pieces of data and then it discusses how this data was analysed. The next chapter, chapter 5, provides a discussion surrounding the first theme that arose from the data. It provides a detailed deliberation about how the transition was socially constructed by the children and parents involved in the research. It also highlights how this construction was entangled with a number of parenting discourses that influenced how individual parents then processed their experience during the transition. In chapter 6, the second theme, the 3 R's of transition (Routines, Rules and reduction of Rights) are presented as being the practices that shaped the transitional experience for the children within the day to day classroom experience. Chapter 7, describes the positioning, power and agency that I observed throughout the transitional process. It details how the children were often positioned by adults, peers or themselves and that the power relations surrounding them influenced whether they could or wanted to accept the positions (Drewery, 2005) made available to them. In other words, it documents that the children had a sense of agency and used agency when given positions throughout the transition and this needs to be considered when

contemplating whether the transition process is a universal process or an individually experienced practice.

Finally, chapter 8 reviews the findings and discusses how the research has met the project aims. It also provides a narrative around how the findings can contribute to policy and practice in relation to children's, parents' and schools' experiences. It discusses the limitations of the research and provides future areas that could be researched. It then reflects on the research journey I undertook and provides a narrative about the journey over time.

Contribution to Knowledge

The contribution to knowledge that has arisen from this research is that the starting school transition is a socially constructed notion (Foucault, 1982; Burr, 2015). It is constructed through the talk that takes place by parents, children, school staff but also the wider community and Government policies and practices. Another contribution was highlighted in the theme that discusses the 3 R's of transition. The rules, routines and reduction of children's rights during this transitional year were used as disciplinary tools (Foucault, 1982) to help form the notion of being a 'good school child'. Finally, another contribution was found in that the positions made available to the children during the transitional experience also helps to form the notion of being a 'good school child' and this indicates that the starting school transition is deeply entangled with this concept. This suggests that from the very start of formal schooling, schools use different positions to teach children what it means to become a 'good' school child.

Chapter 1: Contemplating Philosophical Foundations

This chapter will present the philosophical journey I undertook at the start of this research. It will highlight the decisions and reflections I made about how I once perceived the world of research and how I now understand that world. From this, reflections will be made on how I could then use these perspectives to understand the starting school transition area. Finally, it will outline the social constructionist approach that this research is firmly based on and explain what this means in relation to the research carried out.

1.1 Starting with Philosophical Dilemmas

“What is *true* reality? Isn't all reality *true*? And who knows what *truth* is anyway? Is my sense of reality any more real than yours? Don't we all come from the place of judging reality from our experiences and aren't they all skewed to some degree? The reality that all of us experience every day is really not a reality at all – it is a perception. True reality is what we experience when all the perception is set aside”.

Groves (2009, pg. 11)

The above quotation, was one I came across when I first started studying Psychology at University. I remember using this quote in a class conversation about rationality and decision making. The lecturer in charge of the session quickly refuted the position made within the quote as ‘unscientific’ and crushed

my futile defence by throwing in a number of terms that I could not comprehend at that point in my studies, like 'weak ontological' and 'epistemological stances' (these terms are central to this chapter and will be discussed in more detail below). Therefore, I fell in line and took up the department's dominant positivist, 'pure science' approach as my own but kept hold of the quote for another day.

Having moved University to undertake my PhD studies, I was provided with a much-needed opportunity to re-visit my ontological and epistemological perspectives. I started the PhD journey in 2008 under the guidance of a different director of studies who wanted me to look at research differently. She wanted me to look at the research topic and aims and work out which methodology would best meet those aims. Yet, I can recall the moment that we (as in myself and my previous PhD supervisory team) started to discuss possible methodologies for my studies. I was sure that questionnaires and structured interviews would be the best option whereas my director of studies was adamant that it would be best to follow a more qualitative and naturalistic approach. In fact, even while my supervisors were discussing various methods with me, I was secretly trying to find ways to include some kind of quantitative methodology into the mix! It took a number of meetings and lots of reading around methods, ontology and epistemology for me to realise that I had a limited and biased 'worldview' (Ryan, 2006).

In connection to my 'tunnelled' research vision, it has been argued, repeatedly (Burman, 1997; Snape and Spencer, 2003; Fassinger, 2005; Ryan, 2006;

Henderikus, 2010), that the indoctrination of the positivist approach continues to be ripe throughout Psychology; so, it should be of little surprise to hear of undergraduates being primed to accept it as the ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1982). However, Agrawal (2013) argues that the sheer dominance of positivism in research means that there is a continual need to be more ontologically and epistemologically aware of our positions and assumptions as they impact the design and direction of any research project. Grix (2004, pg. 68) further argues:

“setting out clearly the relationship between what a researcher thinks can be researched (her ontological position) linking it to what we can know about it (her epistemological position) and how to go about acquiring it (her methodological approach), you can begin to comprehend the impact your ontological position can have on what and how you decided to study”.

However, in line with Darlaston-Jones’s (2007) postgraduate research experience, I did not truly comprehend what my ontological or epistemological stances were until I was in the throes of research design and thesis writing. When it became time to consider the research aims and potential questions, I felt I needed to step outside of the positivist boundaries and contemplate what my beliefs, values and ideals may have actually been.

My past experience of research and in particular researching educational transitions (Cartmell and Pope, 2008) had developed a drive in me to objectively measure transitional experiences (e.g. looking at which categorised elements like gender or family size may impact the transitional experience). Yet, as discussed

in the prelude, my experience of parenting two young children through their 'starting school' transition changed this perspective to wanting to 'understand transitions' (e.g. what are 'transitions' and how do children, teachers and families navigate the experience of them). Condie and Brown (2009) theorise this change in perspective as a movement from a "position of knowing" to a "position of understanding" (pg. 63).

Connectedly, this reflectively-fuelled (Schön, 1983, 1987; Larrivee, 1996; 2000; Crotty, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008; Shaw, 2010) experience was challenging and at times, overwhelming; but, most importantly, liberating. Breaking free from the constraints of empiricism has allowed me to consider different perspectives and approaches and to understand how these have had a large impact on the way I set about and carried out the research documented within this thesis. It is for those reasons that I decided to put this Chapter before any other so that it would make my ontological and epistemological perspectives clear and help set the scene for the research aims that were present at the start of the project; these are discussed in more detail later in this Chapter. Finally, it is hoped that this Chapter will help to situate some of the decisions I have made regarding the design, collection and framing of data and the overall conclusions put forward.

1.1.1 'Reality' to exist or not exist?

The positional changes mentioned previously, from knowing to understanding, were also the first experiences of me contemplating changing my ontological and epistemological stances. Snape and Spencer (2003) define ontology as "beliefs

about what there is to know about the world” (pg. 11). Connectedly, Blaikie (1993) argues ontology is the “...study of being” (pg. 6). He asserts it is concerned with the claims or assumptions made about the nature of social reality, especially by particular research approaches. Therefore, this resonated strongly with me during my philosophical journey as I was starting to question what I had been taught and was starting to reflect upon new or alternative perspectives. According to Punch (2009), my starting point had consisted of measuring categories which were firmly framed by a positivist ontology. This paradigm holds, at its core, the premise that there is one ‘true’ external, objective reality. Therefore, according to Crotty (2003), positivists believe that things exist meaningfully as independent objects, separate from consciousness and experience. In relation to the starting school transition, arguably this would transpire as an analogous experience for those undertaking it as the transition itself would be seen as an objective reality. Furthermore, positivists believe that these objects can be accessed without having the participants or the researcher’s personal beliefs or value-based judgments contaminating the data collected (Mack, 2010).

However, Crotty (2003) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) strongly argue against this notion, stating researchers are continually injecting their own values and beliefs in to any data when they decide on how it should be collected and in which way it should be analysed. In agreement with the previous assertion, my beliefs concerning reality have never truly married up to the positivist ideal because I have firmly believed as Rue (1994) once stated:

“There are no absolute truths and no objective values. There may be local truths and values around, but none of them has the endorsement of things as they really are.... As for reality itself, it does not speak to us, does not tell us what is true or good or beautiful. The universe is not itself any of these things, it doesn't interpret. Only we do, variously" (pg. 272 – 273).

Therefore, part way through my postgraduate degree, having been given the freedom of choice, my ontological stance shifted towards the interpretivist's paradigm which, according to Mack (2010), believes that there is no 'true reality' and that we can only ever gain access to interpretations of multiple realities. It also acknowledges the essential role of the researcher and the research aims in the formation, collection and subsequent analysis of the data (Cromby, 2012). Additionally, according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, pg. 19) this paradigm aims to "...understand, explain, and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participants". With this ontology, firmly in place (e.g. that knowledge can only be drawn from the perceptions of experiences that take place within social interactions), my next decision was to look at my epistemological stance.

1.1.2 What can be known about starting school?

Where ontology concerns itself with 'what can be known', epistemology, is the study of how we can come to know information (Maynard, 1994; Willig, 2001; Crotty, 2003). Crotty (2003) highlighted two contrasting epistemologies:

objectivism and *constructionism*. He stated that objectivism is in line with the positivist approach, in that it asserts that meaning is lying in wait to be discovered. Therefore, according to this epistemology, the starting school transition essentially exists whether it is consciously paid attention to or not. Yet, in direct opposition, Crotty argues that constructionism rejects this view of information and knowledge. He asserts that the constructionist epistemology believes that there is no objective truth waiting to be discovered. Meaning cannot be reached without the human mind, in that truth or meaning only comes into existence because of our interactions with the multiple realities available in the world. This meaning is never discovered but it is constructed. He argues that people can construct the same phenomenon in multiple ways and come to understand it in even more ways. This means, according to the constructionist epistemology, the starting school transition is potentially a socially constructed notion, constructed in the midst of the day-to-day interactions and is made meaningful in different and varying ways.

This consideration of epistemological stances is, according to Carter and Little (2007, pg. 1319) “inescapable” for any researcher as it has such a strong tie to the research aims and the methods and methodology they might seek to employ within their research (Whaley and Krane, 2011). For example, with my newly developed ontology, I believed that only ‘individual interpretations’ or as Groves (2009) indicates at the start of this chapter, ‘individual perceptions’ of the starting school transition would be representative data (although, I must point out here that this ‘individualistic’ perspective was made redundant and will be discussed in more detail later). Therefore, my epistemological thinking was starting to shift,

quite naturally, towards qualitative methods as this suited the developing research aims.

In support of this methodological approach, it is often highlighted in research textbooks, that any 'why' or 'how' questions will generally require a qualitative method (Griffiths, 1996; Richardson, 1996; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, 2011; Blaikie, 2000; Willig, 2001; Richie and Lewis, 2003; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Mack, 2010; Silverman, 2011). Although, at the start of this research journey, I did not have any set 'what' questions, nor any clear 'why' or 'how' questions; but, this may have been due to my changing philosophical foundations causing me to feel intense uncertainty in how I felt I could investigate this area initially. Crotty (2003) argues that most research studies do not need to consider or attempt to outline their epistemological stances at the very start. Yet, my first task had been to grapple with my own ontological and epistemological dilemmas; hence, as previously stated the reason for positioning this chapter first.

It was at this point, in my research journey, that I suddenly realised that I was 'in transition' in relation to my own philosophical thinking about research and research methods. I was beyond making what Foucault (1988, pg. 155) termed a "superficial transformation", which he believed was a change in thought but one that had been merely adjusted to fit more closely with reality and therefore still fitted within the original mode of thought. My ontological understanding had completely transformed, in that I could no longer comprehend one 'true' reality ever existing. Therefore, my next task, rather than consider specific research

questions, was to understand where my beliefs, values and ideals sat in relation to research approaches; as Foucault (1988) indicated "...as soon as one can no longer think things as one formally thought them, transformation becomes both very urgent, very difficult and quite possible" (pg. 155).

What this shift in thinking had allowed me to do, was begin what Foucault (1988) and Mac Naughton (2005) deemed critical reflection. In other words, to reflect upon what has been and gone before (ideologies created) but to critically question what the use of it, the purpose of it and the value of it is in relation to where the power of the ideology lies. Therein, I realised that I would need to see past any dominant discourses and 'taken for granted' concepts (Foucault, 1972; 1982; Burr, 2015; Mac Naughton, 2005) surrounding the starting school transition; thereby, this led me to discover the field of social constructionism for the very first time.

1.2 What is Social Constructionism?

Burr (2002; 2015) highlighted that there is no singular definition of social constructionism. She argues this is because there are numerous sub-groups that align themselves to the social constructionist approach meaning one 'true' definition would struggle to encapsulate all of the varying differences held within the approach. Furthermore, trying to define the approach by designing a 'truth' statement would be in direct opposition to the ontological and epistemological values held within the approach.

Ontologically, Burr (2015) argues that the social constructionist approach believes that there is no one true 'reality' external to human beings; therefore, it is in direct opposition to the positivist paradigm (Crotty, 2003; Ashworth, 2008; Bernard, 2013). When contrasting it to positivism, Crotty (2003) highlights that the perspective centres on its understanding that:

“all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practice, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (pg. 42).

Therefore, epistemologically speaking, it believes that there are many ways of 'knowing' and these can be accessed via the many 'knowledgies' that exist (Willig, 2001). Furthermore, this approach holds that knowledge (or as previously mentioned 'knowledgies') are socially constructed and sustained through social processes. This means that every interaction enables knowledge to be fabricated through the social realm. Shotter (1995), Gergen and Gergen (2007), Gergen (2009) and Burr (2015) propose that social constructionism is therefore centred on human relationships that allows the very origin of knowledge and meaning to become traceable. Therefore, prolific social constructionists agree that the approach aims to identify the many ways in which people make sense of their worlds, whilst acknowledging the inescapable historical, cultural and ideological contexts of their lives (Mead, 1934; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Foucault, 1982; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; 1995; Davies and Harré, 1990; Parker, 1990; 1992; 1998; Shotter, 1993; 1995; Potter, 1996; 2012; Nightingale and Cromby, 1999; Gergen, 2001; 2009; Burr, 2002; 2015).

The previously mentioned historical, cultural and ideological contexts are often described as 'discourses' which form an essential part of social constructionist thinking. Burr (2015) defines these as "instance(s) of situated language use" (pg. 63). This refers to any type of language usage, be it speech, text or gesture etc. Unsurprisingly, Psychologists have generally believed a communicator has the ability and freedom to draw on language as a cultural tool. For example, back in 1968, Jackson argued:

"Classroom life, in my judgment, is too complex an affair to be viewed or talked about from any single perspective. Accordingly, as we try to grasp the meaning of what school is like for students and teachers we must not hesitate to use all the ways of knowing at our disposal. This means we must read, and look, and listen, and count things, and talk to people, and even muse introspectively over the memories of our own childhood (pg. vii-viii)

To some, it may appear as if Jackson is simply discussing ways of understanding possible life within a classroom via discussing it with the very people contained within it (therefore using language as a cultural tool).

However, from a social constructionist perspective she may be insinuating the need to grasp hold of the discourse that positions the 'life' contained within that classroom. For example, she refers to using as many, if not all, of "the ways of knowing" (Jackson, 1968, pg. vii). This understanding became an important point within the design of my own research into the starting school transition. It meant that to explore the concept of the transition, I would need to consider the social,

cultural, historical, political and ideological contexts surrounding it, whilst discussing what life was like for the children and teachers. Yet, Lubeck (1998, pg. 289) purports “the study of social and educational phenomena can never be value-neutral, because there is no place to stand to see how things ‘really’ are”. The way of seeing or understanding the phenomena is shaped by our experience of it. This means the children, parents and school staff must experience the transition in the moment, alongside the various discourses surrounding it, before they can attempt to comprehend it. As Lubeck (1998) argued “we can only look from where we are when we are there” (pg. 289).

1.2.1 Drawing on discourse

These pockets of influences (e.g. discourses) are not to be underestimated as most of them are powerful directors or restrictors of what it means to be a ‘child’ or a ‘teacher’ or even a ‘person’. For example, Ariès (1962), De Mause (1976), Postman (1994), Cunningham (1995) and Jenks (1996) have all discussed the birth and subsequent development of the socially constructed notion of childhood. From this perspective, children should not be seen simply as a ‘child’ within the here and now; but as a child who has become distinctive due to the shaping of their historical discourses (Jones, 2009; Frost, 2011; Oswell, 2013). As Jenks (1996) discusses the notion of childhood makes reference to the social status given to children which has been demarcated by boundaries that change over time and from society to society.

Interestingly, the notion of childhood is an evolving shared discourse and people draw upon these shared discourses continually because it is thought that they help to position them in relation to the surrounding historical, cultural and social contexts (Gergen, 2001, 2009; Jones, 2009). In a connected way, positioning was first discussed by Goffman (1959) in relation to the taking up of roles within social interactions. Therefore, it could be said that positioning helps people to construct, structure, and experience the worlds around them (Jones, 2006). In fact, Davies and Harré (1990) postulate that positioning has a dualistic component to it; in that a person may adopt a particular discursive position or assign one to another person through the role that they give them in their developing discourse/narrative of events. Drewery (2005) has taken this aspect one step further and discussed the agency that Davies and Harré's ideas propose. She points out that this agentic positioning stems from the, what she calls, 'position calls' where the invitation to take up a role is either accepted or refused.

However, in contrast, discourses and positioning are sometimes seen in a more negative viewpoint by social constructionists. For example, it is thought by many that available discourses in day-to-day interactions can set limits on or at the very least channel what can be said, thought or actioned (Foucault, 1972; 1982; 1988; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Parker, 1990; 1992; 1998; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Shotter, 1993; Gergen, 2001; Drewery, 2005; Burr, 2002; 2015). It is for these reasons that Burr (2015) acknowledges that people are not free to create any version of 'reality' that they wish. Furthermore, moving back to Drewery's (2005) discussion of positioning, she proposes that some 'position calls' are

‘exclusionary position calls’. They are calls that leave the respondent with no way of being a full participant (Burr, 2002). Drewery states that they are a form of colonisation and can be typically found in adult – child relationships, or ones with an unequal power balance. Therefore, this will be an important point in relation to this research study and will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

According to Potter and Wetherell (1995), positioning and discourses are constructed through the use of language and its ‘action-orientation’. This idea of language being a generator of action rather than just a passive vehicle of thoughts is a core part of social constructionist thinking (Burr, 2015). For example, when a child is reprimanded at school by being given detention, this is actioned by the words delivered from the teacher: ‘for that, you will be in detention tomorrow night after school’. The language used *forms* the action that is intended to take place afterwards. This can also be applied to the notion of the starting school transition and this is expanded upon further in the next chapter where the starting school transition is deconstructed. However, it is important to note here, that it is these *drivers* or *formers* of actions that enables multiple versions of realities or knowledgies to become constructed. Although, an interesting point was raised by Marecek and Hare-Mustin (2009, pg. 76) who stated that these knowledgies will always be intrinsically shaped by the surrounding social contexts and languages, in so much as “what we know and what we see, as well as what we can say” about them will always be *fluid*.

1.3 Choosing Relativism

It is this fluidity of knowledge that causes contention for positivists as it goes against their quest for 'truth' (Gough and McFadden, 2001). However, Burr (2015) also points out that this same issue has been a contentious issue within the social constructionist approach. She continues by posing the question that if we accept that multiple versions of reality are possible then what is the value of any research project. Gough and McFadden (2001, pg. 63) discussed this issue further and stated that social constructionism has been critiqued by many (e.g. Bury, 1986; Hammersley, 1992; Sismondo, 1993; Craib, 1997; Proctor, 1998; Cromby and Nightingale, 1999; Nightingale and Cromby, 1999; Schwandt, 2003) due to its lack of "agreed or neutral version of reality beyond discourse".

In general, what this critique is aimed at, is the relativist side of the realism/relativism continuum (Cromby and Nightingale, 1999; Gergen, 2001, 2009; Andrews, 2012; Burr, 2015). Relativism is often indicated by its focus on language which is thought to enable the meaningful construction of realities by people (Shotter and Gergen, 1989; Edwards, Ashmore and Potter, 1995; Shotter, 1995; Potter, 1996; 2012; Gergen, 2001; Burr, 2015). Therefore, Ashworth (2008) argues that for a relativist, language is deemed ontologically primary. This means we can only reach these realities or 'truths' through the situated (e.g. historical, cultural and social contexts) representations of the world developed through language usage (i.e. post-language). However, Cromby and Nightingale (1999) argue that this stance means that there can be no facts that are held true in every culture across all time, and they stated, some researchers are happy to

accept this, and some are not. They argue that some constructionists want to believe that certain things are more “true” or “right” than others (pg. 6); and, as Hammersley (2000) points out, this is an important point worth considering if a study aims to be relevant to policymakers.

Critical Realism asserts that an external reality does exist, independent of a person but that it is subjected to our interpretations of it (Proctor, 1998; Nightingale and Cromby, 1999; 2002; Cromby, 2012). However, Danermark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen and Karlsson (2002) make an argument to say that ultimately critical realists still use language as their ontological focus. They assert that critical realists “switch from epistemology to ontology, and within ontology a switch from events to mechanisms” (pg. 5) is made. Condie (2013) argues that this means their focus shifts to what it is about people that makes them possible objects in their goal of uncovering knowledge. They are interested in “what produces events, as opposed to the events themselves” (Condie, 2013, pg. 62). Taking that view point of what produces events brings knowledge back to discourse again. In relation to this research, a critical realist would be interested in what produces the starting school transition, rather than being interested in the actual transitional experience. Edwards, Ashmore and Potter (1995) and Potter (2012) argue that the world has to be represented and interpreted and this can be done if we focus on how discourses produce events. However, they point out that this does not mean that people are discourses alone or that discourse is ‘more’ real. This point was picked up by Nightingale and Cromby (2002) who argued that the realness of the claims made by relativists is not the issue, it is the status or value of their claims made.

Consequentially, this means that being a relativist social constructionist goes against the 'mainstream' of Psychology and therefore requires explicit justification (Condie, 2013). This chapter hopefully starts the process of making my reasons and justifications (ontological and epistemological stances) clearer. However, chapter 2, which reviews the discourse that surrounds the starting school transition will make the reasons for taking a social constructionist (and in particular a relativist) approach more profound. This is because the way the topic of transition has been previously researched is in itself a justification for using a social constructionist approach. For instance, as will be seen in the next chapter, the current literature tends to take a positivist approach to the topic which has developed a discursive notion of 'problematic' transitions. However, using a social constructionist approach means these notions can be challenged and the 'taken for granted' concepts (Burr, 2015) can be questioned. Furthermore, Burr (2015) argues:

“the search for truth, the truth about people, about human nature, about society, has been at the foundation of social science from the start. Social Constructionism therefore heralds a radically different model of what it could mean to do social science” (pg. 7).

Taking a social constructionist approach will allow the 'putting it another way' aspect of the approach (Condie, 2013) to take place while embracing the multiple realities and versions of events that exist in the starting school transition. For example, I have taken up the position that acknowledges “a real world outside discourse” (Burr, 2015, pg. 81) although, I have prioritised language in an ontological attempt to understand how transitions are constructed, presented and

contested. However, before this research can attempt to achieve this, it must first review the literature surrounding the notion of transitions and keeping in line with a social constructionist approach I have chosen to do this by taking a discursive approach. The reasoning for taking a different approach to reviewing the literature will be outlined next.

1.4 Taking a Discursive approach

Briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, discourses are an integral part of our everyday life (Foucault, 1982; Liebrucks, 2001; Rogoff, 2003; Mac Naughton, 2005; Burr, 2015). They are all around us, whether directly acknowledged or not, whether understood and accepted or whether understood but fought against. They can have a pervasive influence upon the environments and everyday experiences of human beings (Benwell and Stoke, 2006). This means they hold an extremely important place within today's society and need to be considered in more depth rather than be simply 'taken-for-granted' and side-lined in research endeavours (Burr, 2015).

According to Burr (2015), discourses enable and at the same time impose us to see the world through different lenses or perspectives. As I have argued elsewhere (Cartmell, 2014; Gallard and Cartmell, 2015), they provide human beings with collectively ordained 'knowledge' about the world around them. Furthermore, this 'knowledge' then tends to insinuate or overtly direct (what would be considered) socially acceptable behaviours or interactions. Therefore, Burr

argues, they carry with them implications in relation to what we can and should do in the world. She argues:

“Discourses are not simply abstract ideas, ways of talking about and representing things that, as it were, float like balloons far above the real world. Discourses are intimately connected to institutional and social practices that have a profound effect on how we live our lives, on what we can do and on what can be done to us” (pg. 75).

Foucault (1972) once described discourses as: “practices which form the objects of which they speak” (pg. 49). Therefore, as an example, when a child undertakes an educational transition, by applying Foucault’s ideas, the very act of supporting the child to ‘undertake’ the experience may actually be helping to produce the very notion of ‘transitions’. The way the family, school, community and wider social groups (e.g. Governments) rally around and start to produce activities that are in some way related to the ‘undertaking’ of the transition, is again helping to form the very idea of what a ‘transition’ is. This revelation forced to me to stop, reflect and consider what ‘transitions’ may be and how we (i.e. society) have come to discursively produce them.

Therefore, after reviewing some of the literature around discourses, I found that Foucault’s ideas were similar to the notions of externalisation, objectification and internalisation that Berger and Luckmann had previously proposed in 1966. Their main argument was that “Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product” (pg. 79). Although, Liebrucks (2001) points out

that Berger and Luckmann only referred, explicitly, to the 'beliefs' about reality rather than refer directly to the totality of an objective reality. To deconstruct their human paradox theory that "man is capable of producing a world that he then experiences as something other than a human product" (pg.78), Berger and Luckmann described a continuing and reciprocal cycle that they believed socially constructs the beliefs about human reality. For example, 'externalisation' involves knowledge or shared ways of thinking taking form through their enactment in social practices or their materialisation into artefacts.

'Objectivation' is said to have occurred when these practices or artefacts become objects that have gained what Burr (2015) terms a 'pre-giveness' (similar to the notion of a discourse). Finally, 'internalisation' occurs when the pre-given knowledge becomes a part of the everyday thinking of social groups. For example, when children are born, it has been widely argued that they are socialised into accepting the knowledge or 'objects' that the previous generation have objectified (Handel, 2014; discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Therefore, according to Burr (2015), they are able to develop an understanding that allows them to participate in meaningful interactions within their social groups.

Having briefly discussed these ideas by Foucault (1982) and Berger and Luckmann (1966), if they were then applied to the notion of educational transitions it would be plausible that the very existence of transitions becomes *questionable*. For example, according to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) cycle,

'transitions' can be thought of as externalised objects that have been internalised via the discourses that surround them; theoretically, they are a socially constructed notion of reality. The potentiality of this point at first, unnerved me, as it started to change my initial thoughts concerning educational transitions.

As I discussed in the prelude, one of the original, over-arching, reasons for me undertaking this research was to investigate why children can experience this journey differently. The notion that transitions may be social constructions meant that I had to take a step backwards and re-evaluate what they are, and how we have come to 'objectify' them as objects. Therefore, this led to me re-adjusting the research aims (see below) for this project to include another: develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children.

Research Aims:

- Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition
- Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children

1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented information regarding my philosophical journey and the decisions I have come to make regarding my ontological and epistemology stances. The next chapter will take an idiosyncratic approach to critically

reviewing the current literature surrounding this particular transition. Therein, I posit potential elements of originality in the framing of the review as its aim is to deconstruct the discourses that surround and help to 'objectify' the very notion (e.g. school readiness, developmentalism and 'problematic' transitions) of the starting school transition. However, it should be noted, that by discussing (externalising) and writing this review (objectifying) it will also be helping to socially construct the social construction of the starting school transition! Although, it is hoped that the composition of the review, at the very least, will highlight alternative 'understandings' or perspectives concerning the transition which is in line with the social constructionist approach (Shotter, 1993; Burr, 2015). For example, Shotter (1993) proposed that social constructionists believe:

“we must cease thinking of the 'reality' within which we live as homogeneous, as everywhere the same for everyone. Different people in different positions at different moments will live in different realities. Thus we must begin to rethink it as being differentiated, as heterogeneous, as consisting in a set of different regions and moments, all with different properties to them” (pg. 17).

However, when reading through the material presented the reader should be mindful that Liebrucks (2001) and Burr (2015) argue it is not possible for human beings to write about a subject or topic in an impartial, and value-free manner. Therefore, I wish to make it clear here that I am in no way proposing that my version of deconstructing and/or investigating the transition is 'correct'. Instead, I am an advocate of the social constructionist approach because it enables these alternative perspectives to develop and be heard (Ashworth, 2008).

Chapter 2: Deconstructing the Starting School

Transition

The aim of this chapter is to seek out, explore and gain some awareness as to what influences the existing literature has had on the various ways educational transitions, and in particular the starting school transition, have come to be shaped and produced within England. To achieve this, the 'taken for granted', embodied values and assumptions will be examined (Foucault, 1972; 1982). In addition to this aspect, this chapter will also continue to document my reflections upon the philosophical challenges and contentions that I confronted throughout the process of reviewing the surrounding literature. Finally, this chapter will postulate that the starting school transition is a socially constructed concept which has been largely influenced by the dominant framework (Prout and James, 1997) and discourse concerning childhood. However, it will argue this influence is bi-directional and therefore it tends to position children and the transitional experience as potential 'problems' or perceives it in the light of it being an episode of 'becoming' (Walkerdine, 1993; 2015; Woodhead, 1997; 2006; 2013; James and James, 2004; Qvortrup, Corsaro and Honig, 2011; Wyness, 2012; Hammersley, 2013) When this is acknowledged, it changes the way previous research findings can and should be interpreted meaning that there needs to be a new direction taken in relation to exploring and understanding the starting school transition which this research aims to take.

2.1 Critical Reflection

When I first started to review the literature around the starting school transition, I originally wrote a different literature review to the present one (for an example of the approach taken see Cartmell, 2011). It was a report that reviewed the previous literature surrounding the starting school transition which highlighted, as would be expected, what was known about the transition from the research community, i.e. informed the reader about the English education system, the generally accepted norms and regulations surrounding the transition, and of course the difficulties associated with the transition. This was due to the most common theme to arise from previous research was a tendency to imply that the transition was '*difficult*' (for example, Cleave, Jowett and Bate, 1982; Ladd, 1990; Fabian, 1998; 2000; Kienig, 1998; 2002; Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; 2001; Fabian and Dunlop, 2002; Broström, 2003; Margetts, 2003; Brooker, 2008; Ahtola et al., 2011; O'Connor, 2013). Or, as Tobbell (2006; 2014) has previously argued that educational transitions in general have been 'problematized' by the research community.

At the time, as guided by my changing research focus my philosophical ideas were changing meaning that I started to read more around the topic of discourses and its related power struggles (Foucault, 1972, 1982, 1988; Gergen, 2009; Burr, 2015) this equated to me reflecting on the potentiality of this research project (Schön, 1983; 1987; Willig, 2001; Crotty, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008; Stainton-Rogers and Willig, 2008; Shaw, 2010). I was becoming increasingly aware that many of the previous studies carried out on transitions were basing their judgments on

'taken for granted' assumptions (Foucault, 1982) passed on from one study to another. For example, some papers (e.g. Ladd and Price, 1987; Kagan, 1994; Griebel and Niesel, 1997; Fabian, 1998; Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; 2001; Pianta and Cox, 1999; Johansson, 2002; Ladd, 2003; Gould, 2012; Pramling and Pramling Samuelsson, 2012; O'Connor, 2013) had an opening statement that reiterated, in some way, that the transition can generally be thought of as some major challenge children must face (and this was before they had even reached any of their own analyses).

After critically reflecting upon what I had written, and more importantly considering what I may have been insinuating (Foucault, 1988; Ortlipp, 2008; Shaw, 2010) within my previous writing, I quickly realised that I was being drawn into appearing to take the same perspective. This seemed to have occurred even though I did not share that particular viewpoint. Interestingly, Burchell, Gordon and Miller (1991) once discussed a notion they termed as the "Foucault effect". They defined the effect as:

"...the making visible, through a particular perspective in the history of the present, of the different ways in which an activity or art called government has been made thinkable or practicable" (pg. ix).

I would argue, the essence of this idea can be brought across and applied to the past study of educational transitions. In so doing, postulating that a '*transition effect*' may have occurred due to the way that the majority of past knowledge and understanding and research has helped to form and shape the current idea that transitions are generally '*problematic*' (this will be discussed fully in sub-section

2.3). Within that moment, I knew I could no longer 'see things how they use to be' (Foucault, 1984). Partly, due to my changing ontological and epistemological stances; but, partly because I did not want to continue to, as Foucault (1984) suggests, legitimatise what is already known. I knew then, that I would need to take a different and original approach to reviewing the literature within this thesis to allow myself and others to 'think differently' about this particular transition.

I wanted this review to offer the opportunity to 'reposition' or 'reframe' (Larrivee, 1996; 2000), my (and hopefully others) perspectives surrounding the starting school transition. Larrivee (2000) points out that reflectively repositioning, involves changing our own "perception by 'moving out of' our old position and creating a new position from which to view a situation" (pg. 299). In general, Larrivee was discussing teachers and practitioners' perceptions of the classroom but the notion of 'repositioning' is just as important to researchers when initially contemplating how they perceive their research area (Agrawal, 2013). Larrivee goes on to argue "It is our personal framing that shapes how we attribute meaning to our experiences" (pg. 299). In regard to research, the way we perceive and frame the research process will certainly shape the way we explore and attribute meaning towards the researched area/topic (Grix, 2004; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007; Stainton-Rogers and Willig, 2008). In connection to this point, Dewey (1938) originally argued that reflective change can help us to understand who we really are which can "...enable[s] us to direct our actions with foresight" (pg. 17). It is hoped, that by repositioning myself from within the positivist paradigm to a social constructionist perspective, this review can help to create an alternative vantage point from which new meaning and understanding may be

found in relation to myself as a researcher and to the starting school transitional experience.

2.2 Foucauldian Theoretical Lens

A Foucauldian theoretical lens (Roff, 1992) will help to uncover an alternative perspective of understanding in relation to what the potential implications may be of any discourses that are connected to the starting school transition. Recall Burr (2015) suggests discourses are fermented through time and space through culturally connected interactions so it is important to consider how any discourses may influence the children's day to day transitional experience within this research study. Foucault's ideas about governmentality may help this aspect be understood further (Rose, 1989).

Governmentality can be defined as the creation of governable subjects through the various techniques developed by Governments to control, normalise and shape people's behaviour (Rose, 1989; Leme, 2002; Fimyar, 2008). Therefore, as a concept, Fimyar (2008, pg. 5) argues it "identifies the relation between the government of the state (politics) and government of the self (morality), the construction of the subject (genealogy of the subject) with the formation of the state (genealogy of the state)". In relation to this study, the concept helps the proposition that a relationship between Government, school and children exists. It also includes a tangible link that suggests governmentality implies the governance of the transitional period of the starting school transition takes place and this needs to be researched further. Foucault pays particular attention to the

power relations that exist in all relationships (Roff, 1992; O'Farrell, 2005) and this is an important point to remember when researching an area that includes a Government controlled system of schooling (Rose, 1989; Popkewitz and Brennan, 1998).

2.2.1 Notion of Power

Foucault theorised governmentality was possible due to the rule and authority that stems from the discursive notion known as power. According to Burr (2015), power can be considered to be a negative concept; yet, Foucault understood power differently. He proposed that the modern state uses many different tools beyond the threat of death and torture which history has shown is what sovereign power enforced to control its populations (Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). Instead, the modern state works through seemingly benevolent institutions in order to gain control of a population that self-disciplines itself (Lemke, 2002; Burr, 2015). Rather than being ruled by the power of sovereignty, society is now ruled through the use of what Foucault termed disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977; 1980).

Foucault (1977) purports that assuming power just 'is' should be considered to be a form of fatalism. He argues that we should not be asking the question, what is power; but, that we should be exploring how it is exercised and how this may give it 'life' which he proposes it is birthed through the notion he termed disciplinary power. This is important when considering the day to day, moment to moment interactions which take place during the starting school transition. Johnston (1991) summed up disciplinary power as a system of knowledge that is

used to know an individual as an object and to perceive that same individual in relation to others who can be known. Therein, disciplinary power draws on the notion of culturally set norms and those individuals considered to be deviating from the norm are defined as abnormal (Burr, 2015). Those exposed as abnormal are subjected to disciplinary tools that aim to reform, fix or rehabilitate them (Foucault, 1980; Gore, 1998; Burr, 2015). In this sense, Foucault (1977) argues that disciplinary power shapes and normalises subjects who eventually speak, think and act in similar manners. To enable this to happen, Foucault postulated a number of disciplinary tools can be used to conform behaviour which became known as normalisation, surveillance, regulation, categorisation and totalisation.

According to Mac Naughton (2005), these disciplinary tools produce rules that organise and guide behaviour. They are often used to help children conform to the requested behaviours expected by the majority (Giroux, 1981; Potter and Wetherell, 1987); Burr, 2015; Mayo, 2015). Interestingly, these tools are often used within the classroom settings (Foucault, 1977; Gore, 1998; Mac Naughton, 2005) and it would be interesting to see if they are used in relation to the children's transitional experience. Therefore, a further research aim, research aim 3, has been designed that will aim to understand the implications / function of the socially constructed discourses that surrounds the starting school transition.

Research Aims:

- 1) Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition
- 2) Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children
- 3) Understand the implications / function of the discourses that surround the starting school transition

2.3 Problematising Transitions

First of all, it should be noted that research that originates directly from the UK (and more specifically England), which focuses solely on the 'starting school' transition, is unfortunately in limited supply (Sanders et al., 2005). For this reason, some of the literature reviewed in this chapter does originate from other international countries. One issue that may arise from this practice however is that the everyday values and beliefs, and social and cultural backgrounds of the participants will be potentially disparate (Hofstede, 1983; Cole, 1996). Therefore, whenever possible, UK based research has been used; although, I would highlight there are differences across the education system in the UK (Boyd and Hirst, 2016). Where UK based research is unavailable, international research has been included to ensure that the potential discourses that surround the notion of this transition can be better understood and deconstructed.

Bearing in mind the long history of educating children, the very idea of 'transitioning' or 'transferring' within educational systems is not a new topic of interest to researchers. Although, it has been argued that it is relatively new to Psychology compared to other disciplines (Pianta and Cox, 1999; Tobbell, 2006; Trodd, 2013); however, it would be very misleading to suggest that the topic of educational transitions has remained unscathed of any psychological discourses and this will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

Educational transitions have been researched extensively all around the world and irrespective of the starting age of the children involved, the research can be loosely attributed to categories of focus; these being: child-orientated, family-orientated, school & community-orientated (see Cartmell, 2011 for a review). The sheer volume of papers in these categories means there is a vast amount of information that could be perceived as valuable in helping to contextualise the present study. As previously stated, when writing the first and original draft of this literature review, I did in fact discuss some of the popular propositions put forward in more depth as they appeared to provide an introduction as to why more research was needed to be carried out in the area. However, I wish to argue the opposite in that the relevance of the findings in these studies are considerably reduced due to, the often used, variable approach (i.e. positivist paradigm) or out-of-context approach to the research (Crotty, 2003). I agree with Bronfenbrenner (1977, pg. 513) who once stated, "it can be said that much of developmental psychology is the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time". Therefore, I wish to argue that, from a social constructionist perspective, the relevance of the findings

in these studies are considerably reduced by those actions and are not pertinent to developing an understanding of what this transition 'consists' of as they focussed on the result of undertaking the transitional experience.

Yet, it is the discourse that stems from previous research studies and their propositions that helps to objectify the concept of the starting school transition. Therein, I did not want to leave this information out entirely, whilst at the same time I did not want to be perceived as helping to reify the concept further. Therefore, to assist the reader, I have chosen to insert a table of general and specific propositions that have been reported via academics (see table 2.1 on page 57 – 58). A selection of the research within it will be discussed further as examples as I argue that an alternative perspective is needed when considering this transition. The table however will allow the reader to gain a basic understanding of what has been insinuated through research about this particular transition, which has also helped to congeal the problematic discourse that surrounds it.

Table 2.1 Table showing the starting school transition propositions acknowledged / supported via academic literature

General Statements	Propositions made in relation to the Starting School transition		Research that has acknowledged / supported the proposition
	1)	The transitional experience is thought of as a critical determinant of a child's future development, behaviour, and educational attainment	E.g. Cartmell, 2011; Crawford, Dearden and Meghir, 2007; Fabian, 1998, 2002; Feinstein and Peck, 2008; Field, 2010; HM Treasury, 2004; Kienig, 1998, 2002; Ladd and Price, 1987; O'Connor, 2013; Pascal, 2002; Pramling Samuelsson and Yoshie, 2008.
	2)	By the end of the transition most children can be deemed to be on a trajectory of development that they are likely to follow for the remainder of their school years	E.g. Cooper, Batts Allen, Patall and Dent, 2010; HM Treasury, 2004; Janosz, Armchambault, Moritzot and Pagani, 2008; NICHD Early Childcare Research Network, 2005; Perry and Weinstein, 1998; Pianta and Cox, 1999; Pianta and Kraft-Sayre, 1999; Sylva et al., 2004, 2010.
	3)	Discontinuity between curriculum, pedagogy and environmental expectations often increases the transitional difficulty experienced	E.g. Anderson, Jacobs, Schramm and Splittgerber, 2000; Broström, 2002; Chan, 2012; Evangelou et al., 2008; Galton et al., 2003; Sanders et al., 2005; Stormont, Beckner, Mitchell and Richter, 2005; Merry, 2007; Shields, 2009; Walsh, Taylor, Sproule and McGuinness, 2008.

Table 2.1 cont. Table showing the starting school transition propositions acknowledged / supported via academic literature.

Specific Statements	1)	Specific groups of children are more likely to find the transition more 'difficult' to navigate	E.g. <u>Children with learning difficulties</u> : Carlson et al., 2009; Marks, 2013; <u>Children with low self-esteem / poor confidence</u> : Working with Men, 2004; Evangelou et al., 2008; <u>Younger Children (often summer-born)</u> : Crawford, Dearden and Meghir, 2007; Sharp, 2002; Sharp et al., 2009; <u>Children from low socio-economical families</u> : Izard, Trentacosta, King and Mostow, 2004; LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer and Pianta, 2008; Miller et al., 2003; <u>Children classified as having certain types of temperaments</u> : Keogh, 2003; Martin and Bridger, 1999; Turner-Cobb, 2005; <u>Children with low levels of social skills</u> : Lash, 2008; McClelland and Morrison, 2003; Sanders et al., 2005.
	2)	Parents often find this transition difficult to navigate	E.g. C4EO, 2010; Dockett and Perry, 1999b, 2002, 2004; Emond, 2008; Fthenakis, 1998; Griebel and Niesel, 2002; Hatcher, Nuner and Paulsel, 2012; Johansson, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2007; Pettit, Bates and Dodge, 1997; Russell, 2005; Scott, 2003; Shields, 2009.

2.3.1 Joining the ‘problematic’ and ‘developmental’ discourses together

Over time it appears a potential discourse has developed that implies the starting school transition may impact upon a child’s development or a child’s current level of development may impact the transitional experience. For example, in a British study, Turner-Cobb, Rixon and Jessop (2008) tested out their hypothesis that the starting school transition was stressful to children. This was carried out by collecting children’s cortisol levels, which some academics have argued is a physiological stress marker (see Sapolsky, Romero and Munck, 2000; King and Hegadoren, 2002;). Turner-cobb and her team postulated that collecting children’s cortisol levels through saliva samples would indicate whether the children did react physiologically (in a stress induced manner) to the starting school transition. They asked parents to collect samples for them on two occasions per day, once upon waking in a morning and again in an evening time period (researchers pointed out these times were selected due to difficulties of carrying out assessments during direct school hours). However, these two samples were only collected in three separate time points spread throughout the transition period (time point 1: collected between 4 - 6 months prior to starting; time point 2: during the second week after starting school; time point 3: collected six months later). They also collected quantified measures of children’s temperament, ability to learn and physical health elements which were all self-reported by teachers or parents – not the children themselves.

Based on their interpretation of their data, the researchers summarised that most of the children did indeed find the transition stressful, as Turner-Cobb’s (2006) final report stated “...the experience of starting school undoubtedly creates a

stress response in children” (pg. 2). Although, they did not specifically state it, the team implied within this conclusion that having a stress response is a potentially negative aspect of the transition and to the child themselves. Thereby helping to support the ‘problematic’ discourse surrounding the transition. However, it should also be noted that the researchers did not collect information surrounding the context that the saliva samples were being collected in (e.g. how the children reported feeling, whether they had been in trouble at school or home, which arguably may have had an impact on their stress reactivity levels). According to cortisol experts Manenschijn, Koper, Lamberts and van Rossum (2011), the samples themselves could therefore only provide a glimpse of the children’s physiological stress reactivity that had taken place on those specific days or extremely close to them, meaning it may have been unrelated to the transitional experience. Furthermore, Gutteling, de Werth and Buitelaar (2005) argue there are in fact a wide variety of possible factors that could impact a child’s cortisol readings. These researchers found that prenatal stress levels were linked to a child’s stress reactivity when they were 5 years of age (approximate age of the sample used by Turner-Cobb, Rixon and Jessop), indicating inseparable family factors.

When attempting to evaluate the usefulness of the above research, it must be remembered that discourse is often produced when there is a need to bring together human events, happenings or actions (Polkinghorne, 1995; Benwell and Stoke, 2006; Burr, 2015). It provides links and meaning which Polkinghorne (1988) once argued allows human activity to be perceived as purposeful. By accessing the discourse, people can begin to understand themselves and where

they 'fit' or belong according to the groupings or boundaries surrounding them. By supporting the problematic transition discourse with their research findings, the authors (and those in table 2.1) were helping to give meaning to the term transition. With this realisation, I came to understand that the language used when discussing a concept (e.g. the concept of transition), helps to shape and define our understanding of the way the world and the concept will later interact (Foucault, 1982; Taylor, 2013; Burr, 2015). I have now become acutely aware of terminology and definitions used within research; or, the complete opposite, as in what is being said when a term is not defined within a study! This aspect will be unpacked in more detail in chapter 3 when I look at the current definitions of the starting school transition.

For now, however, I want to return to why I initially became interested in this area of language and terminology. It arose when I was attempting to understand the afore mentioned 'problematic' propositions; for example, myself (see Cartmell 2011), and others (e.g. Fabian, 1998; Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; 2001; Brooker, 2008; Gould, 2012; O'Connor, 2013), had superficially allowed these statements to help define the transition and project it as potentially 'problematic'; in that, academics, educators and policy makers had 'taken for granted' that this perspective was based on 'truth' and 'scientific evidence'. Yet, it was surprisingly difficult to find significant longitudinal research to evidence any of the long-term impacts proposed.

At that point, I did find some potential answers in Kagan's 1998 publication, entitled "three seductive ideas". Within this, Kagan referred to three types of commonly made mistakes that are used when considering children's experiences: *abstraction*, *infant determinism* and *adultomorphism*. The one that is most relevant to the general problematic propositions is the idea of *infant determinism*. Kagan explained that *infant determinism* is based on an assumption that a child's experience within the first few years of life will be overwhelmingly important in relation to their later development and achievements; this notion can certainly be seen within the problematic propositions concerning the starting school transition (e.g. Ladd, 1990; 2003; Kienig, 2002; Izard et al., 2004; Denham, 2006; Fabian and Mould, 2009; Cooper et al., 2010; Early Education, 2012). Kagan went on to argue that the assumption implies that it is extremely difficult to alter or correct any potential impacts; thereby, implying, again, that these first few years need some form of adult protection and support (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000; Field, 2010; Mercer, 2010). However, more importantly Kagan argued that these assumptions / statements are accepted by society, without any true examination of the evidence initially put forward in support of the generalising statements. Therefore, further research which considers the link between these ideas and the starting school transitional experience is needed.

Furthermore, Burman argues that psychological research, that involves young children, tends to focus on the methodology (like the study discussed earlier by Turner-Cobb, Rixon and Jessop, 2008) rather than the actual events (the actual everyday transitional experience) because Burman states measuring young

children's behaviour is thought to be immensely difficult. In reality, studies like Turner-Cobb's can only ever provide a limited snapshot into the way the children's bodies were reacting on 3 particular days. As Jenks (1982) argued, this kind of quantified research design cannot tell us about the rules or regulations, explicit or implicit which governed the everyday practices that were taking place during the transition. It is clear that more qualitative research in the area was needed.

Returning to Kagan's (1998) work, it is arguable that due to the strong influence that the *infant determinism* notion has on children's lives, the problematising of the starting school transition became its own 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1972; 1982; 1988; Ramazanoğlu, 1993; Burr, 2015; Taylor, 2013). O'Farrell (2005) points out that Foucault saw these 'regimes of truth' as historical mechanisms that help to form discursive practices that allude to be based on truth. Furthermore, Dahlberg and Moss (2005) acknowledges they do this by exercising:

"...power over our thoughts and actions, directing or governing what we see as the 'truth' and how we construct the world: it makes assumptions and values invisible, turns subjective perspectives and understandings into apparently objective truths, and determine[s] that some things are self-evident and realistic while others are dubious and impractical" (pg. 17).

Concomitantly, I would argue it is possible, that one of the reasons this particular perspective of the transitional experience has been so readily accepted is because it is entangled and inseparable from one of the most dominant regimes of truths that engulfs the very notion of childhood and what it means to be 'a child'. This 'truth', known collectively as developmentalism, was once named as the 'dominant framework' by James and Prout (1997), which will be discussed and deconstructed next.

2.4 Developmentalism

A developmentalist framework, according to Wyness (2012) and Corsaro (2015) allows psychologists to conceptualise and research the notion of 'childhood' (and therefore as a potential experience of childhood - the starting school transition) by providing frames of reference for measuring and evaluating childhood experiences. These frames are then used to govern educational and social policy alongside professional practice and its related research (Burman, 2017). This framework has often been named 'developmentalism' by many (e.g. Walkerdine, 1993; Burman, 2010; 2017; Cannella, 1997, 2010; Prout and James, 1997; Woodhead, 1997, 2006, 2011; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James and James, 2004; Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008; Wyness, 2012; Smidt, 2013; Corsaro, 2015) but in essence the dominant framework consists of many of the ideals and values of developmental psychology, alternatively known as child development (Doherty and Hughes, 2014).

This dominant framework defines ‘childhood’ as a “universal fact of life” (Wyness, 2012, pg. 80); although, many academics have counter argued that ‘childhood’, in its self, is a socially constructed notion and holds different meanings and connotations in different cultures, and across different time frames (e.g. Ariès, 1962; Walkerdine, 1993; 2015; Burman, 2010; 2017; Cannella, 1997; 2010; James and Prout, 1997; Woodhead, 1997; 2006; 2011; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James and James, 2004; Wyness, 2012; Corsaro, 2015). Yet, within developmentalism, development is seen and understood to represent a natural process of growth and change and is therefore often conceptualised by using an age-related, linear sequence of movements that all children should undergo (Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008). Thereby, common connections have been made, within this framework, between the universalities of childhood and developmental growth and change; in that, the field of child development is categorised by its emphasis on studying childhood changes (Doherty and Hughes, 2014); but also, for its specific way of then attempting to construct childhood (Woodhead, 2011, 2013). As Bukatko and Daehler (2012, pg. 5) state, the developmental approach is defined as the “systematic and scientific study of changes in human behavior and mental activities over time”. Or as Dahlberg and Moss (2005, pg. 5) eloquently note:

“The scientific discourse of developmental psychology provides a way of understanding children, teachers and their work by representing, classifying and normalising them through its concepts. Scientifically guided principles, based on generalisations that are considered sufficiently reliable, indicate the continuing efforts to find a universal

and scientific guide for ‘who’ the child is and how to govern his or her progress and development”.

According to Prout and James (1997) developmentalism holds a number of key features, the first to be discussed has been christened “normative expectations” by Woodhead (2011, pg. 48). He argues that psychologists now generally accept development has taken place if a progressive movement forward (or upwards) along an age-related line of expectations has been met by a child. This stems from early publications by Gesell (1925), Gesell and Ilg (1946), Bayley (1969), Sheridan (1973) and others who have systematically observed, logged and charted children’s development over time. The purpose of these observations and data collections were so that ‘milestones’ of development could be uncovered for each age group, allowing later children to be assessed against each one; or, as Wilmshurst (2013) academically suggests, it was to help build a “...predictable framework that deviations in the acquisition of developmental milestones can be assessed using normal developmental expectations as the guide” (pg. 4).

2.4.1 Mythical Child

Wyness (2012) states that due to the use of these normative expectations, childhood became standardised and normalised through the use of a ‘mythical child’ (Mercer, 2010; Penn, 2014; Burman, 2017) but with the birth of this developmentally measured ‘averaged child’ came more negative terms like ‘abnormal’ or ‘deviant’. In fact, Burman (1997) noted how the quasi-scientific status of these emerging developmental norms quickly changed from being

useful descriptions to derogative prescriptions. Originally declared useful, as it allowed services and support networks to be established, it was soon acknowledged that this 'mythical child' approach was based upon biased westernised world views (Penn, 2005, 2014; Burman, 2017). As Burman (2017, pg. 22) argues:

“The normal child the ideal type, distilled from the comparative scores of age-graded populations is.... a fiction or myth. No individual or real child lies at its basis. It is an abstraction, a fantasy, a fiction a production of testing apparatus that incorporates, that constructs the child, by virtue of its gaze”.

According to Johnston and Halocha (2010), Wyness (2012) and Penn (2014) it is this same 'mythical' child that is mapped onto the age and stage approach used throughout the English primary schooling system (see DCSF, 2007a; 2007b; DfE, 2014a; 2014b; 4Children, 2015). What this means is that every child is continually assessed throughout their educational journey so that any deviations from the expected norm can be highlighted, and where appropriate any declared 'needs' may be met in an attempt to help the children become developmentally progressive again. The forward-looking nature of this grandiose ideology (Corsaro, 2015), or as Burman (2010, pg. 14) terms it “banal developmentalism”, is what Jenks (1982, pg. 14) argues turns children into “transitional objects” (i.e. required to be in a constant state of objective developmental movement) rather than being seen as subjects with their own rights, views and perspectives (United Nations, 1989). This objectification of children's development is clearly perceivable in the school readiness debate and its related discourse which is also

overwhelmingly connected to this particular transition, especially within England, for policy makers, politicians, teachers, and the children undertaking it. As it is discursively connected to this research study, the school readiness debate will be discussed next.

2.5 School Readiness

The school readiness concept can be seen quite overtly within British politics and policy (Whitebread and Bingham, 2014). For example, in a Government commissioned early intervention report, Allen (2011) argued that the prime objective within children's services that work with the age range 0 – 5 should be about producing “high levels of ‘*school readiness*’ for all children regardless of family income” (pg. 46, original emphasis). However, what is less overtly expressed is what the term may actually mean. The construct of school readiness is difficult to define as there are no commonly accepted definitions available (Meisels, 1999; Diamond, Reagan and Brandy, 2000; Dockett and Perry, 2002; Duncan and Rafter, 2005; PACEY, 2013).

Hatcher, Nuner and Paulsel (2012) have suggested that school readiness has been associated with developmental stages and chronological age, as well as specific academic and social skills, and finally to the strength of the home / school connection. Yet Graue (1993, 2010) has argued that definitions are often perceived differently due to differences between local communities and cultures. Scott (2003, pg. 3) when writing specifically for parents, defines school readiness

as “the process of different developmental achievements which show that your child may be ready to meet the demands of, and benefit from, formal education”.

Kagan (1994, 2010) and Kagan and Kauerz (2007) point out that within the academic literature there are various understandings of the word readiness (i.e. readiness for learning and readiness for school). They go on to highlight that readiness for learning originates from developmentalists and it infers the child has reached an accepted developmentally aligned level of capacity to deal with learning materials or experience in a positive or accumulative manner. Furthermore, they argued this definition of the concept tends to use an average age measurement scheme to interpret a child’s readiness level. Readiness for school however can be thought of as different as it measures a child’s ability to not only cope with a curriculum, but they are also able to meet the physical, emotional and social requirements (Bingham and Whitebread, 2012) of the wider and often hidden curriculum (Jackson, 1968; Thornberg, 2008; 2009; Rahman, 2013) that they are introduced to at school.

Research has tended to focus on social or emotional skills and capacities of children getting ready to start school at a developmentally appropriate level. Here, the general consensus appears to be that having low levels of social skills or low levels of peer support when starting school can have a negative impact upon the transition process / experience (e.g. Ladd, 1990; Birch and Ladd, 1996; Ladd, Birch and Buhs, 1999; McClelland, Morrison and Holmes, 2000; Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2004; Denham, 2006; Bierman et al., 2008). In fact,

McClelland and Morrison (2003) point out peer relationships can have a direct impact on a child's development of learning-related social skills. The examples they provide include: peer networks help to build up general social skills which may help a child to attend to instructions and directions, participate fully in group activities, help to organise materials and peers' workspaces and to learn to be persistent in challenging tasks. Prior to this, Dockett and Perry (1999b, 2002; 2004; 2007) have repeatedly argued that these are all skills that are highly valued by early years' teachers and would therefore be a 'supportive aspect' for most children who have them when they make the transition to school.

However, research within this social-peer group arena tends to also, unfortunately, ignore the wider contextual details of each child's life. According to the (American) National Research Council (2001) the development of social skills in children is directly affected by the child's family, culture (Wardle, 2003) and their educational experiences together. This means the relationship appears to be interconnected on all sides and is often inseparable for children (Seefeldt, Castle and Falconer, 2014), so should be seen and investigated in this way by researchers. When this vital contextual information is missing or dismissed (Richardson, 1996; Schwandt, 2003; Ortlipp, 2008; Shaw, 2010) the findings can imply that, for example - low levels of social skills, are due to the child's current level of development or due to the transitional process being investigated. Thereby, it appears to further cement the 'cause and effect' propositions that are readily put forward and it certainly draws upon the discourse surrounding the notion of children's age / stages of development. Again, this acknowledges what Bingham and Whitebread (2012) propose are messy relationships that have

currently formed between a child's overall level of development and their school readiness when starting school. In relation to this research project, to help meet the first research aim of exploring the starting school transition, it would be interesting to see how the information collected about the children's development is used by the children, parents and school staff and to see if it impacts the transitional experience in any way.

2.5.1 Measuring school readiness

Over the past few decades there have been a number of school readiness scales designed and used to measure and assess children's abilities or 'readiness' to start school. For example, the Phelps scale (2003) measures verbal, perceptual and auditory processing in total; these three areas were chosen as, according to Phelps, they had been previously identified as predictors of later academic achievements. However, on the other hand, this scale is quantitatively designed and only really captures a snap-shot view of a child's capacity on a particular day; yet, the results are 'taken-for-granted' (Foucault, 1982; Burr, 2015) to indicate a child is ready or not for the continual everyday demands of formal schooling.

In the United States, the National School Readiness Indicator Initiative (2005) uses a nationally derived scheme which aims to assess all children before they enter the formal schooling system. According to Emond (2008), in comparison to the Phelps scale (2003), this scale argues that social and emotional development must be demonstrable to indicate an acceptable level of readiness. The scale therefore seeks to find positive social behaviours being used by the

children when interacting with their peers on an 'often' or 'very often' occasion. However, it should be noted here that within America, the education system is designed to only allow children promotion to the next stage when they have shown the capacity to learn at the next higher level (Ravitch, 2016). Therefore, this initial test provides a baseline to observe and quantify their later development from. That means the inclusion of the social and emotional aspects to this test does not necessarily mean that the designers felt it was an essential attribute that is required to being 'school ready'. This indicates that the general consensus of what the term essentially means cannot be gleaned from the design or use of these types of scales, due to potential outside influences.

2.5.2 British Policy and Practice

In England, although there is not an overt readiness scale used to test children, the British Government's concern over children's readiness to start formal schooling has grown over the last decade and this can be seen to have developed through the publications, policies and research they have authorised. For example, Moss (2013) originally noted that in a Business Plan 2011 – 2015, drawn up by the English Department for Education in 2010, it was made clear that school readiness was becoming a high agenda item for the Government as it discussed its plans to develop new indicators of "readiness to progress to the next stage of schooling" (DfE, 2010a, pg. 22). However, these indicators were to be used as guidelines rather than as a direct measurement tool, as in the USA. The indicators were to provide Early Years practitioners with information that they could use to gauge whether a child may need additional support services to help

them reach the required developmental stage noted. This, therefore, links the concept of school readiness firmly with that of developmentalism.

In 2010, after a change in the elected Government, the English Department of Education asked for an independent review to be carried out on the Early Years Foundation Stage (hereafter referred to as the EYFS). The EYFS was first legally introduced in 2008 by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DSCF) as a national statutory curriculum framework that all 0-5-year-old children within England followed. This original version of the EYFS claimed this time span within children's lives should be perceived as a unique stage of education in its own right and therefore it should stand completely separate from the National Curriculum framework (DfE, 2014b) which sets out the curriculum children must follow from the start of Key Stage 1 (the next level up from the EYFS). Yet, this 'unique' stance started to lose its place within politics and policies; as, according to the 2010 Minister of State for Children and Families Sarah Teather in an online press release, the Government needed the review of the EYFS because it wanted to "shift the focus to getting children ready for education" (DfE and Teather, 2010).

Moss (2013) has argued the shift in curriculum focus was certainly evident, when the newly revised 2012 EYFS document was published as the document provided specific points for "what providers must do" to ensure that children "...are ready for school" (DfE, 2012, pg.4). It has been argued by others that this new direction has led to the 'schoolification' (House, 2012; Brodie, 2013; PACEY, 2013) of early childhood care and practice. The term schoolification, means the early years of

children's lives are no longer being perceived as unique but are in fact seen and driven as opportunities to help prepare children for when they start formal schooling. Support for this argument, is further evidenced by the 1994 Start Right report (Ball, 1994) and through the 2014 revised EYFS framework document. In the revised EYFS document, the Department for Education made it clear that this stage of education was designed to "...promote[s] teaching and learning to ensure children's 'school readiness' and gives children the broad range of knowledge and skills that provide the right foundation for good future progress through school and life" (DfE, 2014a, pg. 5).

It is through the publication of the EYFS framework that the different Governments that have been in power since its inception have inadvertently defined what they believe school readiness equates to through its use of the Early Learning Goals (ELG's). For instance, the coalition Government (in power from 2012 – 2016) stated that the ELG's should be reached by the end of the reception year and therefore the end of the EYFS framework (DfE, 2012) ready for the children to move onto the National Curriculum levels at Key Stage 1. These Early Learning Goals span across, what the Government termed, the prime areas of learning (personal, social and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language); and, they include Early Learning Goals in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy (Standards and Testing Agency, 2013, pg. 12). In a statistical report, published by the Department of Education (2013), it was noted that 52% of children achieved a "Good Level of Development" in 2013 (pg. 1); this means they achieved at least the 'expected level' of

achievement in all three prime areas of the ELG's, and the two prime learning areas. Thereby, defining the Governments' idea of school readiness.

In an independent review of the EYFS framework, Tickell (2011, who was critical of the sheer amount of ELG's in the original EYFS framework) stated:

“without secure development in these particular areas during this critical period, children will struggle to progress....It is when these foundations are not strong that we can see children struggle, finding it difficult to focus, to adapt to routines, and to cooperate with others” (pg. 21).

Therefore, although Tickell argued that the Government needed to reduce the amount of ELG's (which they subsequently did in the 2012 revised version), she took an overtly developmental stance and emphasised health checks and health visitor interventions. These additional health checks linked to her support for the ongoing assessment of children's development in light of them being viewed, as the Department of Education (2013) state, “school ready” (pg. 17). However, in a direct counter attack on an age and development led education system, James and Prout (1997) argued that this type of assessment would always be problematic as it encourages potential stigmatizing of the children due to “immaturity” or “backwardness or giftedness” (pg. 237).

2.5.3 Starting School at 5...or should we say 4?

As part of the English education system, children must attend school (or be receiving the equivalent of full-time education) by the time they reach the age of

5 years (HMSO, 1870; DCSF, 2009). According to Bertram and Pascal (2002) this age was set as a “...political compromise” (pg. 9), when the 1870 Education Act was passed. Over the years, it has been briefly discussed and reviewed by various academics, policy makers, and politicians (HMSO [Plowden report], 1967; Rose, 2009; Alexander, 2010; Whitebread and Bingham, 2014). Even though the arguments and evidence generally indicate that English children start too young (e.g. Crosser, 1991; Sharp, 2002; Rogers and Rose, 2007; Sharp et al., 2009; Whitebread and Bingham, 2014), no subsequent changes have been made to the legal requirement of when children *must* have commenced full-time compulsory schooling (Baldock, 2011; Bates, Lewis and Pickard, 2011; Adams, 2014; Chitty, 2014). There have however been some changes to the admission processes since 1870.

Originally, the national policy for admission into a state-controlled school specified a child must be attending from the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday (HMSO, 1870; HMSO [Plowden report], 1967; Stephens, 1998; Alexander, 2010; Langston, 2014; Whitebread and Bingham, 2014; Peckham, 2017). However, in 1985 a study by Cleave, Barker-Lunn and Sharp highlighted that many Local Education Authorities (LEA's) were accepting children at the beginning of the term, or even at the start of the academic year that the child would turn five within. Their survey-based study therefore revealed LEA's were inducting some children into school at the average age of 4.5 years. This growing tendency to start children earlier was reported again by Cleave and Brown (1991) and in 1995 by Sharp, who calculated that 44% of LEA's only offered one intake per year which was a September start. This meant that children born in late

summer (around July/August) were effectively starting school nearly one year younger than children who were born in the September/October months. Interestingly, according to Sharp (1995), the remainder of the LEA's was offering two termly (23%) or three termly (25%) intakes, with the majority taking the child in the term *before* the child turned 5. This suggests that there is a wide margin of starting ages being used by LEA's across England and this has been researched widely as to whether the potential age gap may well have been impacting the attainment of summer-born children (e.g. Woodhead, 1989; West and Varlaam, 1990; Cleave and Brown, 1991; Crosser, 1991; Daniels, Redfern and Shorrocks-Taylor, 1995; Sharp, 1998; Riggall and Sharp, 2008). However, after the independent Review of the Primary Curriculum (Rose, 2009) made a number of recommendations in a bid to overcome these potential impacts, the national Admissions Code was revised in 2011 (Whitebread and Bingham, 2014). The change required local authorities to make full-time reception class places available for all children from the September *after* they have turned *four*.

A discourse has arguably developed that has reified parents into thinking children must now start school at the age of 4, as local authorities now request parents to apply for a place in the academic year before their child turns 4 (LCC, 2013; City of London Corporation, 2015; North Yorkshire County Council, 2016). In reality, according to Whitebread and Bingham (2014), parents retain the right to defer their child's entry to school until after their fifth birthday. However, many parents chose not to due to a fear of 'holding their child back' or by withholding an opportunity for their child to become 'school-ready' (Fisher, 2013; Whitebread and Bingham, 2014). In fact, according to Tickell (2011) because the EYFS

documents use the phrase 'school ready' or 'ready for school' parents, teachers, communities and policy makers are perceiving the reception year as the official start of formal schooling, even though this should not be occurring until the child enters year 1.

This readiness concept has a number of macro factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) that have continued to impact its developing strong hold within policy and practice within England. For example, Moss (2013) discusses how the concept has been subsumed into the lifelong learning discourse meaning:

“The early years are, therefore, a necessary part of lifelong learning which, at a time of growing global competition, is seen as a necessary condition for national survival strategies.” (pg. 9).

Interestingly, Vygotsky (1978, pg. 84) once stated that “learning and development are interrelated from the child’s very first day of life”. Additionally, Kagan (2007, pg. 14) has highlighted how Vygotsky argued that children “grow into the intellectual life around them and that development is actually stimulated by the learning experiences offered in formal settings”. Therefore, Kagan acknowledged that this more nurturing understanding to children’s learning offers an alternative to the school readiness concept and has been articulated previously as ‘guided participation’ by Rogoff (1990, 1994; 2003). Whether perceived as guided participation or school readiness, it is clear to see that the school readiness discourse is strongly related to the starting school transition. However more research in the area is needed to understand how the discursive practices associated with it impact the transitional experience.

2.6 Purpose of formal schooling

If early childhood is deemed to be a developmentally important time (Field, 2010; Allen, 2011; Tickell, 2011; UNESCO, 2011) then it is important to consider what the discursive purpose of schooling is for at this age range. As Moss et al. (1999, cited in Moss and Petrie, 2005) argue, considering the relationship between school, family and community means investigating the purposes of these relationships, their administration and related legislation. They state “And this in turn requires rethinking children and childhood.... [For] concepts and practices are produced from particular discourses about, and constructions of, children and childhood” (pg. 6). For instance, Hendrick (1990, pg. 46) notes:

“There is no doubt that in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the school played a pivotal role in the construction of a new kind of childhood.... the classroom and the ideological apparatus of education were crucial because they demanded – indeed could not do without - a truly national childhood.... this construction directly involved all children....and was intended to be inescapable (1990, pg. 46)

There are many philosophies of education which have been proposed over time. These include the use of education to develop personal enlightenment and critical thinkers (Rousseau, 1979). Another was suggested originally by Plato that education should be used as a means to achieve individual and social justice (Guttek, 2014). Biesta (2015) argues education creates knowledge transfer which contributes to developing a democratic society. Dewey (1916) proposed it was to help grow the concept of citizenship across the nation. Whereas, Bourdieu (1993) has argued it is to develop a system of social and cultural reproduction.

2.6.1 Political Agenda

Schooling however is considered to be a different term to education (Gutek, 2014; Tait, 2017). Education is thought of as a personal and social journey of improvement, a 'way of life' (Dewey, 1938). Or as Gutek (2014) defines it "the total social processes that bring a person into cultural life" (pg. 8). Yet schooling, when considered as a system, brings with it many connotations of being a controlling unit (Foucault, 1977). Schooling refers to the system employed to deliver an education (regardless of the philosophy which is guiding the education). Gutek (2014, pg. 8) defines schooling as "a formal educational agency, established and supported by a society, to educate children; it is staffed by teachers, experts in curriculum and instruction, who deliberately instruct students". Freire's (1972) understanding of a schooling system accords with Gutek's definition as he argued it uses a scheme of teaching that 'drills' individuals into learning the required information. He suggested it therefore treats learners like objects, to be acted upon, rather than people to be acknowledged. Linking education and schooling together, Freire (1998) believed the education provided by a school is a political act that cannot be divorced from pedagogy. He acknowledged that we must be aware of the politics that surround education and schooling. For instance, he argued that the way schooling is employed, i.e. the manner in which children are taught and what they are taught serves as a political agenda.

In a similar way to Freire, Foucault (1977) argued that schools play an essential role in how we govern society. He postulates that mass schooling was formed as a method of social regulation. Foucault argued that as sovereign power

reduced, which Tait (2017) explains occurred in the eighteenth century, more liberal forms of governance were needed to regulate the population. Tait (2017) argues that mass schooling allowed the Government to 'govern at a distance' and seemingly be uninvolved in the inoculation of people's capacities and dispositions which are required to successfully govern the population. Goldson (1997, pg. 21) suggests that it is, "thus schools socialize children towards legitimate adulthood; the state assumes *loco parentis*, transmits its message (the national curriculum) to a captive audience, and prepares its charges for social responsibility and work experience in society".

The notion of hegemony, which Mouffe (1979) acknowledges was first coined by Gramsci in 1926, is similar to Foucault's ideas on the Government using schools as a form of social regulation. Hegemony is defined by Gramsci (1971) as a form of power, usually held by the dominant economic and social class (herein referred to as the ruling class), that uses an ideology (particular world view) to infuse its desired values and beliefs into the lower classes of the population. These beliefs are infused into everyday cultural practices (e.g. education) meaning that people do not submit to power per say; instead they consent to it, they are constructed by it (Foucault, 1977).

Mayo (2015) states that values and beliefs are usually delivered from a macro level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) by transmitting an ideology that projects their ideals through aspects like the various national levels of Curriculum within England. For instance, in the updated 2014 EYFS curriculum (DfE, 2014a) the Government

embedded the so-called 'fundamental British values' of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for those with different faiths and beliefs as an essential part of children's learning and development. Sandelind (2014) argued this was proposed to help promote social cohesion and rejuvenate the declining civic national identity (see Curtice, 2013). Thereby, the British Government used a hegemonic approach to influence the national identity of the population by drawing on the power it holds in the realm of education.

According to Briscoe (2008), the literature concerned with the analysis of power within education continues to grow; although, it could be argued that the number of articles published appears to have reduced somewhat from the number that was made available during the 1990's. In fact, it was in this decade that Ball (1990), Ryan (1991), Roff (1992), Gore (1998), all argued that the design (i.e. social construction of the system) of schooling systematically produces inequalities through the use of disciplinary powers (e.g. control, classification, detailed hierarchies and normalising judgements).

According to Mayo (2015), from a hegemonic perspective, education plays a very important role in maintaining the stratification system (i.e. the classification of people into socioeconomic strata) and justifying the unequal distribution of wealth. Like other social systems, schools reflect stratification and sometimes can be a cause of it. The schools that children attend can have an enormous influence on their life chances. For example, according to Bourdieu's (1993) concept of cultural reproduction, schools reinforce variations in cultural values

early in life; when children leave school, these have the effect of limiting the opportunities of some, while facilitating those of others. Yet, from another perspective, the use of power within educational settings can be perceived as positive as it helps to create equalizing opportunities in relation to the achievements of individuals (Gore, 1994). Gore argues that education can help to create a harmonious society by creating a social environment that is based on mutual tolerance of religions, languages, and social class. Furthermore, she states it can provide equal opportunities for the social mobility to all individuals in society, and for securing good education. Therefore, for some (Parsons, 1951), education systems can be used to tackle inequalities rather than simply invent them. Overall, in relation to this research project, it would be interesting to explore how the system of schooling used with the children influences the transitional experience when they start formal schooling.

2.6.2 Notion of Socialisation

It would appear from the review earlier that one of the designs of the schooling system was to teach children what it means to be a member of their society. Many have argued that schools have become a secondary socialising mechanism for children (Durkheim, 1956; Bronfenbrenner, 1958; Bernstein, 1966; Brint, 1998; Wyness, 2012; Corsaro, 2015). Socialisation has been defined by Handel, Cahill and Elkin (2007) as:

“...the processes by which we learn and adapt to the ways of a given society or social group so as to adequately participate in it” (pg. 2).

Handel (2014) proposed the social statuses ascribed to a child at birth are often those of a nationality; belonging to a specific family unit; having the status of a sex/gender category and possibly being a member of a social class or ethnic group. When taken as a combined group of labels or group memberships, these statuses give a child a social identity that may then influence their subsequent interactions thereafter.

Interestingly, Handel (2014) went on to argue that even though there are clear differences in the make-up of the previously discussed statuses afforded to a child, there will generally be some similarities that will exist in relation to the social interactions formed around them all. In particular, he discussed the achievement of the *acceptable* qualification. For example, when a child starts formal schooling they receive the status of school pupil; however, it is not often known whether the child is an *acceptable* school child or not. Therefore, as soon as the child starts school they also start the process of being drawn into interactions that will induce him/her into becoming (or not) the *acceptable* school child. According to Handel (2014), this occurs in most roles or statuses that are given out to human beings and it mostly continues throughout the life span.

In relation to schooling, socialisation by schools has been discussed at length, albeit by Sociologists and Educationalists rather than from a psychological perspective (Handell, 2014). For example, an Educational Sociologist, Brint (1998) argued that schools are the secondary socialisation unit, second only to the family unit. Brint proposed three types of socialisation that schools carry out

collectively; these are behavioural conformity, moral conformity and cultural conformity.

The first, *behavioural conformity*: involves aligning children's behaviour within the classroom and the school community to that which is collectively ascribed to. Brint describes this in more detail by referring to a child's ability to manage their body by following the 'rules': e.g. always raising a hand to answer a question, sitting down on the carpet area with crossed legs or sitting up straight etc.

The second, *moral conformity*: according to Brint is concerned with achieving the collective ideals in morally competent children. Therefore, this would be delivered through the teachers or other adults within the school in relation to teaching honesty and respect for adults, being fair to all and working hard within their studies etc.

The third, *cultural conformity*: is socialising the children to cultural values and collectively held virtues. This means ensuring the children understand and follow the school and community practices, whether they are part of the curriculum or not. According to Martin (1998), this can often be found within the hidden curriculum. Martin argues that this is a form of unwritten rules that can span across the pupil year groups and out into the parental-school relationships. For example, within a primary school, year 6 pupils (the oldest of the school) may be allowed to sit and eat their lunch first as a sign of higher status to the younger

pupils. This is an undocumented practice but one that is accepted by all due to the teachers embodied authority.

However, Qvortrup (1994) and Thorne (1993) have both contested the notion of socialisation as they both believe it merely resembles a knowledge bank of all of the interactions that have been '*done*' to children. In fact, Thorne (1993) asserted:

“Children’s interactions are not preparation for life; they are life itself.....There is much to be gained by seeing children not as the next generation’s adults but as social actors in a range of institutions” (pg. 3).

This argument by Thorne, for me, provides the missing link which started to influence my research away from a developmentalist stance. When I initially read Thorne’s statement, I was confounded and began to critically reflect upon my own conceptualisation of children starting school and I found that I perceived them being ‘successful’ in so much as they could develop into well-educated adults. It was at this point in my review of the literature that I began to truly understand the discursive power of what Prout and James (1997) called the dominant framework.

2.6.3 Becoming versus being

Since the introduction of the 1870 Education Act (HMSO, 1870), Wyness (2012) postulates children are no longer seen as current workers but future workers and this means that due to the power relationship that exists between the school and its staff and children, they have instead become passive pupils and learning

subordinates. Dahlberg and Moss (2005) propose that childhood emerges from the discourse of adulthood, and it is perceived to be a state of adulthood in waiting. Furthermore, they argue that the discourse of developmentalism creates adulthood as a completed state and childhood as undeveloped and therefore requires children to work towards developing fully into a state of adulthood. This means children are always perceived as being in a state of 'becoming' (Walkerdine, 1993; 2015; Woodhead, 1997; 2006; 2013; James and James, 2004; Qvortrup, Corsaro and Honig, 2011; Wyness, 2012; Hammersley, 2013). From this perspective childhood is perceived as the conceptual opposite of adulthood. Wyness (2012) postulates this implies that children are essentially invisible; they lack an ontology of their own. In other words, they tend to be viewed in terms of the adults that they will inevitably become; thereby, research is often interested in what impact events will have on the developing child (and later adult) or vice-versa how the child may impact an important event/experience. Finally, because the children are seen as 'becoming' rather than 'being' their perspective is rarely sought directly and instead researchers often collate information from gate keepers in place of the children. This can certainly be seen within the starting school transition literature with Brooker (2008) acknowledging that it has only been a recent enterprise to ask children how they feel about their transitional experiences.

In relation to schooling, as children are often perceived by the majority as 'becomings' or future adults then it can be argued that the education system has been designed from that perspective too (Prout and James, 1997). This means one of its functions is to train the future adults of a population to enable economic

reproduction to take place (Craib, 1984; Schiro, 2013; Corsaro, 2015). Thereby, its focus is on developing the child into adulthood with enough skills and abilities to contribute to the economy during their adult life (Giddens, 2009; Newman, 2010). Dahlberg and Lenz-Taguchi (1994), cited in Moss (2013, pg. 20) argue however “there is a great risk that children may be labelled ... if they are not able to manage the increased requirements. In this situation, the problem is put onto the children, in terms of their lack of ability and competence”. This indicates an intrinsic link between the purpose of schooling and developmentalism in that it appears that the Government need developmental milestones to assist them in achieving their overall goal of training and preparation of a successful workforce. This means more research is needed that will investigate what influence these developmental milestones may have on the starting school transition as it is considered by Fabian (1998) and Brooker (2008) as the beginning of a child’s school career.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The aim of this chapter was to summarise previous knowledge surrounding educational transitions while presenting an alternative argument that this transition is adversely and intrinsically linked to a number of discourses that impact the way it is experienced. These discourses include the problematising of the transition (Tobbell, 2006), the developmental discourse (Prout and James, 1997; Burman, 2017) with its clear links to the school readiness (Emond, 2008; Britto, 2010; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012; Peckham, 2017) argument. Furthermore, it is also impacted by other discourses of socialisation (Elkin and

Handel, 1972; Denzin, 1977; Brint, 1998; Brint, Contreras and Matthews, 2001; Handel, 2014 and political influences from hegemonic actions (Gramsci, 1971; Mouffe, 1979; Mayo, 2015). In other words, these discourses appear to connect the notion of transition to a concept of success meaning they are often measured against a child's ability to develop 'successfully' in all these areas. Success in this argument is often presented as moving a child's educational development forward in line with culturally based age expectations; even more concerning is the overuse of the 'mythical child' (Burman, 1992; 2017) discourse that enables children to be measured against the idealised westernised version of a child. However, the main argument of this thesis involves the proposition that this may not be the *only* way of understanding this particular transition.

Chapter 3: Understanding the concept of transitions

This chapter will provide a brief history of how the starting school transition has been conceived throughout history from a westernised perspective (Burman, 2017) and what this means to our understanding of the concept in general. To aid the research aim, explore the starting school transition, it will discuss the use of definitions and show how different types of definitions have been used to help formulate the concept to date. Finally, it will draw on the most common theoretical ideas associated with the concept to help the reader understand how it is being theoretically considered within the literature.

Tobbell (2006) states the set-up of the education system within England makes it very clear that all children will be expected to change curriculum stages and schools as they move sequentially through the system. For example, the English education system currently requires children to undertake a minimum of two physical educational transfers (Tobbell, 2014) across different school settings (e.g. starting primary school [age 4] and then transitioning into a secondary school [age 11] with 6th form provision); but this could be as many as five depending on where the child lives and what provision is currently available to them (e.g. starting infant school [age 4], moving into junior school [age 7], then to middle school [age 9], before moving to a secondary school [age 13] and then further education College [age 16]).

Figure 3.1 on page 92 shows some of the potential and often messy pathways that children may follow through their educational journeys. The diagram may

appear complicated as there are currently a number of Middle Schools or University Technical Colleges available across the Country meaning children (with their parents) can choose to attend them rather than follow the typical pathway which would usually be Primary School – Secondary School – Sixth Form or Further Education College.

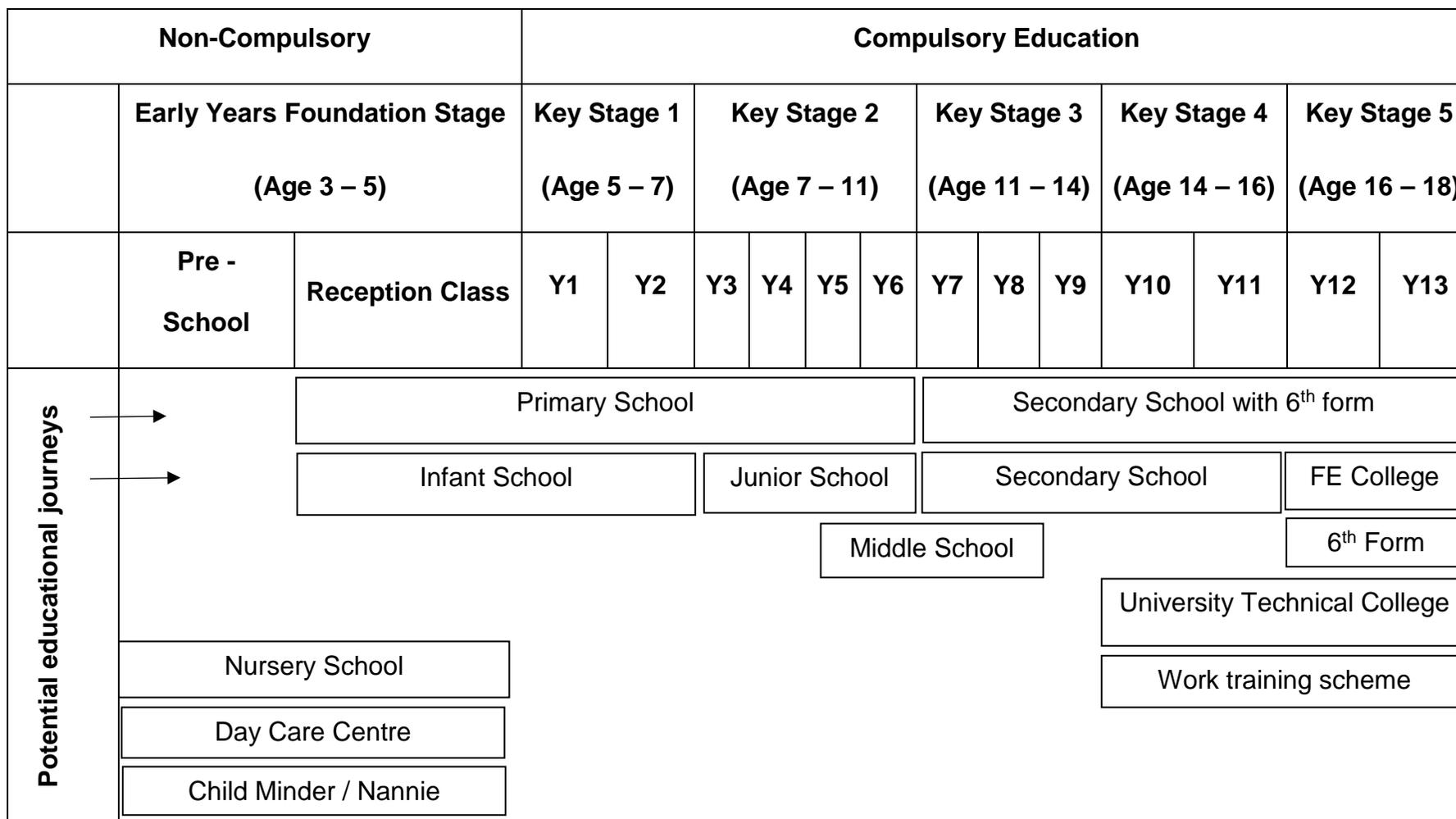


Figure 3.1: showing the potential educational journeys through different establishments a child may take in the English system

3.1 Setting the historical scene

Grossmann (1987, cited in Vrinioti, Einarsdottir and Broström, 2009) points out that Friedrich Fröbel (commonly revered as an early years Educationalist) brought the discontinuity of pre-school and primary school into the forefront of educators' scrutiny as early as 1852. Yet, Grossmann also pointed out that Fröbel spoke of the transition simply as a movement from one level of education to another. This suggests that the concept of transition was seen as a product of the system, i.e. a physical or intellectual response to an environmental change. It was simply a very basic description of an event. In fact, this rudimentary definition, has tended to dominate the research and educational world for over a century and a half (Vrinioti, Einarsdottir and Broström, 2009). At certain points in time, it has been reviewed and the concept of educational transitions has been reported to be a little more complex than previously thought.

Educational transitions are an integral part of the English education system and have been for many years. For example, the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2010) set out to independently review the Primary Education sector in the UK in which it also documented the history of the sector from its birth in the 1800's to present day. During this historical recount, Alexander discussed how the changing format of the country's education system caused the notion of 'educational transitions / transfers' to be born. A British report chaired by Hadow (Board of Education, 1931) asserted that if a change that was being discussed at the time was approved, then it would ultimately lead to having a very disruptive impact on the education of British schoolchildren. The change that Hadow was

discussing was the change from what was known then as elementary schooling (which incorporated children from 5 up to 11 years) to what would become known as primary schooling (which intended to divide the already established elementary schooling into two stages: one for 5 – 7 year olds, which would be called infant schools, and one for children 7 – 11 years of age, which would be called junior schools). Hadow announced that the two proposed different stages would mean children would have to contend with changes in teaching methods, discipline and actual environments. Furthermore, he stipulated that the 'transition' between the two stages would be a disruptive force within a child's education. However, according to White (2008), Hadow went on (regardless of his initial worries) to recommend the changes to occur.

When reviewing Hadow's comments, I saw them as a potential acknowledgment that educationalists and policy makers were becoming aware of the potential difficulties that children may face when undertaking educational transitions. Yet, rather interestingly, these comments were being proposed before any such transition had ever taken place within the British educational system. When reviewed from a social constructionist perspective, Hadow's comments could be proposed as a beginning to the externalising and objectifying of the notion of 'transition' (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In Foucauldian terms, the language being used by Hadow was helping to create the object that would become known discursively as transition.

In connection to the above proposition, Foucault (1972, pg. 49) once argued that discourse is the “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (i.e. Hadow acknowledged these practices as changes in teaching methods, discipline and actual environments). But Foucault also added, discourses “are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention” (Foucault, 1972, pg. 49). Furthermore, Foucault (1982) once noted when considering the conceptualisations of objects “we have to know the historical conditions which motivate our conceptualization. We need a historical awareness of our present circumstance” (pg. 778). In that respect, this means that by externalising his concerns for the children undertaking what he declared to be a ‘transition’, Hadow could have theoretically been helping to build a potential discourse that assumes this ‘transition’ would be an analogous and difficult experience for all children. For example, Hadow implied the disruptive force in their education would be the result of the changes that would be delivered in a similar fashion to every child (i.e. teaching methods, discipline and environment). Hadow also clearly indicates the changes to occur would be outside of an individual child’s control, he insinuates where the responsibility was seen to lie, by acknowledging that the transition will be a disruptive force *in the children’s* education (Burman and Parker, 1993). Thereby, the language used almost implies that all the children will *need protection* from or help with overcoming this ‘problematic’ transition. The birth of problematising the transition had commenced.

What this snippet of history indicates, to some, is that educationalists, politicians and policy makers were externalising and objectifying the term of ‘transition’.

What was less clear however was what that term meant exactly. Although, it is arguable that Hadow (Board of Education, 1931) considered it to be something more than just physically moving between different environments. Hadow's deliberations suggests that they were starting to consider the 'changes' that may be involved or at the very least the possible consequences of undertaking an educational transition. However, in terms of research, an initial difficulty in the area, according to Zittoun (2006) was employing appropriate methodologies that could capture transition based 'changes' *as they happened*. Therefore, it is possible this methodological difficulty, along with the tendency to use a pre-and post-transition research design, encouraged the development of the 'problematic' transition discourse. Thus, illustrating a need for research to investigate the starting school transition experience rather than the pre- or post-effects of the transition.

It is possible that the lenses used to investigate transitions were aligned with the political and organisational lenses that were in use at the time. Baldock (2001) states that these were very much focussed on pupils' intellectual achievement, as was discussed in chapter 2 for economic reproduction purposes, thereby narrowing down and focussing researchers onto more testable areas, like pre-and post-transition effects through the use of intelligence tests. Evidentially, the positivist, deductive paradigm developed a strong hold within the research area as it fitted well with the lenses used (Tobbell, 2006; Stivaros, 2007); although, it should be noted that it was also representative of the time period being referred to (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Furthermore, according to Morcol (2001) and Snape and Spencer (2003) this paradigm was re-enforced repeatedly over time

due to the demands from Government officials when commissioning research (especially Educational) which tended to restrict studies to using methodologies that would produce generalisable results. In fact, Parsons (2002) said if Government officials were to release a sound bite for researchers summing up their philosophy of science it would be “Facts Sir, give me facts about what works, all else is dross!” (pg. 13). This bias has collectively developed into a dependency upon ‘hard’ scientific enquiries, which can be difficult to break free from (Richardson, 1996); thereby signifying that more qualitative research is needed in the area.

3.2 Defining the transition: What are ‘they’ really?

“...What is a definition of this word? Just about always, the way of putting the question is, what is *the* definition of this word? The difference between *a* and *the* in this context is vast, and I have no choice but to blame the schools for the mischief created by an inadequate understanding of what a definition is. From the earliest grades through graduate school, students are given definitions and, with few exceptions, are not told whose definitions they are, for what purposes they were invented, and what alternative definitions might serve equally as well. The result is that students come to believe that definitions are *not* invented; that they are not even human creations; that, in fact, they are – how shall I say it? – part of the natural world, like clouds, trees, and stars”.

(Postman, 1995, pg. 172)

The quote above by Postman sums up the difficulty that I was having when I came to try and define what an educational transition is. This is because people define objects differently and they hold different meanings for many (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015). This was apparent when I looked at the literature for definitions of what transitions are. Many authors have defined the concept simply as a move between two educational stages (Fabian, 1998; Dunlop and Fabian, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; 2001; Allingham, 2011; Gould, 2012; Fisher, 2013; O'Connor, 2013). This means they have defined it as a movement in relation to the children's hierarchical level of learning in school. An example would be from the EYFS curriculum to the Key Stage 1 curriculum. This is also known as a vertical transition (Kagan, 1991); whereas, Kagan (1991) suggests a horizontal transition is one that occurs across different establishments but at the same level of learning (e.g. from school to after school club).

3.2.1 Defining the definitions!

Portelli (1987) argues that researchers generally attempt to define concepts so that they can state the meaning, or the nature of the item being defined as it helps to differentiate the concept in question. In 1960, Scheffler made a distinction between different types of definitions often used in research. He mentions 'stipulative', and 'descriptive' which are the most commonly used types of definitions. A stipulative definition makes it very clear how a concept should be understood from the definer's point of view. Elliott-Mabey (2003) extends this by noting that the researcher tends to use these types of definitions to demonstrate how they will use the definition in question or to bring together a number of definitions and amalgamate them into one working definition that they see fit.

This relates to the most common provided definitions of educational transitions which is that they are movements across two stages of an educational system (Fabian, 1998; Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; 2001; Dunlop and Fabian, 2002; Allingham, 2011; Gould, 2012; Fisher, 2013; O'Connor, 2013). I would argue that by using this type of definition, the focus moves to the end result of the transition rather than being on the processes involved within the transition (Tobbell, 2006).

A descriptive definition (Scheffler, 1960) aligns itself to the same general rulings as stipulative but they also attempt to account for past usage or research findings within them. They also go further in describing the context of the concepts in question (Elliott-Mabey, 2003). For example, Fabian and Dunlop (2005) expanded their earlier definition of transitions to incorporate that they generally involve “intense and accelerated developmental demands” (pg. 229). One issue with this definition is that they do not expand upon what they mean by intense and accelerated developmental demands, therefore it is far from a clear and easy to understand definition. This is because this definition can also be considered to be what Elliott-Mabey (2003) termed as an operational definition. Operational definitions indicate how the concept can be or should be measured (Elliott-Maby, 2003). For example, intelligence is “that which intelligence tests test” (Bell, Staines and Mitchell, 2001, p. 114). In relation to Fabian and Dunlop’s definition of the starting school transition I would argue the operational aspect that has been highlighted has helped to solidify the developmental link to the concept in general as this is often how the ‘successfulness’ of the transition is measured, through

developmentally related tasks (Early Education, 2012; DfE, 2014a; 4Children, 2015).

Elliott-Mabey (2003) argues that definitions will vary due to various reasons: the context it is attached to, the theoretical perspective taken, how the researcher wants the concept to be used and how it will be researched in future usages. Liefoghe et al. (2003) purport that the most important aspect of a definition is not whether it is 'correct' but that it is 'useful' in some way. From this perspective, the previous definitions provided have allowed researchers to understand educational transitions from a basic point (e.g. movement across two stages) then investigate them in different directions and styles. Ginnett, and Curphy (2002) postulates that this variety in concept definition shows that the research community understands that one, in general, will never be fully correct. Furthermore, it demonstrates just how complex and multi-faceted defining concepts can become indicating that universal definitions cannot always be achieved. This demonstrates a need for further research that explores the complex nature of transitions and how they are understood and interpreted by those who undertake or are involved within them. This need is recognised in research aim 1 and 2 for this research study.

Research Aims:

- 1) Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition
- 2) Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children
- 3) Understand the implications / function of the discourses that surround this transition

Others have defined transition as something more than just a movement and this is where finding a common definition becomes difficult to achieve; although as postman (1995) pointed out 'the' definition is not always needed as 'a' definition can suffice. Allingham (2011) defines transition as "any kind of change that may alter the routines that the children, and sometimes the adults are used to" (pg. 3). She makes a clear argument that transition is much more than just simply moving from room to room or between settings. She talks about the introduction of a new member of staff or an unexpected visitor as being a transition as this can influence the routines the children are used to. In contrast, Brooker (2002, pg. xi) argued they are "developmentally dramatic" and that transitions to school were not the same for every child because they involve changes for the children that their past experiences have not prepared them for. Finally, Dockett and Perry (1999a; 1999b) describe the transition as an opportunity to learn to become a school child. Thereby, connecting identity changes with this particular transition. With all these competing ideas related to this transition, it is clear that more

research is needed that will enable a more in-depth exploration of the concept to take place.

3.2.2 Transitions are identity work

In the social constructionist perspective, identity is not thought of as an internal process, hidden away in compartments somewhere within the confines of the brain or body (Burr, 2015). Instead, it is thought to be in a constant state of flux, which is reviewed through the essence of interactions between people. This means that every interaction between individuals or groups can be thought of, as Burr (2015) metaphorically described, as a dance between individuals. The interaction involves two people moving together, subtly changing the way they respond and perceive themselves through rhythm and posture. Shotter (1993) classified it as 'joint action' to assert that what entails within the interaction does not come from any internal psychic structure (e.g. personality) but from the talk and behaviour given and received within each minuscule moment of the interaction; in the case of this research the interactions that form part of their transitional experience. Burr (2002) argued that a person's sense of self should be considered as Gilligan (1982) first proposed, as 'self-in-relation'. In other words, identity in its own right cannot be viewed separately from the interaction of self and environment. There is no dividing line between the two as both sides are reliant upon the nuances provided by and for each other. This means research needs to consider children's developing identities in light of the transitional interactions they experience.

Considering identity, Gould (2012) argues transitions are a process, an identity related journey. Furthermore, he argues that children are constantly in transition in at least one area of their life. They are always being asked to move onto the next stage somewhere in their development. He states that transitions therefore are about moving from one stage to another but that it is a continual process, as is identity work (Creed and Scully, 2000; Beech, 2008). Gould states children are therefore “almost permanently in transition” (pg. 8). The process should be viewed as adaptation rather than simply change. Moss (2014) argues (pg. 10) “transformative change is about opening up to a continuous state of movement, not just a short burst of movement whilst traversing from one static position to another”. Social constructionism tells us that this idea of being in a constant state of flux is especially important to developing our identities, especially our school related ones. Hoyuelos (2013, pg. 329) writes that Malaguzzi’s stance was that “Change should be understood not as the transition from one state to another, but rather as the permanent state of human existence – not the permanency of pre-established ideas, but the permanent capacity to modify and change behaviours as a function of the essential variability of the human being”.

3.3 Theoretically considering the starting school transition

When considering transitions, several theoretical frameworks have been utilised; they have been theorised as ‘rites of passage’ (Van Gennep, 1960; Fabian, 1998), as family-based transitions (Fthenakis, 1998; Griebel and Niesel, 1997, 2002, 2009) or as a ‘border-crossing’ (Campbell Clark, 2000). Additionally, they have been viewed as being a core part of Elder’s life course theory (Elder, 1974;

1994; Elder and Johnson, 2001), as a 'rites of institution' (Bourdieu, 1991), and finally as being based firmly on an ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 2005). [For a fuller review of the theories used to consider transitions, see Dockett, Petriwskyj and Perry's (2014) in-depth analysis]. All of these theories allow the concept of transition to be understood from 'a' perspective. Yet, one of these theories seems to be more dominant (Foucault, 1982) in relation to the starting school transition and this is Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (e.g. Johansson, 2002; Tobbell, 2006; 2014; Fabian and Dunlop, 2006; Brooker, 2008; Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008; Dockett, Perry, and Kearney, 2012; O'Connor, 2013; Trodd, 2013; Dunlop, 2014; O'Toole, Hayes and Mhathúna, 2014; Symonds, 2015) and its relation to transition, so will be discussed next.

3.3.1 Ecological Concept

The starting school transition is often seen as an ecological concept (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Fabian and Dunlop, 2006). Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory and his later bio-ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) proposes that agents other than the developing individual should be recognized as *crucial* co-participants in determining the paths human development can take. Therefore, development cannot be investigated singly or exclusively with human beings; researchers must incorporate an individual's equal partner in life, their environments. As Bronfenbrenner stated: "development never takes place in a vacuum, it is always embedded and expressed through behavior in a particular environment" (1979, pg. 29).

Therefore, when attempting to observe an educational transition, the home and wider contexts that children come into contact with must also be observed and documented. This is because, in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's theory, a child's world comprises of complex 'layers' that through fermentation eventually engulf the child's environment. In fact, Bronfenbrenner once described these layers to be similar to Matryoshkas sets (more widely known as Russian nesting dolls) that can sit inside each other from the smallest to the largest. However, the 'nested dolls' approach implies that the relationship to each other is one-directional in that the largest doll cannot be impacted by the smallest but that the smallest would be 'protected' in some way if the dolls were accidentally dropped. This is, in fact, quite different to what Bronfenbrenner was trying to show by using the Matryoshkas metaphor.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) believed that each environmental layer can interact with each other and with the child directly or indirectly. Therefore, any change or conflict arising within a layer has the possibility of rippling throughout other layers until it reaches the child (which would be deemed as one-directional). However, more importantly, Bronfenbrenner also proposed that the child itself can cause a rippling effect from its own position outwards towards other layers; thereby, postulating a bi-directional relationship exists between a child and his/her environment. He termed this, reciprocity, a reciprocal relationship.

This notion of reciprocity is a core part of Bronfenbrenner's model. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains this means:

“the growing person is viewed not merely as a tabula rasa on which the environment makes its impact, but as a growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides. Since the environment also exerts its influence, requiring a process of mutual accommodation, the interaction between person and environment is viewed as two-directional, that is characterized by reciprocity” (pg. 21).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory, applied to the starting school transition contains a number of interlocking systems which children must travel through in their early years of education. These nested systems are known as the micro-system (e.g. home, nursery and school); the meso-system (the relationships between child and home, nursery or school); the exo-system (e.g. mass media, government institutions and parental workplaces); the macro-system (e.g. influences from the wider society like Government policies and practices); and finally, the chrono-system (e.g. the historical time frame that events are held in). Table 3.1 on page 107, indicates what each of the five systems within Bronfenbrenner’s model consists of, and how reciprocity within each level can influence a person’s understanding of what this transition is all about.

Table 3.1 – Bronfenbrenner’s ecological system model applied to the ‘starting school’ transition

	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Implications to consider</u>	
Chronosystem	Microsystem:	Child setting involving face-to-face interactions between child and others	Home, playgroup, nursery, school	Quality of relationships in meeting and supporting the child’s overall experience (e.g. Responsiveness of adults and child to adult)
	Mesosystem:	Centres on the relationships between two or more settings where the child can actively participate	Relationships between school and home	The strength of supportive and respectful relationships developed by all parties involved (e.g. allows for collaboration between home and school).
	Exosystem:	Child not actively involved within the setting but can be indirectly impacted by the settings	The opportunities provided by community services (e.g. health professionals, family support workers) and parental workplaces or unemployment support systems	Access to appropriate health and social care services Supportive policies for families regarding child care and flexible working hours
	Macrosystem:	Wider societal norms and values that can indirectly impact a child’s experience	Cultural and societal ideologies, religious practices and social policies	Ability to democratically influence or meet societal norms and values in respect to role composition (e.g. Being school-ready, meeting parental role expectations).

Micro-system

The microsystem is the closest system to a child; it contains the structures with which the child has direct contact as depicted in figure 3.2 below. It encompasses the relationships and interactions a child has with their immediate surroundings (Berk, 2000). Structures in the microsystem include family, school, community, or childcare environments.

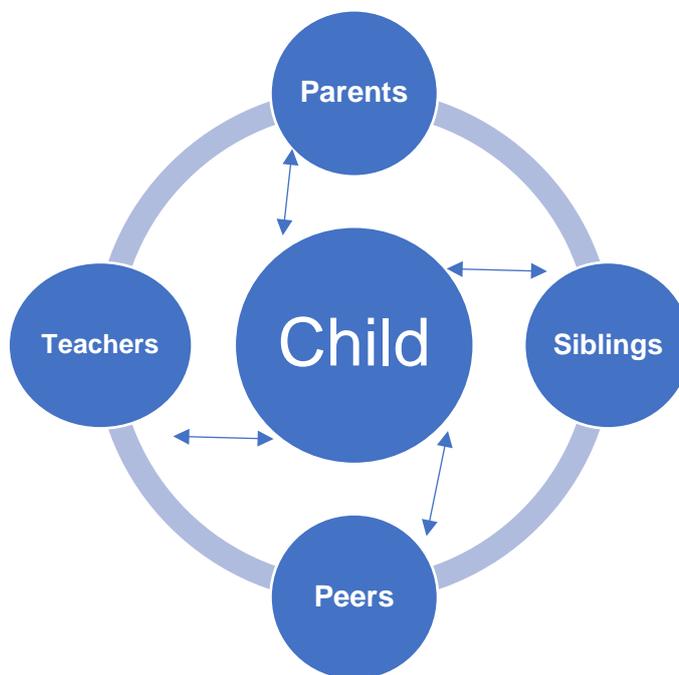


Figure 3.2: A typical microsystem for a reception year child within the UK

Interestingly, Bronfenbrenner (1979) defined a microsystem as “a pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with given particular physical and material characteristics” (pg. 22). Therefore, he was advocating that the most important part of the microsystem is engaging and participating in these activities, roles and interpersonal relations as *individuals* and *learning* to incorporate these into their

personal and unique stories. For example, a pair of twins may have the exact same microsystem that is depicted in figure 3.2 at the start of the first school transition however they are highly likely to experience it quite differently. Meadows (2010) argues this could be due to the interactions differing between each child and their parent/s, teachers or peers and the context in focus. Thereby, within this layer, and certainly within this research project it is an individual's subjective or phenomenological experience and participation within their microsystem (e.g. school classroom) that is the most enriching information that can be drawn or attended to.

Within this layer, in relation to the starting school transition, the child engages with many different individuals and develops a network of available resources whose collective aim tends to be in support of the child's overall experience. Therefore, when it is time to officially start school, **some** children will have developed several relationships that will help them to understand and anticipate what the transitional journey will consist of. The word **some** is an important one to explain further here, as many researchers are now starting to understand and explore the concept of agency within childhood (James and Prout, 1997; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Mayall, 2002; Bath, 2009; Jones and Welch, 2010; James, 2011; Oswell, 2013) and they would argue that the child can select whether to, or not to, engage / participate with individuals or networks of support and this would alter their overall transitional experience. The term agency and how the children used it during this transition will be discussed more fully in chapter 7.

Meso-system

The next layer in the model is known as the mesosystem and relates to the relationships and channels of communication between the different microsystems responsible for 'raising', 'socialising' or 'educating' a child (Elkin and Handel, 1972; Denzin, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Brint, Contreras and Matthews, 2001; Handel, Cahill and Elkin, 2007; Ackbar, 2011). Bronfenbrenner (1979) uses the example of a young child learning to read to help describe the importance of the mesosystem to a child's development. I want to use a similar example, but I will adapt it to show the importance of this layer in relation to a child's first transition to school and their developing school identity.

During this educational transition to formal schooling, a child must learn to become a 'school child' (Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; Meadows, 2010). It has often been stated that the more similar a home environment is to a school environment the better able a child is to make this transition into becoming a successful 'school child' (Fabian, 1998; Fthenakis, 1998; Johnson, Cowan and Cowan, 1999; Fabian and Dunlop, 2002; Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003; Lam and Pollard, 2006; McIntyre et al., 2007; Thomas and Pattison, 2007; Dockett, Perry and Kearney, 2012). Within the UK, reading is seen to be a vital skill that helps children to achieve educationally and all school children are expected to master this skill (HCESC, 2005, Sylva et al., 2004; 2010). In fact, the teaching of this skill starts very early on within the reception year via the introduction of phonics learning (Ofsted, 2010). During this time, teachers usually send home books that may contain pictures, although they often become more text based as the child's reading ability increases (Allingham, 2011). The idea behind sharing

school books with the child's home setting is so that parents can model (e.g. develop their meso-system duties) the value of reading by sharing fun and interesting stories together with their children (Yaden, Smolkin and Conlon, 1989; Krashen, 2004; McCardle and Chhabra, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that a child's ability to learn to read is supported by two important influences. One is the competence of the child's teachers and the second is the quality of the relationship between the school and the child's home. This means that if the channels of communication between the school and home are strong and positive, the child will likely be encouraged to read at home and the child may identify with learning to read as a positive goal. Although, according to Bronfenbrenner, if the communication or relationship between home and school is strained, the parents may not view reading practice in the same light as the teacher and the child may be less likely to be encouraged to read at home. However, this does not include those parents who do not develop good communicative relationships with school but who themselves value the art of reading and therefore encourage it at home regardless of the bond with school.

In connection to the previous example, research has shown that the art of reading is intertwined with the identity of being a school child (Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; French, 2007; Garrett, 2012). Furthermore, it has also shown that it is the practice of reading that usually has the most positive impact on a child's overall ability to master reading (Yaden, Smolkin and Conlon, 1989; Krashen, 2004;

McCardle and Chhabra, 2004; Garret, 2012). This connection, between practice and identity, is in line with Bronfenbrenner (1979) in relation to his proposition regarding the interaction between child and reciprocal processes being the driver of the child's development and developing identity. This means the mesosystem is important in supporting a child's development, especially the home-school relationship; however, it is not an essential prerequisite for a child to be able to achieve and learn to become a 'school child'. It is the social sphere of the classroom or wherever the interaction between child and reciprocal processes occurs that drives a child's learning and developing identity.

Exo-system

Beyond the microsystem settings and the mesosystem linkages that contextually impact children's development lays the *exosystem*. This layer contains the settings where the child does not spend time, but which influence the child's primary settings – and therefore their experiences and development. For example, within this layer would be the mass media, government institutions and parental workplaces. In relation to this research project, at the start of the project the Government had just released a new curriculum that all children aged 0 – 5 would follow which became known as the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS; DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2012; DfE, 2014a; DfE, 2017a). The change in curriculum would have an indirect influence upon a child's development as it dictates what practices and experiences a child should be provided with in a reception classroom within England.

Macro-system

The next contextual layer is the *macrosystem*, which is the largest and most remote level, but which can still have a great influence over a child's life experience. The macrosystem includes a variety of often abstract influences. For example, cultural values, religious norms and values, Government freedom, economic influences and also worldwide impacts like war.

Chrono-system

Finally, the Chrono-system, in relation to this transition, provides information to help contextualise each of the four main systems within the theory. This is because the information provided by the chrono-system is based on the socio-historical information about an event (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For instance, the chrono-system informs us that this transition (e.g. starting school at age 5) originated back in 1880 when the Education System within England became free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 and 11 (Ball, 1990; Gillard, 2011; Nutbrown and Clough, 2014). However, the understanding and experience of this transition has changed over time due to children now, often, attending pre-school and moving up through the early years system to reception classes (Fisher, 2010; Whitebread and Bingham, 2014), in comparison to what was their very first transition into the education system back in 1880.

With all of these systems in mind, Bronfenbrenner stated (1979, p. xiii) “an ecological transition occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting or both”. He further argued, “upon entering a new setting, the person's development is

enhanced to the extent that valid information, advice, and experience relevant to one setting are made available, on a continuing basis, to the other” (pg. 217). As Fabian and Dunlop (2006) pointed out, this links to Bernstein’s (1990) ideas about children needing to know the rules of a setting to be able to participate appropriately.

A criticism could be raised here of Bronfenbrenner’s ideas as, in essence, he did not explain how a child may go about engaging and participating within a setting or how this may impact their developing identity. Nor, did he fully describe what the connotations might be for a child should they chose to actively *not* participate in a microsystem setting. Critically speaking, it seems that Bronfenbrenner has tended to focus on the power of reciprocal relationships but not on what may happen should these relationships become strained or severed. He also does not acknowledge the notion of power and the impact of related power imbalances that are often found in adult-child relationships (Foucault, 1982; Prout, 2005). Therein, it is vitally important that other theoretical notions are also sought that will allow an understanding of the practices and processes that are incumbent to a child’s transitional experience.

I would argue that the core argument of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, that influences outside the child must also be adhered to in research whilst attending to the influence that comes directly from the child, aligns with Foucault’s ideas. From the review in chapter 2, it is clear to see that there are a number of discourses that surrounds the starting school transition and Bronfenbrenner’s theory alone

cannot provide an explanation as to how they may influence the child's day to day experience. However, if aligned with and used in connection to Foucault's ideas around discourse and power new understandings on the function of these discourses will be possible. From this, it is important to consider if Bronfenbrenner's notion of reciprocity (1979) exists within Foucault's notion of discourse.

3.3.2 Discursive reciprocal relationships

I would propose that discourses form a reciprocal relationship with the people that draw on and from them. Their 'experience' of a concept, for example, must infiltrate their own ideological thinking about the concept and ultimately at some point in time, this thinking may become a part of a dominant discourse used by another person somewhere along their life journey (Burr, 2015). For example, take the concept of parenting, the 'experience' of parenting is carried out in various ways and there are a number of discursive notions that situate the concept of parenting (Dodd, Saggars and Wildy, 2009; O'Dell, 2011). Parenting has been researched by many academics in relation to 'its' impact on a child's educational experience (see Desforges and Abouchaar 2003; Sylva et al., 2004, 2010). Furthermore, according to Fabian and Dunlop (2006) parental contributions (like their own educational experiences, plus their values, beliefs and socio-economic status) can affect the way this transition is experienced by children. However, Miller (2010) purports that to attempt to isolate parenting from other factors that may influence a child's experience can be extremely difficult and at times unhelpful. In fact, she states, "...the personalities and characteristics of every individual child and parent ensuring that no two children, even within the

same family, have exactly the same outcomes from the parenting behaviours they experience” (Miller, 2010, pg.8) can make isolating parental behaviours an irrelevant task. She also goes on to argue that parents “bring our own experiences and beliefs to bear in trying to understand and interpret...” (pg. 9) an aspect of parenting (which within this research would be supporting their child through the transition).

This is an interesting point within my thesis. I believe that transitions may be socially constructed and to try to understand if and how they are involves listening to the people that ‘talk’ and ferment the discourses that help construct the notion of transition. As has been stated previously (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Handel, Cahill and Elkin, 2007; Brooker, 2008; Miller, 2010; Bingham and Whitebread, 2012; Handel, 2014), parents are the first socialiser within the child’s life and they sit between the child and the environment and help to delineate the two. Therefore, when considering what this transition is about, the parents understanding of what it consists of will be an important aspect to contemplate (Dockett and Perry, 2002; 2004; 2008). As Sunderland (2006), Suissa (2009) and Burman (2017) acknowledge, parenting takes place in a discursive space that is unique to each person because they draw on differing social, cultural, political, economic and biological contexts. Therefore, this research wanted to see which discourses they drew from when they attempt to understand what the term ‘starting school transition’ means.

The proposition that there are many discourses available to human beings surrounding one event or object has repeatedly been proposed within this thesis. Each collection of discourses has been released into our social world with the intention of 'setting the record straight', of defining an event or object as a version of truth held by its designers and subsequently by those who accept or become confined by it (Foucault, 1972, 1982; Burr, 2015; Gergen, 2009). For example, the connotations applied to the notion of 'transitions' have been drenched within the historical, cultural, political and societal ideologies and perspectives that have been held as truth and knowledge across time and space (see chapter 2 for a review of some of these discourses)

When considering a person's use of discourse, it is important to fully consider the ramifications of Bronfenbrenner's ideas surrounding the chronosystem. For example, when parents draw on the available discourse at the very start of their child's journey they are utilising a mixture of ideas surrounding past experiences and struggles that are fermented usually through the macro systems surrounding them (e.g. Government policies, ideologies, books, research papers etc.). However, as they start to undertake the journey themselves with their children, influences from their micro, meso, exo, and again, the macro system starts to alter the way they understand the meaning of the concept. Foucault (1982) suggests that discourses are important components in people's lives and their evolving identities and this research will therefore draw on Bronfenbrenner's ideas of the transition being an ecological concept and on the different systems (e.g. micro, meso, exo and macro) when investigating the implications of the

starting school discourses. Applying Bronfenbrenner's ideas in this unique way to Foucault's will help to contextual any findings in relation to research aim 3.

3.3.2 Communities of Practice

The way a child positions (Davies and Harré, 1990; 1999; Drewery, 2005) themselves and reacts, through participation or non-participation, to the everyday transitional practices of the classroom is also an important point to consider theoretically. To achieve this, I will also draw theoretically on Lave and Wenger's (1991) framework of communities of practice. In relation to the starting school transition, the Community of Practice theory may be able to explain the processes that children need to undertake to make a successful transition; especially in relation to developing a school child identity. In fact, Boylan (2004, 2010) argues that the linking of practice and identity is one of the most powerful aspects of the community of practice theory. Both in early formulations (Lave and Wenger 1991) and later extensions of the theory (Wenger 1998) the relationship between learning to do and learning to be is emphasised. Lave and Wenger (1991) have articulated their theory of learning as being a trajectory of participation. Thereby, as new individuals join the learning group or community of practice they become apprentice learners. They undertake to copy some of the practices and routines they see, but as Penn (2014) argues it is not until they can comprehend why they are doing the activities or practices and they can perform them without having to think about them, that they become full members of the said community of practice. This theory of learning has been used widely but not so much in relation to children or learning within the classroom (Boylan, 2010). This is because, some believe that the theory does not appear to allow for the differences that may

exist in the way children learn in comparison to adults (Penn, 2014). As Briscoe (2008) suggests the power imbalances that exist between adults and children may change the way learning can take place for children (Boylan, 2010; Penn, 2014)

If learning is a socially based experience, children and adults should not have differences per say in the way that they learn. However, there may be more obstacles for children in relation to them understanding the learning experiences they undertake. For instance, it is commonly acknowledged that adults hold power and control over children (Briscoe, 2008) which means they may not always provide explanations for why they must carry out certain aspects of learning. According to Lave and Wenger (1991), this is an important part of the child's journey to reaching full membership of their community of practice and being successful in their learning. Therein, if guidance is not provided enabling the child to make sense of the learning experience then they may be restricting the child's membership to the developing community of practice. This may impact or prolong a child's transition in learning to understand what it means to become a school child.

There is a growing body of literature that points to the way in which different patterns of participation and social interactions amongst children equals multiple identification possibilities with education and later as individual learners (Rogoff, 1990; 1994; 2003; Boylan, 2004; Wenger, 1998; Briscoe, 2008; Bath, 2009; Rahman, 2013). In these accounts the CoP theory itself and other social cultural

perspectives, underpin the different ways that learners do or do not adopt identities in relation to formal practices. Boaler and Greeno (2000) argue that part of being successful at school requires identification with the teacher and with the 'figured' world of school. Thus, in a community of practice, identity is seen as developing in and through relation to practice. Therefore, within a school classroom, the way the participant positions themselves in relation to the practices is ultimately important in their development of identity. By being able to draw on Foucault's (1982) notion of discourse and the community of practice theory, this research will be able to investigate what implications the discourses may have on the child's ability to interact with the transitional practices that are provided for them and look at the influences this may have on their developing school child identity.

3.3.3 Rationale for the research

The social constructionist perspective comprehends the notion of transition as being understood, interpreted and experienced by each child, parent and school staff differently. Rahman (2103) supports this belief as he argued that the type of school, the classroom relationships they form (with the adults and their peers), the child's family and cultural backgrounds will impact on the child's experience and ultimately the outcomes produced within the school setting. Furthermore, he argued that even though there is often a set curriculum which is driven from one perspective and has set targets that should be achievable by all children, the uniqueness of each child will undoubtedly impact the aims and expectations made of the child. As Pollard and Filer (1996, pg. 281) stated:

“Classroom contexts are both the same and yet are different. They are the same in that pupils may well all be present at identical times, adjust to similar expectations and often engage in similar curricular activities. However, they are different because each child experiences the classroom in the light of their particular structural position, learning stance, interests, strategies, identity and cultural background. The way in which each child interprets the classroom setting, acts and learns is bound to reflect this differential positioning and to lead, in consequence, to differential experiences and outcomes”.

Therefore, following the review of the area surrounding the starting school transition in chapter 1, 2 and 3, the aim of this research was to explore the concepts associated with this transition. To achieve this, it needed to carry out a qualitative based investigation into the classroom experience of the transition, whilst also listening to the ideas and beliefs of the parents, children and school staff. It aimed to uncover how the transition is experienced from a Foucauldian (Kendall and Wickham, 1999; Burr, 2015) perspective rather than from a problematic proposition stance (see chapter 2 for further details) which prior research has tended to do (Dockett and Perry, 2007; Brooker, 2008). Furthermore, it is interested in uncovering if there is a link between the explicit and implicit transitional activities that help the children develop their school child identities. Finally, it aimed to examine the implications of the discourses that surround the transition and explore what impact these may have on the overall experience. To achieve all of this, it would need to employ a research strategy that would allow me to become a part of the “daily ebb and flow” (Maddon, 2010,

pg. 34) of the transitional experience, meaning an ethnographic approach would be best suited to meet the research aims.

Research Aims:

- 1) Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition
- 2) Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children
- 3) Understand the implications / function of the discourses that surround the starting school transition

3.4 Chapter Summary

The concept of the starting school transition has been defined in many ways. The difficulty in reaching one true definition is that researchers' perspectives and previous research influence future definitions of the concept. However, as postman (1995) argues 'a' definition is feasible as long as it is useful. One contribution being made by this thesis is that it argues for and illuminates the concept of transition as a social construction and more importantly that it is a continuous reciprocal experience between child and environment. Therefore, it offers to develop a new definition based on the ideas of social constructionism and Foucault's theoretical framework; as well as drawing on the ecological and community of practice theory. The thesis argues that both aspects (i.e. child and environment) influence each other during the day-to-day life cycle of the

transitional period. This is why it is vitally important that research uncovers the explicit and implicit activities that go on within the classroom experience on a day to day basis if a thorough understanding of the concept is to be gained.

Chapter 4: Collating 'a' perspective

This chapter will provide a thorough discussion of how I went about carrying out the research this thesis is based on. It will consider how I chose a school, how I made connections and relationships within the school with staff, parents and children, whilst discussing the potential impacts of these relationships. This will lead into a review of the ethical considerations I made in relation to the study's design. It will provide detailed information on what research tools were used to collect data, including observations (and what kind) were made, how and why interviews were carried out and it will discuss the use of conversations and document analysis. Finally, it will provide a discussion around how I went about analysing the data collected. By drawing from a discursive psychological perspective (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Potter and Hepburn, 2008), a number of themes were chosen that allowed 'a' (my) perspective to emerge that helps to situate and explain how this transition is socially constructed by the adults and children involved within it. To summarise, this chapter will make it clear to the reader, exactly what was done and when in relation to collecting data and it will also highlight why and how the data analysis was undertaken in the way it was.

4.1 Choosing Ethnography

As previously outlined in chapter 1, the change in my philosophical stance meant that I became increasingly aware of a need to choose a research strategy that would enable me to meet the research aims and allow me to 'see' and 'experience' in some way what the transition process was about. It would need

to utilise a range of methods that would allow me to become a part of the everyday practices that take place within the classroom. From this realisation, came my first taste of understanding what ethnography was all about.

Atkinson et al. (2001) propose that ethnography was originally established in the field of anthropology and that it developed over time due to a research need to represent unique communities in foreign lands. As Tobbell (2006) has noted, the operative word in the previous sentence is 'foreign'; in that, early ethnographers aimed to introduce the "practices of communities dissimilar to our own" which Tobbell defined as "white, western world[s]" (pg. 89). This is why Clifford (1986a) described ethnographical processes as making the strange familiar. This means ethnography enables researchers to capture something of the totality and complexity of their chosen research situation (Maddon, 2010), in this piece of research this was the transitional experience.

However, Atkinson et al. (2001) argue that the field of ethnography is so diverse and broad it is difficult to define. Furthermore, Stivaros (2007) postulates that the practice of 'doing' ethnography is idiosyncratic and is therefore heavily shaped by a researcher's philosophical beliefs which again makes defining the approach more troublesome as these beliefs can be vast and varied. In agreement with Stivaros's proposed personalised foundations, Rock (2001) argues that ethnography consists of an intimate process of interaction between the researcher and the world being viewed. Consequently, Wolcott (2008) suggests that ethnography should be thought of as a particular 'way of seeing' and

recording the world; and, that it allows 'a' distinctive, personalised perspective to emerge. After reviewing the research surrounding the starting school transition (see chapter 2 and 3), it was proposed that a different perspective or 'way of seeing' was needed to help understand the complexities of the transitional experience more fully; this is why an ethnographic approach was undertaken.

As a research strategy, ethnography permits a researcher to develop an array of research tools that will help them investigate and view the world, events or occurrences in a philosophically primed manner (Maddon, 2010; Murchison, 2010). This is, according to White, Drew and Hay (2009), like a case study approach in research. They argue a case study approach aims to discover implicit knowledge about an event, situation or an individual. Within this research, if a case study approach was taken it would focus on the transitional events. However, this would not allow the in-depth and inescapable impacts (Foucault, 1982) from discourses to be seen and documented, as they are developed from various cultural and societal influences. Murchison (2010, pg. 4) acknowledges that an ethnographic approach can achieve the above by allowing a "...researcher to explore and examine the cultures and societies that are a fundamental part of the human experience". Additionally, Maddon (2010) argues, one of the main functions of ethnographic research is to experience and document the "...daily ebb and flow of life" (pg. 34). This is the reason that this strategy appeared to be the most suitable (see discussion on page 121) for documenting and exploring the starting school transition as by focussing on the daily 'ebb and flow' during the transition year I would be able to meet the project's overall research aims; see the research aims provided below.

Research Aims:

- 1) Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition
- 2) Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children
- 3) Understand the implications / function of the discourses that surround the starting school transition

Barron (2007) has postulated that ethnographic research with very young children continues to be sparse. Yet, Corsaro and Molinari (2008) have argued that it “is an ideal method...particularly when it aims to both document children’s evolving membership in their culture (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and when focused on key transition points in children’s lives” (pg. 240). However, Prout and James (1997) has noted that most ethnographic research that takes place with children tends to focus on how adults attempt to teach children these lessons of culture, rather than on how these lessons are learnt and interacted with by the children themselves. This was a challenge that the current study was able to address by taking an ethnographic approach as it allowed the focus to be directed at the children’s and parents’ interactions (i.e. their ‘talk’, actions and/or choices etc.) during the transitional experience, rather than focussing purely on providing a narrative about the adults or the children themselves. This allowed in-depth information to be collected about the different interactions and when brought together with other pieces of data, like interview transcripts or document analysis it allowed the complexities of culture and discourse to become visible. For an

example of this, see the discussion on pages 213 -214 which highlighted how, through document analysis, that a discourse of staff working in partnership with parents was proposed by Government documents; yet, some of the parents reported in the interviews that they felt that they had been peripherally positioned by staff members instead. Therefore, the way the parents had been positioned was in direct contrast to the discourse promoted.

4.1.1 Doing inductive ethnography

Interestingly, there appears to be some form of academic difference in whether ethnography is better suited to an inductive or deductive research approach. For instance, Maddon (2010) argued that “ethnography allows us to mesh both inductive and deductive theory together” if required. Whereas, Denzin and Lincoln, (2011), purports that ethnography should be driven from either an inductive or a deductive approach. However, Clifford (1986b) proposed that ethnography has tended to lend itself, over time, to be more of an inductive approach. He argued this has occurred due to the revolution from the positivist to interpretivist paradigms; thereby, this alteration aligns with my own change in philosophical thinking. Rock (2001) once commented that ethnography is inductive in nature, as ethnographic research is often exploratory at the outset and that set research questions or theoretical ideas are not usually identified from the very beginning; this was certainly the manner in which my research initially started to unfold. In fact, Rock argued that research questions or theories often emerge from the very detailed descriptions that are garnered from within the fieldwork. As this process occurred in this research project (discussed in more

detail in section 4.5) it further illustrates that the research was ethnographic in nature.

If truly acknowledging Rock's (2001) point concerning the emergence of ideas from within fieldwork descriptions, I believe the researcher involved should therefore attempt to provide as much information about their decisions within the project so that other researchers can then develop a better level of understanding of the study's findings. There is an expectation that this will include a consideration of the data analysis and interpretation of the findings (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2015); but, in line with Rock's point I would also like to discuss the decisions I made regarding pre-field work knowledge and why I made field notes in the manner that I did since the research inductively emerged from within this arena.

4.1.2 Pre-fieldwork Information

When contemplating an inductive approach to a research project there is an important philosophical element that needs to be considered fully. Should the researcher enter the field as a 'tabula rasa'? This means the ethnographer is a blank slate and does not hold any preconceived ideas gained from existing literature or theoretical perspectives. However, as Maddon (2010) points out, it also means the ethnographer does not know where to start observing, they have no knowledge to filter the massive amounts of data that could be noted. If they observe an event or behaviour that they had no theoretical background on they may misunderstand the notion of capturing 'good' data.

In contrast, from a social constructionist perspective, the idea of being a 'true' blank slate is simply unachievable (Burr, 2015); ethnographers cannot be truly neutral, apolitical, objective, data-capturing devices (Clifford, 1986a; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). Maddon (2010) states that researchers take socially and culturally informed thinking into the field with them regardless of whether they have read around the subject of investigation. Therefore, he argues that there is no such thing as a blank slate in any ethnographer's mind. Furthermore, he finalises that if potentially useful information is available then researchers should take up the option of consuming it before entering the field in question. He used the word 'consume' specifically as he also stated that an ethnographer should not let this knowledge, information or theory consume them, but they should consume the information so that it can give the researcher something to bounce ideas off or reflect on after they have completed their fieldwork.

The point of gaining critical pre-field work perspectives is not so that the ethnographer can then 'judge' experiences. As that would, in effect, remove the exploratory aspect of ethnography and render it useless. It is, instead, to allow the ethnographer to educate themselves to possible themes of relevance that they may then wish to pay attention to (Wolcott, 2008). This was certainly what helped me in the first few days of observations. My pre-fieldwork reading and reviewing included historical material related to the English Education system and the National Curriculum/s (e.g. Stephens, 1998; DfES, 2006b; DCSF, 2007a; 2007b; DCSF, 2008; White, 2008). I examined the history of UK government policies in relation to Children and Families (e.g. Central Advisory Council for Education, 1967; Woodhead, 1989; DfES, 2003; 2007). Furthermore, I reviewed

previous research and theoretical propositions surrounding Children and Education (e.g. Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Desforjes and Abouchaar, 2003; Rogoff, 2003; Sylva et al., 2010) with a particular focus of course on Educational transitions (e.g. Cleave and Brown, 1991; Fabian, 1998; Dockett and Perry, 1999a; 1999b; Fabian and Dunlop, 2002; Yeboah, 2002; Zittoun, 2006). Finally, I also read and reviewed a large amount of work done using an ethnographic methodology to gain a better understanding of the debates on reflexivity, ethics, ethnography and autobiographical memories (e.g. Burgess, 1981; Bowen, 1990; Oliver, 1991; Barron, 2007; Stivaros, 2007). This reading armed me with knowledge and understanding that enabled me to overcome various related issues throughout my own fieldwork as the reading developed my understanding of the historical, social and cultural aspects at the forefront of each of those issues. It also helped me to start to shape my research aims.

4.1.3 Field notes

Another important consideration to be made when carrying out ethnography is how a researcher feels about the argument that field notes should be either subjective or objective or a combination of both (Crotty, 2003). As with any scientific endeavour, field notes (as is expected from any experimental procedure) should be a faithful representation of the true events observed (Wolcott, 2008; Maddon, 2010). However, as per Hammersley (1992) and Murchinson (2010) argue, once an event has been observed the writer must choose what parts of the event should be written up (i.e. chosen to have more relevance) and which should be discussed in a briefer format. This indicates that when writers write their notes they are automatically (and certainly not always

consciously) making decisions on what they have observed and what they will tell the world about. The choices they make, about what will be recorded and what will not be are usually chosen from a strategic and/or sometimes subjective point of view. According to Kouritzin (2002), this filtering of information is what contributes to the claim that ethnographic field notes are, at the best of times, 'raw' data issues as well as a form of analysis in themselves, and at the worst of times simply misleading.

Subjective Versus Objective

As a social constructionist, I declare that subjectivity in note-taking should not be treated as a private or personal problem that needs to be hidden from view. Instead, as Wolcott (2008) has argued it is better to engage with the fact that the perspective of the ethnographer will undoubtedly shape and form their notes because of their own unique personal gaze. Furthermore, the way that individual researchers chose what to observe and from that, what to record will always mean that field notes are generally idiosyncratic. As Tedlock (1991) acknowledges, what is hoped for is that the ethnographer will strive for objectiveness throughout their observations and inscriptions. However, she argues, it is paramount that they also understand that their ethnographic gaze will be directed through their strategic and personal inclinations therefore they will never be truly objective. That means, it is difficult to separate subjective and objective elements as they are part and parcel of all ethnographers' understandings of the scenes that they participated in.

It was certainly an aspect I found difficult when taking notes in the field. I noticed that when I first started my initial observations, I was being far too subjective, and I had to restrain myself time and time again. For example, I often found myself writing down subjective descriptions of individual emotions or behaviours, as in using words like “annoyed” or “ecstatic” or “caring”. This left me feeling deflated by the time I had completed a full day of observing as I could see clearly where I had marked subjective comments. According to Bernard (2013), my ‘jottings’ or ‘scratch notes’ (Ottenberg, 1990) were the first level of notes taken. They are usually the ones completed in the middle of the field when life is hectic and fast, and researchers frantically try to capture as much information as possible whilst actively partaking in the world around them. The next level becomes known as the ‘proper field notes’ (Ottenberg, 1990; Bernard, 2013) as these are the ones which utilise the first notes but are completed at the end of the day when life is not so hectic. This means the ethnographer can expand on the descriptions included in the first level of notes as the events are still in their immediate memory. However, in the second level of note making the researcher can be more reflective and analytical in their approach and tone of writing. This second level was also steered more strongly by the research aims which were guiding the project overall.

Using this system allowed me to come to terms with my ‘subjectiveness’. I allowed myself to write subjective and objective notes in the field and at the end of the day I would work my way back through the notes so that I could be more objective with my descriptions. I knew this meant that my first notes were true participatory field notes and my second were, in essence, participatory analytical

reflections. This realisation led me to question whether the research equated to real ethnography anymore! However, the more reading I did around the subject of subjective-objectiveness within ethnographic research the more I came to understand that other researchers have followed a similar system due to the same issues within their own note-taking techniques (e.g. Burgess, 1981; Bowen, 1990; Oliver, 1991; Barron, 2007; Stivaros, 2007; Woods, 2013).

As an alternative approach, some researchers prefer to simply note objective events (dates, time of day, and names etc.) and then write up their 'full-notes' after they exit their field of enquiry (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Maddon, 2010). However, I would have been uncomfortable in becoming so reliant on memory recall as without the subjective 'jottings' that I made I would not have been able to recall all of the events that have become a part of my analysis. For example, my memory needed a jolt of content when I found myself in the evenings trying to write up my 'proper' field notes. When I came across subjective comments it often helped to revitalise my memory enough to initiate the memory processes of recall (Dong and Kintsch, 1968; Buchanan, 2007; Caruso, 2008). In other words, as Buchanan (2007) acknowledges, the subjective comments were in effect useful mnemonics. They allowed me to access the nuances and subtleties of human behaviour which was exactly the focus of my project: the experience of transition. This revelation opened my observations much more as I was no longer feeling deflated or defeated by trying to rein in my 'subjectiveness'. I did adhere to not making uncritical or biased comments as these do not have a place in ethnography, but I did allow myself to subjectively describe events or places, objects or behaviours.

Maddon (2010) suggested that completing field notes using a neutral and objective language would have helped to protect my data from being socially and culturally coded. However, as my knowledge and understanding of discourse and social constructionist ideas developed, I became acutely aware that I would struggle to complete my 'jottings' and my 'proper' notes in that manner and that some subjective phrases would be unavoidable. Maddon (2010) went on to acknowledge this when he discussed the idea that it is uncritical to view ethnographic field notes simply as 'raw data'. He argued the data has already been partially 'cooked' by the ethnographer through the choice of words used in the initial inscription process. Furthermore, he argues the data is continuously being organised and analysed and therefore, it is never really 'raw' data that we know of in comparison to quantitative raw data.

There is a potential tension here then: will the data consist of facts that will speak for themselves or will the data consist of information that the researcher actively creates meaning from? As a social constructionist, I believe all researchers actively create meaning from their data sets. Even in quantitative research the experimenter may collect a number of data sets which represent a number of variables but will only write up the variables and data sets that represent what they are writing about in their research papers (de Laine, 2000; Crotty, 2003; Wolcott, 2008). Furthermore, they are even more likely not to write up their reports if they find a non-significant result (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2015). Therefore, they are subjecting their data to their own subjectiveness (Wolcott, 2008). Therein, I wish to acknowledge that this study never intended to make any claims of representativeness. I believe individual ethnographers will 'see'

different sets of facts and themes even when presented with the same data sets (Maddon, 2010; Murchinson, 2010). An example of this can be found in appendix 1, which contains a description of contextual information regarding the school and daily life of the classroom environment. It is based on an amalgamation of all of the data collected (i.e. observations, interviews, conversations and document analysis). It is a narrative, which developed from my ethnographic participation within the daily 'ebb and flow' of the school and classroom, allowing me to develop my perspective. This is consistent with the aim of this project as this has always been to simply provide 'a' perspective of the starting school transition.

4.2 Ethical Considerations

There were several ethical considerations that needed to be made and dealt with throughout the process of designing and setting up the research study and these will be outlined as thoroughly as possible in the following sub-sections. Many of the concerns were dealt with in the initial setting up of the study due to the comprehensive and effective ethical approval process that must be followed at the University of Huddersfield. This required submitting an application to the Departments Ethics Committee (within the Faculty of Human and Health Sciences – Department of Behavioural Sciences) and a copy of the approved application can be found in appendix 2, as well as a copy of the risk assessment form (see appendix 3). However, as I have now come to learn, ethical concerns are rarely explicit and easy to foresee. They can in fact be implicit and well hidden, emerging as and when they need to which can cause them to become messy and chaotic (Palaiologou, 2012). These kinds of issues require a

researcher to be able to 'think on their feet' and as Stivaros (2007) argues can require the researcher to make decisions which can instigate great personal struggles to take place within themselves.

4.2.1 Starting out: accessing Holme Court School

Following the decision to carry out an ethnographic study, I first started to investigate whether any of the local schools (i.e. within the immediate area of my home locality for ease of travelling) may be receptive to allowing me to join them for approximately a whole academic year. Having worked within educational settings previously, I understood that many schools may not be able to allow such a large commitment to go ahead so I started my initial enquires very early on in my PhD registration period; essentially, this was an attempt to compensate for the expected reluctance from some schools. Surprisingly however, it did not produce any real benefits for the study as many of the schools were adamant that they did not have the time nor resources (although none were asked for) to get involved within the proposed study.

However, for a few years prior to starting my PhD I had volunteered at a local primary school as a School Governor as I had always been interested in seeing how schools work and how they were managed locally. I had initially discounted the school, which was given a pseudonym name of Holme Court School, as a potential research site as I did not want to take advantage of my position as Governor nor have it influence the relationships that I would need to develop with the staff and children. Although, after a careful discussion with the school's head

teacher and the remaining Governing board, we felt that the potential benefits to the school from the research findings and to my own understanding of the day-to-day working life of the school (from a Governor's position) would far outweigh any potential negative consequences that could potentially arise from the close relationships that I had already formed with the school team in general. As Rock (2001, pg. 34) once stated it was "... like a fairy godmother ..." had come "... to help the forlorn ethnographer".

It should be noted here that this form of convenience sampling has been argued to lead to biased and unrepresentative data sets (Barbour, 2008; Straus, 2009; Bornstein, Jager and Putnick, 2013). Firstly, I wish to challenge the claim that the research would be unrepresentative due to the sampling technique used. Returning to my philosophical roots, I would argue that all research is never truly representative of any given sample (Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Gergen and Gergen, 2007; Burr, 2015). It is merely a snapshot of the events of a social situation in action. Each reality contained within the interaction, is local, specific and co-constructed (Guba and Lincoln, 2005) and therefore could never be representative of any sample size. This is why I propose this research is only one way of understanding the transition process; this does not make it any less important however. In fact, it can provide the rich and meaningful data that cannot be found when attempts are made to control and isolate the context from the actual research process (see an earlier review of this issue in relation to problematising the transition in chapter 2).

Secondly, however, I cannot argue against the claim that the sampling technique and data may have contained, as Ashworth (2008) and Silverman (2010) declare, some bias due to the pre-existing relationships I had formed within the school. I acknowledge these may have existed and this needs to be considered when perceiving the value of the research in general. However, I will discuss the ways that I attempted to reduce this as much as possible in the next sub-section.

4.2.2 Insider vs. Outsider relationships

Even though there were a number of benefits envisaged for the school from the research (i.e. supportive actions as they had recently started to reflectively investigate their transition practices with the aim of finding areas for improvements) I was still apprehensive of taking up a researching role as my prior relationships would mean that I would not be positioned as a complete 'outsider' (Mullings, 1999; Stivaros, 2007; Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Silverman, 2010; Kerstetter, 2012). Although, in fairness, I did not perceive this as having many potential drawbacks on the research design, my uneasiness with this aspect derived more from the remnants of my positivist background. In fact, I had come to understand the notion of the 'space between' insider-outsider postulated by Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) and was comfortable with this notion, on the understanding that those whom I would be working with was also comfortable with any newly formed role.

The more I considered this position, the more I became unsure on how this would transpire within the classroom and wider school setting due to a potential power

imbalance due to the role of school Governor. After careful consideration of the ethical consequences of being in a dual role (e.g. Governor and researcher), from my own and the staff's perspective, I made the conscious decision to change from an active Governor's role (e.g. with full voting rights) into an 'observer's' role within the Governing board for the duration of the research study. This meant, I was able to attend Governing meetings, and keep abreast with school changes however I could not raise issues within meetings or ask for items to be discussed or added to the agendas (NGA, 2017). It also meant that I did not possess the right to vote in relation to any issues put forward to the Governing board for a consensual decision (DfE, 2017b). As Mac Naughton and Hughes (2009) purports, removing any potential power imbalances can help participants (in this case the staff) feel more supported and protected and less inclined to see me in any possible negative manner when / or if observing in their classrooms. Once this decision had been made and agreed with the Head-teacher and Governing board members, it was felt appropriate to seek the direct support from all of the school staff. To avoid any potential bias, stemming from my presence, contaminating their decisions this was initially sought in a private meeting held between the school staff, Head-teacher and chair of Governors.

I was informed by the Head-teacher that the meeting had successfully secured my access to the school as the staff unanimously supported my initial request. Although, I must state I was never fully sure whether the Head-teacher had taken on the role of gatekeeper (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Wanat, 2008); though, Wanat (2008) acknowledges they are widely used in educational research. Gray (2013, pg. 73) defines a gatekeeper within the research process as "the person

involved in the process to allow or deny another access to someone or something”. Furthermore, McFadyen and Rankin (2016) argues, being a gatekeeper within a school can position that person as being in a position of power, whether that is intentional or not, and it should be noted that this may have influenced some of the staff members’ decisions to support the research project. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) advise that if gate keeper permission is granted when others would have preferred not to engage in the research, then the study may “be sabotaged by the subjects” (p. 76). Therefore, they suggest permission is sought from all on a more personal level as you move about within the research arena.

4.2.3 Obtaining consent

Having gained the ethics committee’s approval, and a general consensus from the school staff, the issue of seeking out consent from any potential parties became the next clear priority. However, before I could consider approaching any prospective children and their families, it became apparent that I must first navigate through what Hood, Kelly and Mayall (1996) called the hierarchical chain of gatekeepers. More specifically, this meant first discussing and documenting the research study and its aims with the Head-teacher (see Appendix 4 – Staff information sheet) to which he responded by supplying an official ‘blanket’ statement to show full support for the research project to take place at the school (see Appendix 5 for an anonymised copy of the Permission Letter).

The Head-teacher provided this 'blanket' (e.g. covering the consent of all staff) statement as he believed the conversation he had facilitated with all staff would be sufficient and that I would not need to gain written consent from each member. When I asked if I could, initially, he was reluctant to grant me access as he felt his authority should suffice. As both, Homan (2001) and Dahlberg and Moss (2005) discuss, gatekeepers can restrict access to participants for various reasons and these can have positive or negative undertones. In relation to this research, it was unclear whether the head teacher was attempting to assist me (in a positive manner by removing some of the work) with my research endeavours due to our pre-existing relationship or whether he was utilising the power available to him as he was deemed the gatekeeper for the school and its staff.

Van Maanen (1988) best describes the process of gaining access as a "continuous push and pull between fieldworker and informant" (pg. 144). Therefore, I made it very clear that I was working under the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (BPS; 2009; 2014) and that this meant that I needed to ensure that each potential participant received an opportunity from myself to become fully informed about the research and to give written consent, if they wished to take part within the study. After discussing this fully with the Head-teacher he was supportive of my decision to seek individual consent from staff members.

The next step therefore involved seeking out informed consent from the staff that would be involved within the project in any way. At first, I only considered asking for the consent of the teachers and teaching assistants that would be working within the reception classroom on a daily basis. However, after careful consideration, I abandoned this perspective and asked for all staff at the school to consider giving their informed consent; I took this approach as I realised there was the potentiality of following some of the reception children in to other areas of the school (i.e. assemblies where all staff partake in activities) and it would ensure that every staff member had been given the opportunity to discuss and document any ideas or concerns surrounding the research (de Laine, 2000; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Gallagher, 2009). Furthermore, it also ensured that every member of staff was aware of their right to withdraw and how they could implement this up to the point that data was anonymised, without having to provide a rationale for their withdrawal (BPS, 2009; 2014; BERA, 2011). After meeting with each member of staff individually and providing them all with information sheets (Appendix 4), they all chose to unreservedly provide written consent (see Appendix 6 – Staff Consent Form).

In relation to the potential children and their families, as I wanted to follow and document the lived experiences of the children undergoing the ‘starting school’ transition, I did not have any preconceptions concerning who I may want to be involved as participants. Therefore, I felt it best to approach all the children and their families and ask for their consent to be a part of the study (Morrow and Richards, 1996; Neill, 2005; Gallagher, 2009; Punch, 2009). This was initially carried out at a meeting organised and run by the school (held in the June of

2009) for all the children and their parents that had been granted a place at the school ready for the September 2009 intake. The meeting was centred on discussing the practices that will take place at the school (e.g. start and end times, daily routine for the children and the homework and reading expectations), and it was an opportunity for the parents to ask questions and look at and buy the school uniform items their child may require.

All the parents or carers of the prospective children, except two families, attended the meeting; the two families who could not attend the meeting were sent a letter from myself (Appendix 7 – Parental Letter) detailing the study, asking them to consider providing consent (Appendix 8 – Parental Consent Form) for their children to partake within the study. For those who did attend the meeting, the Head-teacher kindly provided me with a space within the meeting to verbally detail the research study, answer any potential questions and ask parents to sign up by leaving their details on a contact sheet or by emailing / telephoning me with their details. Initially, I felt this was the best option compared to potentially forcing parents to choose ‘on the spot’ whether they wanted their child to be a part of the study or not. However, several parents / carers came up to speak with me following the meeting to arrange the next steps as they were keen to get involved and they received a parental information sheet (see appendix 9).

Parents and carers consent

Following on from the meeting, the school was informed that they would be receiving three extra children into their reception class (as they had recruited less

than the maximum threshold number of 30 children). Therefore, the Head-teacher was keen that I sent out the parental letters (Appendix 7) and consent forms (Appendix 8) to all families to ensure that each family was provided with the same opportunities to learn more about and to sign up to take part in the research study. At the end of this process, this resulted in a total of 12 out of 25 families consenting to take part. The ethical considerations relevant to the 13 families who did not consent are discussed later in the sub section 4.3 Managing emerging ethical tensions. Those who signed up, returned their consent forms via a pre-paid envelope addressed to my University address. I purposely chose a return address separate from the school as a joint decision was made by myself, the Head-teacher and the reception class teacher that it would be best if the school staff remained unaware of which families had signed up. This was implemented, as advised by Gallagher (2009), to help prevent any potential for the children to be treated differently in relation to those who may not have signed up.

Considering children's informed consent

Having received signed consent forms from the school (Head-teacher), staff and parents, I was now able to proceed to the final layer of consent givers, the children themselves. However, this proved to be more difficult to navigate than I had first anticipated. Retrospectively speaking, this was partly due to my understanding of children, their rights and their ability to consent being underdeveloped when I undertook this aspect of the research. This has grown and developed immensely throughout this project and if I were to undertake research that involved children

again in the future I would be looking to incorporate more child aware methods like those proposed by Clark and Moss (2011) and Kellett (2011).

However, at the time of carrying out the research, I was aware that according to the BPS (2009; 2014) ethical guidelines, research involving children (under the age of 16) should always attempt to gain informed consent, either directly from the children themselves or from their parents / carers or from a person deemed as holding 'in locos parentis' (e.g. teachers). As the children were aged between four and five years of age I was unsure on how much they would be able to contribute fully to giving informed consent. However, I felt uneasy about the prospect of simply achieving parental consent even though this would be deemed 'good enough' according to a collection of ethical guidelines provided by differing disciplines (BPS, 2009; BERA, 2011). After carefully reviewing and discussing this issue with colleagues, I came to realise that If I did not attempt to seek informed consent from the individual children then I would, in some way, be supporting the notion that Morrow and Richards (1996) proposed that children are "...seen as parents property, devoid of the right to say no to research" (pg. 94) and this was unacceptable to me.

Gallagher (2009) has highlighted that informed consent from children involves four core principles. These are: (1) explicitly gaining either verbal or written agreement, (2) informed consent can only be deemed true if children are informed enough to show some understanding of the full nature of the research, (3) the consent must be given voluntarily and finally, (4) it must be renegotiated

repeatedly to allow a child to withdraw at any stage. However, Gallagher (2009, pg. 16) also made it clear that "...putting these principles into action is often challenging". But, as suggested by Cocks (2006), Campbell (2008) and Green (2012), I wanted to try to find a way of attempting to offer the children the opportunity to understand what the research was all about, regardless of their chronological age and estimated cognitive development (Danby and Farrell, 2004; Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008); therefore, I arranged to meet with each child during the informal interview that was scheduled with each family to take place during the summer vacation (in the month of August).

From an ethical perspective, this meeting was an opportunity to discuss with the parents / carers the research in a familiar setting, away from the school environment (as I requested that we meet in the child's home or favourite place to visit); but, more importantly it was also an opportunity for me to talk to the individual children so that I could try to explain the research to them in a child friendly manner (Einarsdóttir, 2007) and ask for their consent or assent to partake (Gallagher, Haywood, Jones and Milne, 2010). During these interviews, I sat down with the children and their parents and attempted to talk through the consent issues with the child.

Due to Fisher's (2013) advice, I made sure to maintain eye contact with the child so that they could see my full attention was with them at that moment and not with their parents. Again, following Fisher's advice, I used 'easy to understand' language (e.g. in place of 'observe' – I used the wording "*watch with my eyes*")

to try to help them comprehend what I was saying. I also attempted to make it clear that when I was observing them in the classroom I would always ask for their permission first and I tried to make it clear that they could agree or disagree to this request and it would not influence the relationship that I or their teachers would have with them. Some (but not all) of the parents joined in on those discussions, in an attempt to help their child, understand the messages I was relaying to them. This sometimes helped immensely and at other times appeared to confuse the child further. Interestingly, at the time of the research, two sets of parents appeared surprised that I was attempting to discuss the matter with their child and half way through the conversation asked me to stop and accept their consent in place of their child's. Being a guest in their house, I did not feel it was my place to continue pursuing the matter and so I relinquished, as requested.

As my knowledge of power and control grew from studying Foucault's work (1982), I realised that asking the children in this situation (with their parents present) may not have been the most appropriate way to seek their consent. Children can often feel pressurised to accept invitations if they are in the presence of adults (Scott, 2008; Mac Naughton, 2005) and I had no way of knowing whether this may have occurred due to the approach I used. After some thought, I came to realise that gaining the children's, freely given (BPS, 2009; 2014), informed consent was possibly an over-zealous idealisation and that at best I had received verbal partial consent (Alderson and Morrow, 2011) from some of the children; partial, meaning that I was unsure how much each child fully understood the research project and its aims etc. For instance, at this point in the research I was still considered as an outsider (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Silverman,

2010) to the children, meaning I had not developed the capacity (through a meaningful relationship with each child) to understand whether the children fully understood what I had said to them. Relatedly, Alderson and Morrow (2011), argued that children who can give partial consent should be considered as not giving informed consent or assent in either case. I wrestled with this knowledge, unsure on whether I should continue on with the research until I realised that I could attempt to counter this by making sure that I proactively ask for permission from the children throughout the day and look for signs of dissent being displayed (Alderson and Morrow, 2011; Green, 2012).

Dockett, Einarsdóttir and Perry (2012), suggest signs of dissent range from the child verbally informing the researcher that they are unhappy with their presence or being involved in the research process; in such an incident, the child may tell the researcher “no” or “go away” etc. The authors also argue that children can show non-verbal signs of dissent which often involve turning their backs to the researcher or if being observed, hiding behind something that blocks the researchers line of sight. Similarly, a piece of ethnographic research by Skanfors (2009) found similar results to Dockett, Einarsdóttir and Perry’s (2012) and she termed these approaches ‘say no’ and ‘show no’ (pg.10). She also concluded that researchers need to develop and employ an ‘ethical radar’ throughout the research process by looking for these signs of dissent.

4.2.4 Anonymity

Throughout the setting up and collecting of data, I offered and provided all participants with anonymity with full intentions of using what Kaiser (2009) calls the “dominant approach” (pg. 1634) of providing each individual with a pseudonym if I used any data related to them. This is a standard procedure within research as per the ethical guidelines followed (BPS, 2009, 2014), and in fact it has been argued that using real names like some researchers have argued for (e.g. Guenther, 2009; Svalastog and Eriksson, 2010) is considered a valid but unusual move (Silverman, 2010; Sullivan and Riley, 2012).

All the adult (both staff members and parents) participants were happy to accept a pseudonym name when questioned about this during the research briefing talks I carried out with them. However, some of the staff members at the school were apprehensive that their identity would be deducible if I provided information about the roles that they undertook (i.e. whether they were a class teacher or teaching assistant etc.). Therefore, together, we decided not to provide this contextual information as it was not directly relevant to aiding the understanding of collected data.

Discovering an Ethical Dilemma

I have taken a different approach when using any data that came directly from any interactions involving the children within the study (e.g. classroom data). The reason for this relates back to my concerns over only receiving partial consent (Alderson and Morrow, 2011) from the children and due to the fact that I was

unsure on how much information the children had understood about the potential impact of their participation (e.g. publication of the findings etc.). My positionality as an ethnographer has changed repeatedly whilst undertaking the research. For instance, I started off considering children from a developmental perspective as “becomings” (Prout and James; Jenks, 2015), meaning that I initially perceived parental consent as more valid than that of the child’s. Therefore, the power to consent, from my perspective, was perceived as belonging to the adults. Yet, during the initial collection of data, I was learning to consider children as “beings” (Uprichard, 2008) and holders of power in their own right and this is why gaining their informed consent became increasingly more important to me as the research progressed.

As stated previously, I started out on the research journey with the intention to use the customary process (Lahman et al., 2015; Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger 2015; Allen and Wiles, 2016) of providing anonymity and confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms with the children, as I would with the adults. However, as a developing social constructionist, I became increasingly aware of my ability to construct individuals whenever I write about them. Furthermore, per positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1999; Linehan and McCarthy, 2000) what I write about a participant will contribute in some way to positioning them and constructing them within a discursive sphere to an outside audience. Some of the children’s behaviour that I observed and discuss may position them as ‘difficult’ or ‘naughty’ or ‘unusual’. Alternatively, it may position them more positively as ‘good’ or ‘hard working’ etc. However, through a process that Kaiser (2009, pg. 1632) calls “deductive disclosure” this positioning of a child may in fact

offer information that allows them to become identifiable to those who have some knowledge of their discursive traits (e.g. a classroom teacher, or parent / carer, family member), regardless of the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, I realised that even though I had been granted consent by the parents on behalf of their children, I had also promised those parents that their children would not be identifiable (see appendix 8 for a copy of the parental consent form). Yet, Kaiser (2009) had acknowledged the possibility that this may not be achievable when using positioning information, which this research project draws upon quite intently (for examples of this please see data boxes 52 and 53 located in section 7.2.1).

I must acknowledge here that I did not attempt to explain the potential drawbacks of using positioning information with the children. As discussed in section 4.1.1, this research took an inductive approach meaning that the positioning of the children in the classroom only came to light after the data had been analysed. This caused an ethical dilemma as the analysis of the data and the writing up of the findings took place a number of years after the data collection point (see section 4.2.5 for further details). This means I have lost contact with a number of the families and cannot, therefore, go back and discuss this issue directly with the children. Therefore, I became ethically aware that if I chose to disregard this knowledge and write up the findings as originally proposed, I could potentially be abusing my position as an adult over the children (Foucault, 1982; Blase, 1991; Mac Naughton, 2005). For instance, I do not believe the children had any understanding of what this positioning of them, by me, could mean, when I asked for their consent. Yet, the adults in the study were offered an opportunity to view

interview transcripts and any conversational dialogue that was used to ensure they were happy to have it included.

Bickford and Nisker (2015) argue that a tension always exists between maintaining anonymity and confidentiality whilst also providing a nuanced deep description of a phenomenon, which is often expected from ethnographic research (Maddon, 2010). Yet, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the notion of using pseudonyms with the children as I discovered that Allen and Wiles (2016) describe how there are cautionary tales (e.g. Vidich and Bensman, 2000; Tolich, 2010) within the research literature. These ‘tales’ support Kaiser’s (2009) point that sometimes pseudonyms cannot provide anonymity when the participants experiences are analysed or described in rich detail. Additionally, Nesper (2000) points out that although pseudonyms are thought of as “devices for protecting participants”, they can also be considered as “strategic tools that play important roles in constituting objects of inquiry” (p. 546). Allen and Wiles (2016) outline that sometimes presenting pseudonymised voices can be inappropriate and they argue that researchers must consider how the information is to be expressed, voiced and who will be reading it or have access to it. This lead me to consider alternative ways of naming the child participants.

Creswell (2013) argues that the responsibility for participant anonymity rests firmly in the researcher’s hand and he describes a number of ways of naming participants within research. These include the usual pseudonym option, but also that numbers or letters can be assigned to an individual participant, although it is

acknowledged that this is not a popular option due to its potential to de-humanise participants (Lahman et al., 2015; Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger, 2015; Allen and Wiles, 2016). In fact, it was difficult to find recent published research that used this approach, although there were examples (e.g. Mundia, 2012).

Interestingly, child protection services within the UK use this approach when writing serious case reviews (for an example, see Tudor, 2016); as, the aim of these reviews are to describe the experience of the child whilst shielding their identity as much as possible (Trodd and Chivers, 2011). In other words, they aim to disconnect the child's identity from their story (Lahman et al., 2015). In a way, to help overcome my ethical dilemma surrounding the children, this was what I was looking to achieve within the research. I wanted to ensure that the positional information provided could not produce a storied version of each child which may then indicate their identity to others. As Hadjistavropoulos and Smythe (2001) clearly state "these individuals did not consent to have stories about them circulated in this way" (pg. 169). Therefore, I chose to name the children using letters to help remove all possible discursive and positional links to each child participant by limiting the 'story' that could emerge from discussing their interactions and actions from within the classroom. To do this, standard terms are used (i.e. if three children were interacting I deem them Child A, Child B, Child C etc.). This occurred in every interaction discussed. This means that every time a new interaction is discussed within the findings the children may have been the same as previously discussed or they may have been different children. The only information the reader receives is that they are in fact one of the twelve child participants.

To summarise, I understand that this approach may have ‘dehumanised’ (Lahman et al., 2015; Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger, 2015; Allen and Wiles, 2016) the child participants, reduced the richness of the data, and is not commonly used, especially in ethnographic research. But, I felt that this was the most ethical approach to take as I was acutely aware that the children had not given me full informed consent. Nor, had they been given the opportunity to consider what kind of information could potentially be made available to a wide audience, for an indefinite period (Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger, 2005). A reflective review of the complexities of carrying out research with children is discussed further in section 8.3.2.

4.2.5 Debriefing

In relation to debriefing, I explained to the multiple parties of participants that there would be a number of points throughout the research study that I could and would like to discuss the progress and findings of the project. I ensured that everyone was aware of the opportunity to ask questions whenever was convenient for them and myself (Crotty, 2003; Gallagher, 2009) and this was taken up by some of the staff members and it was certainly taken up by most of the children, at one time or another. For example, the children appeared to enjoy asking me various questions about what I was doing, and they also enjoyed looking at the notes or drawings that I made whilst collecting data.

As advised by Silverman (2010), I wanted to maintain an honest and open dialogue with the participants so decided to send them copies of any transcripts

that were drawn up so that they could read through them to ensure I had fully understood their points and that it was a true reflection of what had been discussed. Although, each family received this, it did not result in any constructive feedback being received from the parents meaning it was not as successful as I had originally envisaged the approach being. However, I did contact each family to assess whether they felt the transcript was a true record of the conversations we had had together, and they all agreed that they were.

Additionally, I offered all participants and their families, staff members and the school (e.g. Head-teacher) a de-briefing report (see Appendix 10) that would contain the conclusions drawn within the thesis; however, this was declined by a number of the families. In contrast, one of the families asked if they could receive a full copy of the thesis once it had been finalised as they felt that would be more useful to read through than a de-briefing report. Additionally, I also offered to provide the school with a full copy of the thesis to which they responded positively towards. However, eight years have now passed since the start of the data collection process and unfortunately, I have lost contact with two out of the twelve families.

4.2.6 Summarising the ethical considerations

Consent: I obtained informed consent from all staff members (see Appendix 6) working at the school (e.g. teachers, teaching assistants, office staff) and from all the parents / carers of the observed children (see Appendix 8). The children were given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions to enable them to understand

the study as much as reasonably possible and they were frequently observed for any signs showing dissent daily.

Anonymity: I have taken measures to disguise the numerous identities involved within the study. For the adult participants, I employed the use of pseudonyms and for the staff members I chose not to provide information about their direct roles within the school. For the child participants, as discussed in section 4.2.4, I have used standardised terms to disguise their identities and their 'stories'. Finally, the school has also been given a pseudo name of Holme Court and is described only as a small village school in the North West of England.

Confidentiality: I made it clear to the staff, families and children that I could not guarantee confidentiality of information (Gallagher, 2009; Oliver, 2010; Palaiologou, 2012) as the study will be discussed in various ways (e.g. supervision meetings, at conferences and through journal papers); but this would always be done by systematically anonymising the data first. Furthermore, I made it clear to all that I am obliged to disclose any information I believe may indicate a safeguarding concern in relation to any individual involved within the research (Morrow and Richards, 1996; Graue and Walsh, 1998; BPS, 2009; 2014; BERA, 2011).

Right to withdraw: All the parents (see appendix 8) and staff members (see Appendix 6) signed a consent form that explicitly asked them to acknowledge their understanding concerning their right to withdraw themselves or their children

from the study at any time, which would result in the associated data also being withdrawn. In relation to the children, I made a commitment to ensure that they were verbally reminded of this frequently and I sought to establish their wishes if they displayed any signs of dissent throughout the course of the study.

Data Protection: All of the data has been protected by ensuring that any field notes have been secured in a locked briefcase kept at my home and any electronic materials have been password protected. All of the research data and associated notes will be shredded or deleted at the end of the overall project in compliance with the BPS ethical guidelines (BPS, 2009; 2014).

Debriefing: All participants have been offered an opportunity to receive a debriefing report (see Appendix 10 for a copy) or to be granted full access to the final version of the thesis.

4.3 Managing emerging ethical tensions

Although I had attempted to take precautions in relation to potential ethical issues arising, I knew there would remain the possibility of unplanned or unforeseen issues emerging as the project developed (de Laine, 2000; Sullivan and Riley, 2012). However, I genuinely underestimated their complexity and impact (e.g. in terms of time and emotional resources) when they did occur. Having reviewed the literature surrounding ethical considerations I knew that unforeseen ethical tensions were quite commonplace yet surprisingly the literature did not tend to explain how one should deal with them, if they were to arise.

4.3.1 Issue of No Consent

An issue I had to navigate through concerned the children in the classroom whose parents had not consented for them to be a part of the study. It is often discussed within the ethics literature, that there may be a time during a research project that some of the children within a large group may not have consented or have been given parental consent etc. (e.g. Morrow and Richards, 1996; Graue and Walsh, 1998; Alderson and Morrow, 2011). The general advice given is that the researcher should consider how they will manage the sensitive situation so as to avoid excluding those children, especially if they wish to participate in classroom activities. What is less clearly explained, is how to go about ensuring that these children are not excluded whilst also ensuring that the researcher is not breaking the ethical codes of research (BPS, 2009; 2014).

Alderson (2014) acknowledges that classroom-based research that does not gain parental consent for all children will become a much more complicated research project overall. She suggests the children with no consent may have to be given different activities to complete during the research process; and that they should not be recorded, or have notes made about them. As this research project, involved carrying out observations of the children undertaking normal school activities, I understood that I would not need to provide alternative activities for these children. I was also reassured that I would not need to exclude, either intentionally or accidentally these children as I was not attempting to influence the environment or the activities they were undertaking. Bearing this in mind, I started to undertake the observations following Alderson's advice about not observing or recording, making notes about any of the 13 children who did not

have parental consent. However, I was unsure how to proceed when one or more of the children with no consent happened to be a part of a group of children that I was observing.

This made the process messy and confusing, as I wanted to jot down any activities or behaviours that I had observed within the interaction; but, I could not make notes about the children with no consent. This meant that I could not provide all of the information that might have been needed to fully understand why certain behaviours or activities took place. Therefore, I made the decision to only observe group interactions that involved the children who had been given full parental consent. This means I will have missed out on some potentially interesting data, but it is important to know I was in line with the ethical guidelines set by the BPS (2009; 2014) and BERA (2011).

4.4 Collecting data

An ethnographic approach was chosen as it would allow the intricate and detailed experiential reality of the starting school transition to be uncovered. Nevertheless, as Banister et al. (1994), Denzin and Lincoln (1998), and Stivaros (2007) states, research methods in themselves only highlight partial parts of a wider picture and therefore it is best to triangulate where possible by utilising multi-methods. Tobbell (2006) acknowledges that by taking this approach, researchers are more likely to gain data that is multi-modal and developed from a multiple foci perspective. This was the only way of gaining the information that this project sought, which was to understand the intricate relationships and

environmental influences that shape children's starting school transitional experiences.

To collect this data, the project had to seek out the children's perspectives and experiences of the transition, the parental / carers perspective, and finally those of multiple stake holders too (e.g. teaching staff, non-teaching staff, head teacher and governing board). This meant employing a number of methods to allow the multiple perspectives sought to remain true and rich (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Flick, 2004), whilst being employed to address all of the research aims. The methods utilised are shown in figure 4.1 below.

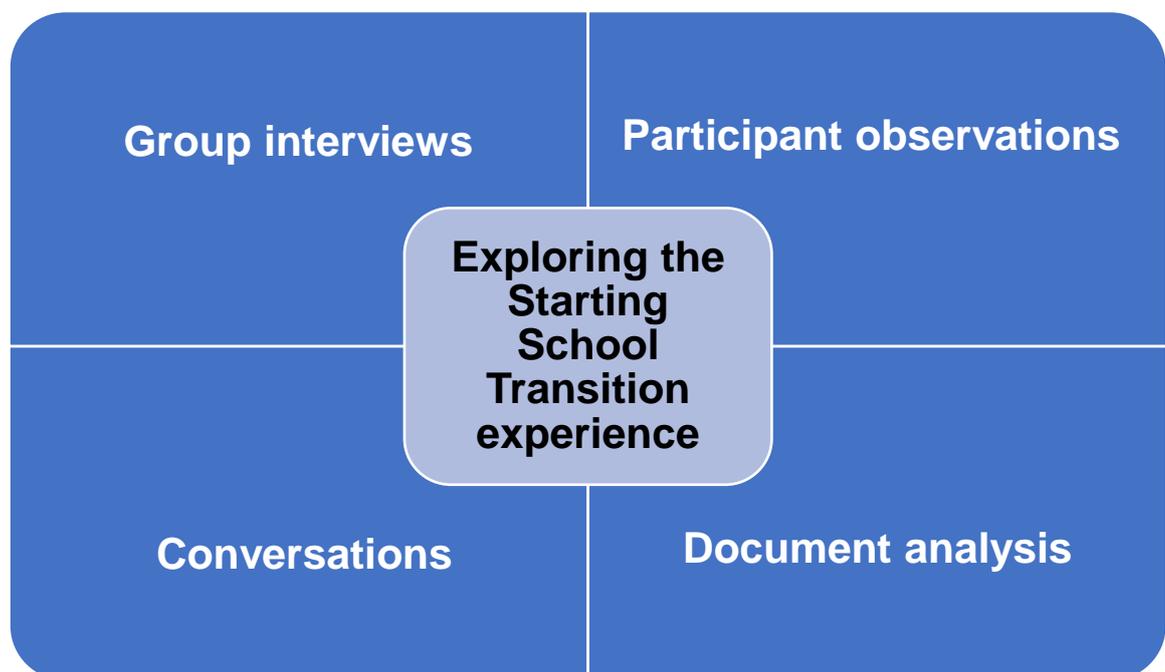


Figure 4.1: An illustration of the multi-modal methods employed to ethnographically explore the starting school experience.

4.4.1 Group Interviews

These were scheduled to take place once before the transition process began and once again near the end of the first formal year of schooling (see Appendix 11 for the interview schedule and topics). The group interviews were designed to provide the families of the children with an opportunity to highlight how they felt they understood, planned for and coped with the transition as a family unit. As Harden, Scott, Backett-Milburn and Jackson (2000) state interviews can provide opportunities for unique insights to emerge from respondents' discussed experiences, allowing them to explain and describe their own social worlds. This is why Maddon (2010) acknowledges that interviews can be a useful tool to employ when undertaking ethnographic research.

I undertook 2 semi-structured interviews with the focal children's parents/parent or carer and invited the children to also attend. The first interviews, all took place approximately one month before the children were due to start in the reception classroom (August 2009). The second interviews, took place at the end of the child's reception school year (June 2010). The chosen areas for consultation (see Appendix 11 for a list of topics covered within each interview and example questions that could be asked) were arrived at based on the general literature review of transition research (see Chapter 2 and 3 for a review of this area). Although, for the first interview, it should be noted that at the time of the interview, I was working from the transition propositions literature (see table 2.1 on page 57 – 58, for an overview of what these were). Therein, I focussed on collecting information about parental influences towards the transitional experience (e.g. parental educational experience, values and beliefs about education, socio-

economic background of the family) and child contributors (e.g. temperament, position within the family, other siblings at the school etc.). Example questions (which can be seen in more detail in Appendix 11) were:

1. What do you believe this transition is all about?
2. Did you enjoy school?
3. Why do you think we educate children?
4. Will your child be entitled to free school meals when they start at school?
5. What position is this child? First born, second born etc.

The first series of interviews (i.e. pre-transition) took on average an hour to complete. The shortest interview took 40 minutes and the longest lasted for 1 hour 23 minutes. The second set of interviews (i.e. post-transition) took, on average, 30 minutes; with the shortest being 21 minutes and the longest being 37 minutes. The topics covered in this set of interviews was more focussed on uncovering the parents understanding and experience of the transition. Example questions were:

1. In the first interview, you described it as.....would you say the same now?
2. Could you review the school year for me and tell me about how you think the year has gone?
3. Could you give me some advice for future parents about what might help them prepare for the transition?
4. How do you feel your child has managed the transition?
5. How do you feel you managed the transitional practice as a family?

In an ethnographically primed manner (Maddon, 2010), the venue for undertaking the interview in was chosen by the interviewee (e.g. family home, public café or public park) to allow them to choose a natural environment rather than asking them to undertake the interview in an unknown environment, i.e. the classroom. An additional aim to providing the participants with a choice over their environment was that it could help them feel more empowered to discuss the topic openly and honestly without any pressures being felt from the school or its staff (Bernard, 2013). Furthermore, every family was interviewed separately in an attempt to prevent any input or biases being brought into play from other families (Silverman, 2010). The family were allowed free choice on who would be present to represent the family and most of the interviews were carried out with the mother/carer of the child. One included the father of the child as well. In all of the initial interviews, the child was also present, but this was not the case in the follow up interview later in the year where there were only 8 in attendance. Every interview was audio recorded and later transcribed.

4.4.2 Participant observations

After completing the first set of interviews, I had been able to utilise a guiding focus for the observations that were to follow. For instance, after analysing the initial interviews with the parents, it became clear that they had perceived and socially constructed the transitional process as an opportunity to learn to become a school child (for a detailed presentation of these findings - see chapter 5). This allowed me to develop the research aims more, meaning two more aims (e.g. research aim 2 and 3) were added to the initial single aim (research aim 1) that had been developed at the start of the project.

Research Aims:

- 1) Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition experience
- 2) Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children
- 3) Understand the implications / function of the discourses that surround

When the parents discussed their ideas surrounding the transition, they highlighted certain practices like rules and learning as being an important aspect to master if a child was to be deemed, from their perspective, to have successfully transitioned. Therefore, I used this information to guide my observations within the classroom (see appendix 13 for an example of fieldnotes made). I focussed on any micro-politics involved within the classroom as Ball (2012) believed this helps to shape learning environments. Blase (1991) defines micro-politics as “the use of formal and informal power by individuals and groups to achieve their goals in organizations” (pg. 11). Furthermore, both he and Ball (2012) argued that cooperative and conflictive actions or processes are an important part of the micro-political realm. Thereby, I was interested in documenting interactions where an adult may have praised or punished a child, or where a child is pressured to conform to the group’s thinking in a peer to peer interaction.

Finally, due to my expanded research aims, I was interested in understanding what being a school child means. Therefore, as an ethnographer I aimed to

participate in, observe and document these micro-political activities when they occurred within the classroom or wider school activities; for instance, like the learning and obeying of school rules, routines, lunch time interactions and behaviours, and play time interactions. On the whole, the observations I made were based on my active participation in the daily life of the classroom so were interaction and behaviour driven and they made up the bulk of the field notes produced. However, it should be noted that the field notes also contained any conversations I overheard (discussed more fully in the section 4.4.3 conversations in this chapter) or was involved in and they included any self-reflections I made.

The observations I made were guided by the research aims. Yet, over the first few days of observations, it became clear that I would be unable to record all the phenomena I wished to record during my time in the field. I was also becoming increasingly aware that my biases and assumptions were starting to dictate what I chose to observe and note down. At first, this unsettled me as a researcher as I believed that I should be aiming to be as 'objective' as possible. However, after working through the notions of subjective / objective data I allowed Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2001) words to provide a blanket of comfort for they stated that "field notes are inevitably *selective*. The ethnographer writes about certain things that seem 'significant', ignoring and hence 'leaving out' other matters. In this sense, field notes never provide a complete record" (pg. 353).

It should also be noted here, my intention when carrying out the observations was that I would complete them as a participant observer. However, as mentioned previously, I was positioned by the school staff and parents in the space 'between' (Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). This meant not being fully accepted as a member of the school staff nor being accepted as a member of the parental group. I was aware of this and had anticipated that this may be a possibility at the start of the project. Even with this knowledge, I still envisaged being able to carry out the observations needed using a participant observer's role once within the classroom; however, I underestimated how difficult it would be to be accepted by the children too. As Corsaro and Molinari (2008, pg. 242) discuss "the ethnographer's acceptance into the world of children is particularly difficult because of obvious differences between adults and children in terms of cognitive and communicative maturity, power and physical size".

Clearly, in hindsight, I had what Punch (2002) declares as a privileged position in comparison to the children (and perhaps the teachers), in that I was an adult and not subject to the rules and regulations of the school. The staff were reluctant to involve me in activities and the children immediately picked up on this 'difference'. Even during the first session, it was clear that I was being viewed as someone different by the children by the way they flocked around me to see what I was doing when writing down observational notes; or by their insistence on trying to sit on my knee or wrap their arms around me. It was at this point that I was instructed by the school that they wanted me to use formal names with the children.

For example, they asked that I was known to the children as “Mrs Cartmell” even though I had invited the children to call me Kat during the initial interview visits, in an attempt to distinguish myself from the teachers. Once a member of staff introduced me as such, the children immediately started to call me Mrs Cartmell and this was then difficult to move past. I started to feel uncomfortable with the position I had been given within the classroom as the children did not seem sure on whether I was to be treated like the other adults or whether I could be treated more as friend (see the field note extract in Data Box 1).

Data Box 1

Child A, B and C had broken a pencil and was trying to fix it. Child A looked around the room and stated, “I don’t know, let’s ask Mrs Cartmell!” Child B then replied “Errm, no cos she is a teacher and she may get cross with us”. Child A attempted to query this comment “No she not.... she...” However, they were unable to finish the sentence as Child C quickly interrupted by firmly stating “Yeah she is...that is why she is called Miss now silly!”

I had chosen to undertake the observations as an active participant within the children’s environment. In reality, I was able to experience the transitional practices with the children but due to my privileged position I did not always manage to experience this from the children’s perspective as much as I had originally wanted to gain access to. Reassuringly, however, Van Maanen (1988, pg. 8) proposes that “there is no correspondence between the world as experienced and ...as conveyed in a text”. Thereby, I realised that whatever

observations I made would be socially constructed by me when I wrote them up, regardless of whether I was physically involved in an interaction with the children or whether I was a peripheral observer of their interaction.

4.4.3 Conversations

Another research method that allowed me to develop a deeper level of understanding of a situation was by employing the use of conversations within the research project. Interestingly, the importance of everyday talk has meant that the primary medium of social interactions are now viewed as taking place in general conversations (Burr, 2015). “Much of what we observe in formal and informal settings will inevitably consist of conversations” (Silverman, 1992, pg. 15). As Murchison (2010) states, when undertaking ethnographic research, you have to be able to reach the data that can help make the strange familiar (Clifford, 1986a) and as discourses are often unspoken truths (Foucault, 1982), I needed a tool that would allow me to gain access to participants cognitive thinking in the moment. Therein, social interactions were captured via conversations that took place on a daily basis during the school year and these were with the children, teachers, school staff and with parents. The conversations involving children often took place within the classroom where I did not have consent for all the children in the room. If a conversation included any of these children I chose not to record any of the conversation. Not having consent for all children meant that using audio recording equipment was not possible when attempting to capture these conversations. If I felt the conversation may help meet any of the research aims in some way, I took down detailed notes as soon as was practically possible. This was usually carried out as soon as the conversation ended. As suggested

by Burgess (1988), I attempted to write my notes as a verbatim record of the conversation, but this was dependent upon my recall of the events. However, my notes were always typed up at the end of each day to ensure the richness of the memory was still present.

In relation to the conversations between myself and another adult, again if I felt it may help meet the research aims in some way, I asked if it could be audio recorded (Kusenbach, 2003) to which my request was usually consensually granted. Throughout my time in the field, one person refused this request, but they were happy for me to make hand written notes during the conversation. Whether it was audio recorded and later transcribed or written up from note form, I tried to seek the adult's approval of whether the product was a true representation of the conversation (Oliver, 2010; Silverman, 2010). In all incidences of this taking place, the adult agreed with the representation presented. However, I must admit that this exchange of ideas often took place in busy environments where staff / adults were constrained by time and tasks that had to be completed. In future research, I will endeavour to find a more specific time to complete this where the participants preferably do not have so many competing issues for their attention. However, as Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) acknowledges this can be a difficult goal to achieve when undertaking school-based research.

4.4.4 Document analysis

As discourse is fermented and objectified through talk, and since talk is also written documents, I wanted to investigate what discursive thoughts were in the documents produced in relation to this transition. This would help with the overarching ethnographic goal of making the strange familiar (Clifford, 1986a). Therefore, this analysis was guided by research aim 1, 2 and 3.

Research Aims:

- 1) Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition
- 2) Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children
- 3) Understand the implications / function of the discourses that surround the starting school transition

To gain a wider level of understanding that went beyond the child's micro system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I needed to seek out information from other areas of the child's ecological system. This included understanding the relationships that surrounded the child-parent-school triad centred within Bronfenbrenner's (1979) conceptualisation of the meso-system. Therefore, I reviewed any document that may be used by the school to converse with parents or the children. This included documents such as the school's handbooks, school website, home-school agreements, letters home, pupil reports, homework tasks, teacher observation sheets etc. I analysed these documents to help understand the relationships that

were being co-constructed through the use of these documents which were also discursively positioning the relationships as well (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

Additionally, I also wanted to better understand the discourse that surrounded this transition from an exo and macro system position (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and how this has become objectified (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015) via government policies and reified through school paperwork. I used the research aims to guide my choice of documents and also what to analyse. I was interested in understanding the nuances provided by the documents which may have helped to construct the transition in a certain manner. Therefore, I sought out a range of documents to analyse which may have contributed to the shaping of the children's day-to-day transitional experience at school (e.g. EYFS and National Curriculum documents, County Council documents relating to school policies and procedures related to transition, school handbooks, reading books used, stories read in groups, school prayers and hymns sung in assemblies).

4.4.5 Leaving Holme Court

I had initially planned to stay (in a full-time capacity) with the children for the entire school year (potentially 190 days). However, after the end of the first term (64 days), I became aware that I was starting to see the strange as familiar even though the aim of ethnography is to see the 'familiar as strange' (Clifford, 1986a; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Therefore, I decided to reduce the amount of times I went into the class and wider school down to three full days per week (from five) thereby spending 47 days within the classroom in term 2. This helped

as it meant that I needed to have more conversations with individuals to catch up on progress and to understand the cause and effect of certain activities or events. This led to me being less reliant on my own interpretations which I was starting to make more frequently as I got to know and understand the children and classroom practices more. After the second term ended, I noticed I was repeatedly making the same types of observational notes and so decided to reduce the visits to one or two per week (changing the days each week to ensure that I observed a range of activities instead of the same ones every week). This equated to spending 22 days in the classroom in term three. Therefore, in the full academic year, I spent 133 full days with the children within the school / classroom environment.

4.5 Data Analysis

One of the first steps of data analysis in qualitative research is to organise the material so that it is possible to systematically work through it (Richardson, 1996; Barbour, 2008; Bernard, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2013). This is because, analysis and interpretation do not magically appear out of ethnographic data sets unlike in quantitative data sets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In ethnographic data, analysis and interpretation are instead illuminated through a patient but often messy process (Murchison, 2010) and this was certainly the case in this research. Therefore, the first task to be completed was what Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) called data preparation and involved transcribing the first set of interviews which I undertook without having chosen which analytical method I would use to analyse the data with.

It should be noted here that any transcription process is simply a re-representation (Potter, 1996) of what a participant has said. Therefore, it cannot be considered a neutral process, although, the procedure followed can be consistently applied (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Gill (2000) proposes the use of a verbatim transcript, if discourse is a potential area of interest. With this advice in mind, whilst transcribing each group interview, I ensured that the transcript was indeed a verbatim record (where possible) and included the 'arrs' and 'erms' that were given (Patton, 1990; Poland, 1995). However, due to the conditions of where the interviews sometimes took place, there were a number of occurrences where the speech of an individual became inaudible and where this occurred, as advised by Poland (1995) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011), it was noted on the transcript. For an example of an interview transcript see Appendix 12.

It is important to point out that the transcription process is one of the first steps in data analysis (Potter, 1996) as Bailey (2008) explains that researchers spend great amounts of time listening to the audio being transcribed and this will enable them to develop a sense of familiarity with the data. Therefore, as suggested by Bailey (2008) and Sutton and Austin (2015), I repeatedly listened to each audio file, once before transcribing began, another during the transcription process and another to check the accuracy of the transcription document against the audio file. Braun and Clarke (2006) acknowledge that this level of familiarity can enable a researcher to identify initial patterns or repeating issues between one or more interviews. Therefore, they suggest these should be noted in a reflective journal as they can be used later when attempting to code the data or when checking for accuracy. I had taken this approach throughout the transcribing process and I

made reflective notes in my journal which were guided by research aim 1, therefore I noted down anything I felt was interesting in relation to the concepts associated with the starting school transition. As I moved on to transcribing other interviews, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), I was able to note points or ideas that appeared to be common amongst other participants. This process indicated there was a potential topic which appeared to be repeating across the participants which was “learning and what their children will or should learn seems to be important to many parents” (extract taken from reflective journal).

According to Silverman (2010), after transcription, it is important to begin to gain some form of control over the data and this can be achieved by simply reading and re-reading the transcripts with a general aim of devouring the information presented (Barbour, 2008; Bernard, 2013). It was at this stage that I attempted to find guidelines that would assist me in analysing the data collected. This is where I first entered a problem, as Patton (1990) contended, there are no rules or basic precepts that can be used when analysing qualitative data. As many authors have argued (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Carter and Little, 2007; Murchison, 2010; Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017; Nowell, Norris, White and Moules, 2017) analysis is not always a linear process where you can rigidly follow a step by step approach. Instead, they purport that it is a more recursive and iterative process, where you sometimes have to move back and forth as needed. I spent quite some time in this space, as I moved back and forth inductively (Braun and Clarke, 2006) reading and re-reading the transcripts. Whilst doing this, I was also reading the literature on qualitative data processes (e.g. Ritchie and Lewis,

2003; Barbour, 2008; Stainton-Rogers and Willig, 2008; Silverman, 2010) which highlighted that the most suitable analytical method to help me meet the research aims, which required rich detailed descriptions of shared understanding and experiences, would be thematic analysis.

4.5.1 Employing thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used method of analysis in qualitative research (Barbour, 2008; Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006) define it as “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data” (p. 79). This means it can answer research aims / questions by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the data by illustrating themes from within the data set (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). The method is often described in textbooks but a detailed ‘step-by-step’ description of how to rigorously carry it out is rarely provided (Nowell et al., 2017). Therefore, I chose to follow the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) who are considered to have outlined a consistent, systematic and rigorous approach for the method (Silverman, 2010; Bernard, 2013; Ando, Cousins, and Young, 2014; Gerdin, 2017).

Braun and Clarke’s (2006) approach to thematic analysis is achieved by working through six phases to create established, meaningful patterns. These phases are: (1) familiarisation with the data, (2) the generation of initial codes, (3) searching for themes among codes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and finally (6) producing the final report covering all themes.

How I fulfilled each phase of the analysis will be covered in more detail in the upcoming sections (4.5.2 and 4.5.3). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), these six phases are linear although they highlight that sometimes a researcher may need to move back and forth between phases as new understandings develop. They suggest that a researcher should always detail how they carried out their coding, and development of themes so that a reader can judge the creditability and “trustworthiness” (Nowell et al., 2017, pg. 1) of findings produced. To help in this endeavour Braun and Clarke (2006) argue a researcher should also inform the reader of whether they undertook an inductive approach or a theoretical approach to the thematic analysis as this can influence how codes and subsequent themes are developed. I used both an inductive and a theoretical thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) at various points of data analysis. For example, the first stage of analysis was carried out in an inductive manner and will be discussed next.

4.5.2 Inductive thematic analysis

The first data analysis was of the group interviews, involving the parent and child, which took place before the children had started at school. At this particular time of the research, my epistemological stance was guiding my research aims in a very broad manner as the overarching research aim was to explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition. As stated previously, the interview questions / areas were chosen to enable this to be explored within these initial interviews. However, when it came to analysing them I inductively set out to understand the data so that more specific research questions could evolve

through the coding process (Banister et al., 1994; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Barbour, 2008; Silverman, 2010).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), inductive analysis is “a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher’s analytic preconceptions” (pg. 89). Therein, in my attempt to explore the concepts associated with the transition (research aim 1), I moved back and forth through the interview data set, reading and re-reading the transcripts to help familiarise myself with the data (Phase 1). As I moved onto phase 2 of the analysis, I used coloured ‘post-it-notes’ and highlighter pens to demarcate ideas and possible patterns that were directly related to the research aim. For instance, I was interested in understanding how the participants were conceptualising the transition and what concepts they have come to associate with it. Savage (2000) proposes that qualitative coding is a reflective process that encourages researchers to interact with and consider what the data is attempting to ‘say’. Coding enables a data reduction process (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to occur as the researcher moves through unstructured data by identifying important sections of text and attaching labels to them in a categorical manner.

Undertaking this second phase of data analysis highlighted that there were 6 potential patterns being repeatedly discussed during the group interviews, indicating they were important pieces of information to the participants when they considered the starting school transition (research aim 1). As they were observed regularly, 6 categories were coded as: (1) ‘personal experience’ (including

information about the children's or parent's life experiences in relation to schooling); (2) 'learning' (which included any data that discussed how the children or parents have learnt or will learn during the transition); (3) 'positioning' (which included information about how the participants felt they would or had been positioned before the transition through past experience or school activities); (4) 'doing school' (detailed the activities the parents and children associated with the concept of schooling); (5) 'expectations' (which included the parents' and children's considerations of what they were expecting to occur during the transition and what behaviours they would need to carry out); finally (6) was labelled as 'influencers' (this contained information about potential influencing factors that may impact a child's transitional experience).

It should be noted here that code 6 'influencers' was omitted from the analysis at this stage as it consisted of information which formed from specific interview questions (e.g. how would you describe your child's personality? will your child be entitled to free school meals when they start at school?) which had been initially designed to test the transition propositions literature (see table 2.1. on page 57 - 58). Therefore, I felt the data that was represented did not contribute to developing an awareness of how the participants were conceptualising the transition or any concepts they associated with it (Research aim 1).

Phase 3 involves searching for themes by beginning to examine how codes combine to form overarching themes in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I initially felt quite lost in this process which King (2004) suggests is a normal

reaction for those who are attempting thematic analysis for the first time. He proposes that rather than trying to interpret every code to an equal depth, which I was initially doing, that researchers focus on identifying themes which help to build an understanding of the phenomena under investigation. This knowledge prompted me to go back through the coded data and ask myself how the data could help me meet research aim 1 and understand what concepts may be associated with the starting school transition. As I did this, I began to draw up a mind map for each code which documented the various answers I found to my guiding question. Having completed a mind map for each code, I placed them next to each other so that I could begin to visually interrogate them (King, 2004) for potential relationships between the coded data. Utilising the mind map process allowed me to understand that two emerging themes could provide a description of the transition, in line with research aim 1 (Boyatzis, 1998), from two conceptual perspectives. An example of this was one code which helped to understand the transition as 'being about learning' and one that helped to understand the transition as 'being about school activities'.

I believe it is important at this point to discuss the common usage of the words 'emergence' or 'discovery' of themes from within data sets. As Braun and Clarke (2006) rightly outline, these terms are passive accounts of an analytical process. Furthermore, they argue that it "denies the active role the researcher always plays in identifying patterns/themes, selecting which are of interest, and reporting them to the readers" (pg. 83). Therefore, I highlight that, under the guidance of the research aim, I played a central role in the identification of the theme (Patton, 1990; Nowell et al., 2017).

To progress onto phase 4, means the potential themes from phase 3 need refining and a researcher must review the coded data to consider if it forms a coherent pattern (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Therefore, I moved all the colour coded data over to separate word documents until each document contained the same coloured data. From there, I revisited the coded data and grouped individual extracts from each document into each potential theme. As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain a theme is not solely dependent upon quantifiable measures but on whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research aim. They argue the data within the themes should bind together meaningfully and be clearly distinguishable between themes. By the end of this phase, the researcher should have developed a good understanding of how the themes fit together and what story they tell about the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

The fifth phase involves determining what aspect of the data themes are capturing, thereby identifying the story that each theme tells (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For instance, the first theme was storying how the parents and children had come to associate a concept of 'learning to learn' (see data box 3 to 6 in Chapter 5 for extracts of this data) with the notion of the starting school transition. The second theme documented evidence of another concept 'learning to become a school child' (see data box 2 in Chapter 5 for extracts of this data) and how it had also become entangled with the notion of the starting school transition. Having established that each theme had highlighted a concept that the parents and children associated with the transitional experience I came to realise that the

relationship between the two themes was that they were both being used by the participants in their attempts to predict or construct what the transition experience might be like. For example, parents made it clear that they understood the transition would be a time of learning how to learn, like learning how to read and add up. But they also recognised that it involved learning how to be a school child, meaning the children would need to learn how to obey the school rules and follow instructions given by the teacher. This meant that the parents and children had socially constructed the transition as being an opportunity for them to learn how to carry out these two conceptual practices which they associated with the notion of starting school. Therefore, an overarching theme of ‘constructing the transition’ was named, see figure 4.2. for a visual representation.

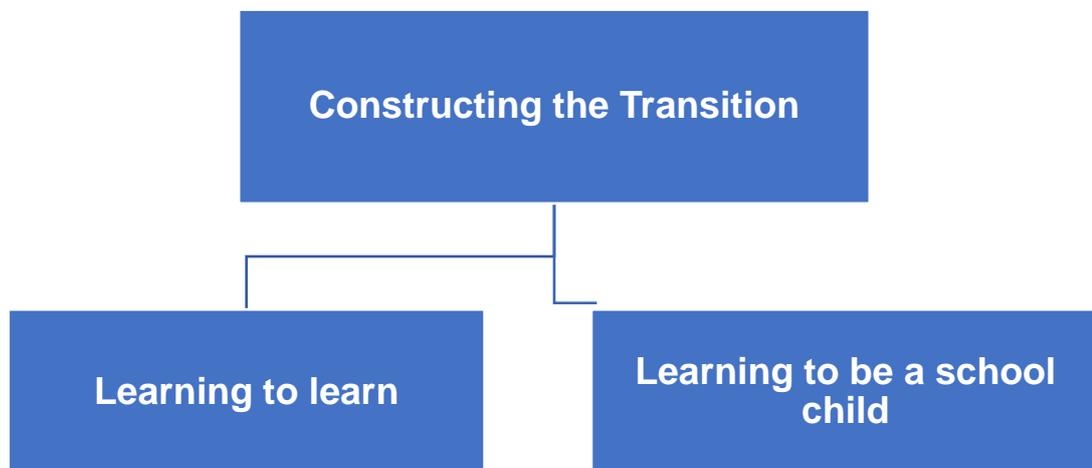


Figure 4.2: a diagram showing the initial theme and sub-themes which emerged from the inductive thematic analysis of the first set of group interviews.

4.5.3 Theoretical thematic analysis

After collecting more data and having developed my theoretical knowledge, I undertook a theoretical thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the remaining data sets (this included the post transition group interviews, the field notes, observations, conversations and document analysis). This was due to the research aims (provided below) being realigned and developed from the first analysis and taking this approach per Braun and Clarke (2006) allows them to be met by providing a more focussed and detailed analysis of some aspect of the data. Boyatzis (1998, pg. 48) reminds us that when creating themes “keeping the objective or research phenomenon in focus is essential”. This means that all themes that have been produced in this second analytical stage were directly in response to the research aims that drove the analysis.

Research Aims:

- 1) Explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition experience
- 2) Develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children
- 3) Understand the implications / function of the discourses that surround the starting school transition

To guide me further when attempting to meet the research aims, I utilised a few guiding questions to help me when analysing the reminding data sets. These were: What discourses surround the transition? How do they influence the day-to-day experience of starting school? What discursive practices are visible within the classroom setting? These questions were chosen as they embrace a Foucauldian perspective (Kendall and Wickham, 1999; Burr, 2015) which is the theoretical lenses I employed within this study. This is because Foucault (1982) believes we should question the implicit and explicit expectations that are provided by the discourses that surround us on a daily basis. Therefore, I used this theoretical lens to interrogate the starting school transition by investigating what potential impacts the discourses that surround it have on the daily experiences of the children undertaking the process.

Shotter (1993) postulates that outlining the theoretical lenses that was used when carrying out this type of thematic analysis can help the reader understand the analysis depicted. Therefore, I have already acknowledged the overarching social constructionist perspective throughout this thesis, but I also drew upon the foundations of a Foucauldian discursive psychology perspective when analysing the remaining data sets. This meant that I had developed a 'bricoleur' (Crotty, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) approach of analysis as it drew from a Foucauldian perspective whilst utilising methods from discursive psychology.

It should be noted here that discursive psychology is different to discourse analysis in that it looks at the nuances of the discourse rather than the minute

detail of the text collected (Harré and Stearns, 1995). Therefore, it is not interested in the way words are spoken or what *is* fundamentally spoken which discourse analysis aims to achieve (Kendall and Wickham, 1999); instead, it is more interested in how the actions that stem from the words or texts have an impact on individuals around them. As Potter and Hepburn state “the focus on discourse rather than language signals an approach that is focused on action and practice rather than linguistic structure” (pg. 2). Thereby, it focuses on the experiences in the moment by moment interactions as it sees discourse as a verb rather than just a noun (Potter, and Hepburn, 2008).

It has been argued that discursive psychology, in general, does not hold the same notion of discourse as is used in Foucault’s work (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Harré and Stearns, 1995; Potter and Hepburn, 2008). For instance, Foucault (1977) describes discourse variously as including institutions, and institutional practises like schools have. He argues that the rules of inclusion and exclusion are embodied in the founding of the institution and are therefore an important part of the discursive notion of the institution. Yet, Potter and Hepburn (2008) state that discursive psychology has a more restricted notion of what discourse is. However, they also argue that does not mean that the two perspectives cannot work together. In fact, they suggest by marrying the two in a ‘bricoleur’ (Crotty, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) approach could mean that Foucault’s insights about institutions like schools and its practice and subjectivity are aired more. They state a virtue of discursive psychology “is its precision and its fittedness to a particular analytic practice” meaning the theoretical perspective can add richness to an already rich analytical approach. Therefore, after marrying the two

together I started to pay particular attention to discursive strategies, lived ideologies and ideological dilemmas, and positioning (Edwards and Potter, 1992) and these helped me to design codes to help me analyse the data sets.

4.5.4 Coding and Analysing

Due to the Foucauldian discursive psychology approach taken and the research questions which guided me (What discourses surround the transition? How do they influence the day-to-day experience of starting school? What discursive practices are visible within the classroom setting?), coding and analysis started to initially take place by viewing what the texts (e.g, field notes, interview transcripts, observations, documents collected) were constructing that was relatable to the overall research aims and questions in an attempt to develop it into cohesive themes. As Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013) and Nowell et al. (2017) outline that a consistent approach must be taken when carrying out thematic analysis I chose to carry out the analysis using the same six phase process which I have previously outlined in section 4.5.2. The only difference in this process was that instead of inductively producing codes (in phase 2), in this analysis codes were deductively produced based on the Foucauldian theoretical framework being drawn upon. It has been argued (e.g. Holligan, 2000; Deacon, 2006; Ball, 2013) that little of Foucault's work focussed explicitly on education or schools, therefore Belsey (2001) suggests that his critique of these areas needs to be constructed from what is implicit. Belsey (2001) argues that "Foucault highlights that by using his notions of problematising the present, archaeology, genealogy, governmentality, the self and the operation of power/knowledge, one could question the discourse of discipline, institutions and their practices" (pg.

73). This means, in relation to this study, as Foucault (1972) outlines that discourses systematise and frame how we think, feel, understand and practice in specific areas in our lives, I wanted to uncover potential *discourses* associated with the daily *practices* involved in the transitional experience and make visible the power relations that can also influence an individual's *identity*. This produced three initial theoretical codes: discourse, practices, identity.

When undertaking a theoretical thematic analysis, King (2004) suggests using a provisional coding template that can be used across all the data sets. After an initial exploration of the data sets, the three initial codes were developed into what King (2004) terms hierarchical codes. This means broad higher order codes often provide an overview or 'theme' for additional codes which develop throughout the initial analysis. Any 'lower order codes' (King, 2004) allow for distinctions to be made within and between cases categorised under the hierarchical code. Due to the prominence of experiences observed/heard additional lower order codes were therefore developed under each theme of code. I formatted these numerically as: (1) *Discourses* (1.1 developmental, 1.2 childhood, 1.3 parenting, 1.4 school child), (2) *Practices* (2.1 rules, 2.2 routines, 2.3 rights of the child, 2.4 power relations) and (3) *Identity* (3.1 school child, 3.2 positioning, 3.3 re-positioning). These can be seen in figure 4.3 below. These codes provided a coding template which was then systematically used across all of the available data sets.

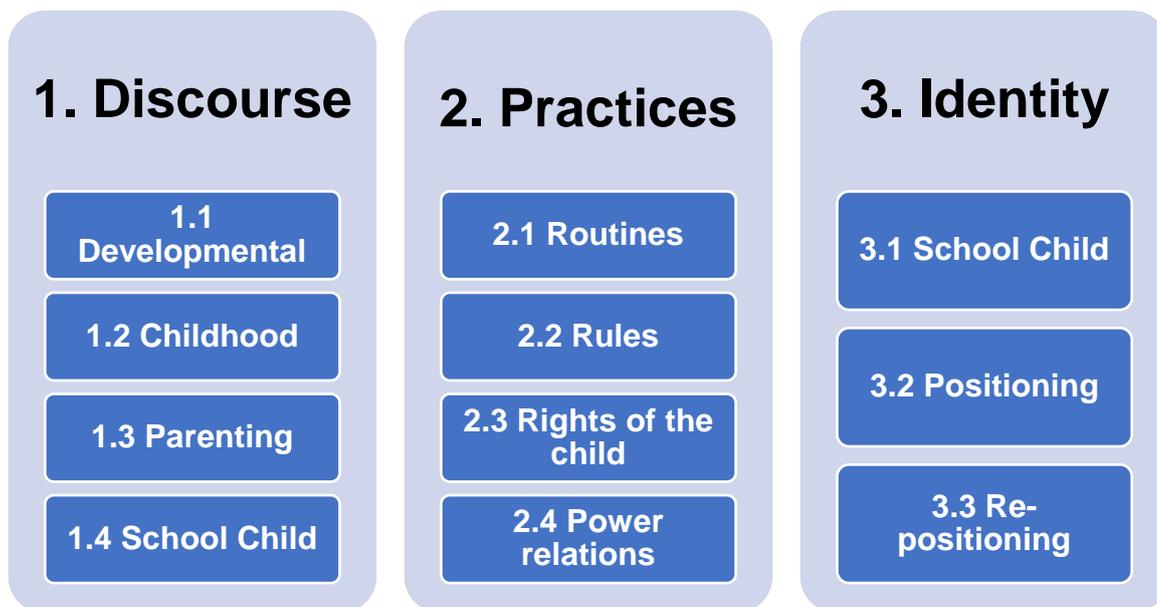


Figure 4.3: showing the various theoretically driven codes and sub codes used to initially analyse the various data sets available.

Regarding the physical process of carrying out the coding, after having typed up all the group interviews, field notes, observations, conversations and collated the documents to be analysed, I used a similar approach as I had used in the first analysis except instead of using colours to code extracts of data I used the assigned numerical code (e.g. 1.1 or 3.1). I considered which data sets each research aim would need to draw from, and then systematically worked through them producing a number of different word documents that contained extracts for each sub-code, according to each research aim. During phase 3 of the analysis process, I systematically went through each sub-coded document looking for any patterns and/or contradictions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). When contradictions in the data were found they were capitalised upon to allow a greater depth of exploration to be provided. As Mason (2006, pg. 20) explains, qualitative research does not aim “to produce a tidy picture, but to allow for the messiness

and tensions that exist in social reality” to be documented. She explains that “explanations do not have to be internally consensual and neatly consistent to have meaning and to have the capacity to explain. Indeed, if the social world is multi-dimensional, then surely our explanations need to be likewise” (pg. 20). Therefore, contradictions in the data were used to provide alternative explanations.

Data extracts, indicating patterns, contradictions or single ideas were grouped in relation to how they helped to meet any of the three research aims. This produced three large documents of data extracts (one for each research aim) which were made up of various sub-coded data. As is suggested by others, extracts were used repeatedly across all three documents, if it was felt they fitted within each research aim (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maguire and Delahunt, 2017; Nowell et al., 2017). At this point, I used a mind map approach to try to understand what the extracts in each document were attempting to ‘say’ (Savage, 2000) in relation to each research aim.

Initially, research aim 1 had been explored during the inductive analysis stage but had only been carried out on a small selection of the data (pre-transition group interviews) and this process resulted in two new specific research aims being produced, whilst research aim 1 was realigned to concentrate on concepts associated with the starting school transitional experience. Therefore, I chose to explore research aim 2 first as this would require an amalgamation of the inductively coded data (from the pre-transition group interviews) with the

theoretically coded data extracts (from the pre and post-transition group interviews, conversations and collated documents). Research aim 3 was then explored as this was theoretically interested in data sets which documented classroom practices (e.g. field notes, observations, conversations and collated documents). Finally, research aim 1 was returned to and explored using the theoretically coded data extracts which originated specifically from the field notes, observations, conversations and collated documents.

Research Aim 2

The first data document I went on to mind map was based on research aim 2, which was concerned with developing an understanding of how the parents, children and school staff understood, interpreted and experienced the starting transition. This means the coded data originated from the group interviews (both pre and post transition), the conversations I had with staff, and the collated documents. By undertaking a mind map process of the data, I was able to categorise the data further (i.e. phase 4 of the analysis) into three potential sub themes. The first sub theme was detailing how the parents and children had come to (1a) 'define the transition' based on their experiences pre and post transition (see figure 4. 4 for a visual representation of the connections between sub themes and sub-sub-themes in relation to research aim 2). Therefore, this first sub theme contained two sub-sub-themes which were (1.1a) 'socially constructing the transition' from experiences and (1.2a) 'learning to learn' how to navigate the transition. This meant the data contained in this theme was helping to demonstrate how the children and parents had defined and redefined the starting school transition by drawing on their interactions and experiences.

Interestingly, in the data extracts from the second group interviews (post transition) it became apparent that having undergone the transition, many of the parents reported that they had experienced (2.1a) 'relationship changes' with both their children and the school staff. In fact, many of the parents discussed how they felt that (2.2a) 'unequal relationships' had developed between themselves and school staff; even though there was a difference in opinion as to whether this was a positive or negative outcome. Thereby, a second sub theme emerged that detailed how the parents had undergone a process of (2a) 're-positioning' during the transition. Finally, a third sub theme formed which illustrated repeating ideas (Braun and Clarke, 2006) concerning (3a) 'parenting discourses'. The parents appeared to draw upon these discourses, which were (3.1a) 'good' parenting and (3.2a) 'pushy' parents, when they were attempting to consider their own actions in relation to the transitional experiences they reported. Having completed phase 4 of the analysis, I had three sub themes formed which contained their own sub-sub-themes; yet they appeared to be quite distinct from each other.

Recall, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that stage 5 of the analysis process can only be reached when a researcher has come to understand the full story being portrayed by the data. Therefore, I undertook another review of the extracts and data in each sub theme and sub-sub-theme and completed additional mind maps until I uncovered the connecting relationship between the three sub themes. The relationship that overarched the three sub themes was that each sub theme and sub-sub theme was indicating various influences that were impacting the way that each participant was (a) 'constructing their own understanding of the starting

school transition'. Therefore, in response to research aim 2 which was to understand how parents, children and school staff understood, interpreted and experienced the starting transition, the overall theme showcased that the parents', children and school staff drew on available discourses when attempting to socially construct the starting school transition. The full theme of constructing the transition and its sub and sub-sub themes that developed are shown in figure 4.4, below.

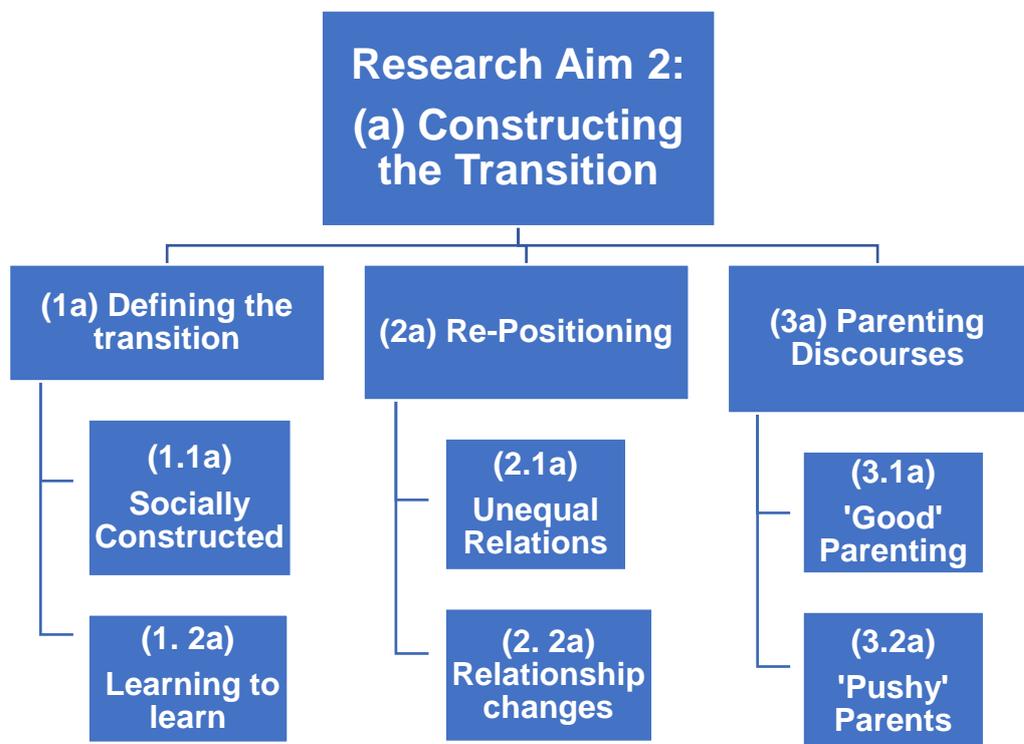


Figure 4.4: showing the overall theme, sub themes and sub-sub themes which emerged in response to research aim 2.

Research Aim 3

Research aim 3 was to develop an understanding of the implications / function of the discourses that surround the starting school transition. Theoretically speaking, this meant that I wanted to understand what the implications may be regarding the discourses and practices that the children underwent during their *daily classroom experience*. Therefore, to help meet this aim, I drew on the data gained from the field notes, observations, conversations and collated documents.

As highlighted by Nowell et al. (2017), in theoretical thematic analysis, initial codes may begin to form main themes, and this occurred when I was attempting to meet research aim 3. The initial codes used in phase 2 of the analysis (see figure 4.3) had uncovered numerous extracts that related to the daily classroom practices and associated power relations that the children experienced during the transition (e.g. initially coded as (2) practices, 2.1. routines, 2.2. rules, 2.3 rights of the child and 2.4 power relations). Therefore, in phase 3 of the analysis I had uncovered three potential sub themes which were documenting common patterns (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017) or experiences in regard to a number of discursive practices observed within the classroom. Thereby, allowing me to understand research aim 3 more pragmatically by highlighting three discourses which influence the daily transitional experience (see figure 4.5 below for a visual representation of the sub themes and sub-sub themes which emerged). The sub themes were (1b) 'routines' used within the school / classroom environment, the (2b) 'rules' employed and finally what (3b) 'rights' the children were granted within the school environment.

In phase 4 of the analysis, these three discursive practices (Foucault, 1982) were broken down into smaller categories (sub-sub themes) by drawing on a Foucauldian lens to understand the implications / functions of the discursive practices found. For example, in relation to routines, the Foucauldian lens allowed me to understand that various discourses influence the (1.1b) 'use' of school / classroom routines, they influence what (1.2b) 'type of routines' are used, and they influence the expected (1.3b) 'value' of the routines. Thereby, developing my understanding of potential implications / functions of discourses during the transition (research aim 3). Additionally, again from a Foucauldian perspective, in relation to the rules employed within the school / classroom the data repeatedly indicated (Braun and Clarke, 2006) that the learning of the rules appeared to be taught through a process of (2.1b) 'rote learning' and that this helped to produce (2.2b) 'docile bodies' by implementing regimes of practices. Again, developing my understanding of potential implications / functions of discourses during the transition (research aim 3). Finally, the sub theme of children's rights was broken down to represent three sub-sub themes which centred around evidencing the (3.1b) 'four pillars' of the United Nations Convention Rights of the Child (UNCRC, United Nations, 1989). It highlighted that children were being discursively positioned as (3.2b) 'becomings' during the transition (Prout and James, 1997) and how overall, they were being (3.3b) 'perceived as less than adults'. The data within these sub-sub themes allowed me to consider the implications / function of children rights within the classroom during this particular transitional experience.

Finally, I designed a mind map with the intention of uncovering any more possible links within the extracted data and this highlighted a repeating connection (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to the discursive notion of being a 'good' pupil. This process therefore emphasised an additional sub-theme existed within the data, which was the (4b) 'good' pupil. This sub theme documented examples of how the three practices (e.g. routines, rules and rights of the child) helped to (re)produce a discourse associated with the expected behaviours of a 'good' school child. Having reached stage 5 of the analysis, in relation to research aim 3, I had come to theoretically understand that the data was storying (b) 'how and why these three discursive practices had been employed and what their potential function was during this transition'. All the sub and sub-sub themes can be viewed in figure 4.5 on page 196.

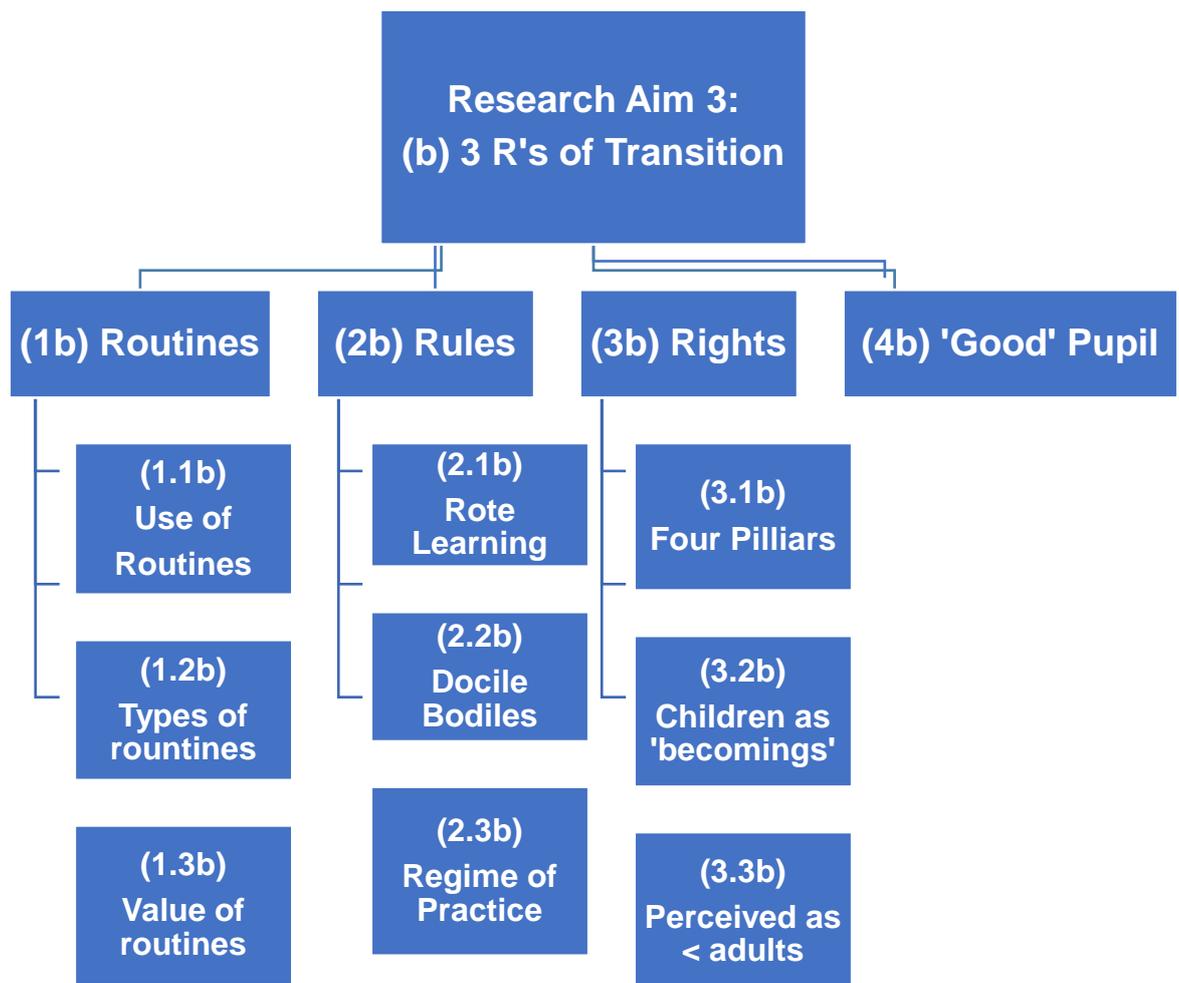


Figure 4.5: showing the overall theme, sub themes and sub-sub themes which emerged in response to research aim 3

Research Aim 1

Finally, I went back through the coded data to look for examples that may help me to meet the realigned research aim 1, which was to explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition experience. As Foucault (1982) acknowledges that discourses constitute objects (in this case the transition experience itself), I was keen in this analysis to examine the data that was

captured during the day to day process of the transition period as this evidence would assist in understanding what concepts help to constitute the experienced transitional practices. Therefore, I examined the field notes, observations, conversations and collated documents.

The initial codes used in phase 2 of the analysis had highlighted one potential hierarchical theme (King, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006) which was centred on identity and this concept was intertwined with transitional experience. Within this there were two potential sub themes which were theoretically driven. One was focussed on Foucault's ideas relative to (1c) disciplinary power (1975; 1980) and exploring how the children may have experienced this during the transition. The other was based on the theory of (2c) positioning (Davies and Harré, 1999; Linehan and McCarthy, 2000) with the intent on exploring how positions were taken up by children throughout the transitional period. For instance, the data highlighted a number of repeated examples of how the children were positioned by staff, other children and by themselves at times. This was illustrated through sub-sub themes which showcased how (2.1c) 'subject positions' were made available to them and that these positions are often entangled with cultural messages of (2.2c) 'moral values'. From a Foucauldian perspective, the sub theme (1c) 'disciplinary power' (Foucault, 1977; 1980) was evidenced through two sub-sub themes, the employment of (1.1c) 'disciplinary tools' and (1.2c) 'self-policing' which the data indicated was being used in a manner as to coheres the children into performing the behaviours expected of a 'good' school child.

Yet, there were a number of coded extracts that showcased that the children were capable of responding to subject positions and disciplinary tools in a variety of ways. Therefore, in phase 4 of the analysis, this led to the development of an additional sub-theme (3c) 'agency', which collated examples of children being (3.1c) 'social actors' (Mayall, 2002) during the transitional experience (sub-sub theme) and it showcased them employing (3.2c) 'repositioning tricks' (Quick, 2015; cited in Hargreaves, 2017) in their attempts to understand how they were being positioned (sub-sub theme). In stage 5 of the analysis, I had come to understand that the data was highlighting that the (c) 'concepts of identity, power, positioning and agency' were intrinsically connected to the starting school transition experience. A full breakdown and visual representation of the connections between the sub themes and sub-sub themes for theme 3 can be seen in figure 4.6 on page 199.

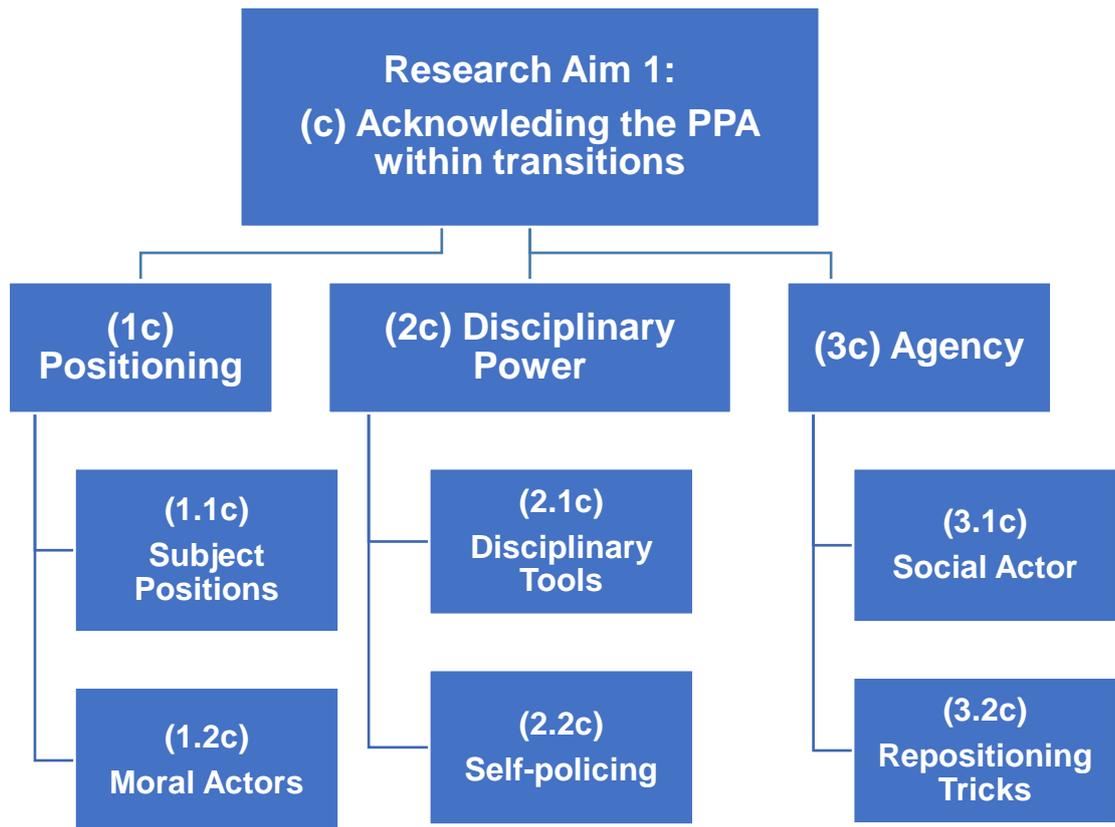


Figure 4.6: showing the overall theme, sub themes and sub-sub themes which emerged in response to research aim 1.

Finally, phase 6 of a thematic analysis is, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), the writing of the report in respect to the various themes reported. This is where a researcher immerses completely with the analytical process, progressing from a description of organised patterns of data to theorising, in relation to academic literature, the significance of the broader meanings and implications of the findings (King, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). It is argued that direct quotes of any data are an essential component of the report as they assist the researcher in capturing the story the data is portraying (King, 2004; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al. 2017). Furthermore, Braun and Clarke

(2006) argue they support the reader's decision in relation to the validity and merit of the completed analysis.

4.5.4 Validating the themes

Using a mixture of “top-down deductive and bottom-up inductive processes” (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010, pg. 17), means the iterative approach (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Barbour, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) employed during this research allowed the data process to be both exploratory and confirmatory (Braun and Clarke, 2006; 2013; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The findings and inferences made have all been subjected to a rigorous form of analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017), where data collected from all stages of the research was utilised to illustrate the phenomena of the starting school transition. To achieve a certain degree of ‘descriptive validity’ (Maxwell 1992), and to make my interpretations of the participants’ views as ‘valid’ as possible, confirmation of these interpretations were sought, where possible (as discussed in section 4.4.1 and 4.4.3). The combination of different research methods and data sources acted as a large resource from which I was able to validate the findings (Richardson, 1996; Silverman, 2010; Bernard, 2013). Additionally, each theme, sub-theme, and sub-sub theme was subjected to a process of ‘re-analysis’ where I remained ‘blind’ (Boyatzis, 1998), and where the thematic analysis process outlined above was repeated. As a product of these efforts, the findings reported throughout the following three chapters have been cross checked and validated with evidence from each stage of the research and have been subjected to a re-analysis.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, in this chapter, I have argued why I chose to carry out an ethnographic study to investigating the starting school transition. I detailed the ethical reflections that I have considered and worked with during the research process. Additionally, I have highlighted how and why I collected the data I collected. I have attempted to highlight 'how' and 'why' the themes that will be presented in the next three chapters were 'chosen'. Ultimately, "qualitative analysis is a creative process, depending on the insights and conceptual capabilities of the analyst" (Patton, 1999, pg. 1190) and on the researcher's commitment to their philosophical beliefs even if this is unintended or unacknowledged. However, by explicating my beliefs throughout this thesis and my subsequent approach taken, I hope to situate the reader in a better position to understand how the interpretations made were formed and reformed.

Lastly, I would like to highlight that as Ritchie and Lewis (2003), Braun and Clarke (2006) and Silverman (2010) all argue the research process, including the presentation of data, are inevitably influenced by the researcher's 'personal value systems'. Therefore, I reaffirm the central role that I played in the 'construction' of the following three 'themes'. Therefore, there are no claims that the opinions expressed in the following three chapters are representative of the views of parents', children and school staff in general; instead, they are indicative of the sample (Denzin and Lincoln, (2011) yet they provide an alternative perspective (Burr, 2015) to understand the starting school transition from.

Chapter 5: Let's 'talk' about starting school

This chapter focusses on uncovering the discourses that were found to be fermenting behind the talk (e.g. group interviews, Government policies, printed materials from school) produced by the children, parents and staff throughout the research project. It will provide evidence of the use of differing sets of discourses from a micro, meso, exo and macro system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) whilst concluding that each family tended to use these discourses to help them understand and define what this particular transition is about. Thereby, the use of various discourses had an impact on how each parent came to understand and form a definition of what the transition meant to them.

When analysing the talk from the parents, it was clear that they had altered their own socially constructed definition of the transition from their original definition given at the very start. This journey will be highlighted in the upcoming sub sections where I will present their original definitions and then show how this changed and was influenced according to the individual experiences and influences coming from parents meso, exo, and micro systems. The findings overall showed that the definitions parents used in the moment were constructed in a messy and complex manner.

5.1 Initially Defining the Transition

The macro level discourses that may influence a child's or parent's understanding of what the transition is has been discussed in previous chapters (e.g. Chapter 2 and 3), where it was highlighted that the consensus surrounding its definition focussed on the temporal shift and on the discontinuity aspect of the experience from one setting to another (Fabian, 1998; Fabian and Dunlop, 2002; Yeboah, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Brooker, 2008; Jindal-Snape, 2010; Gould, 2012; Trodd, 2013). Therefore, it is arguable that it has become an idiomatic expression of *change*, of *becoming* something else afterwards, and finally of *belonging* (Dockett and Perry, 2004, 2016; Dunlop and Fabian, 2007; Brooker, 2008). This was certainly acknowledged within the initial parental interviews where many of the parents defined the transition utilising those three expressions; thereby, supporting the previous literature in this area.

When asked to describe what they thought this transition was all about, most of the parents believed this transition was about learning to become a school child. As can be seen in the following quotes (see Data Box 2), this was often directly stated.

Data Box 2

“... to learn what it means to be a school child”

(Pam)

“... they will mould her into being a Holme Court pupil”

(Becky)

“Starting school means the child learns to become a school child”

(Nicole)

It was also indirectly implied in other interviews whereby the parents noted having to learn the rules and routines involved in being a school child, using terms like “*learning the ropes*”, and “*fitting in*”. Therefore, based on the comments presented in Data Box 3, 4, 5 and 6, it suggests the parents considered the transition to be a practice-based experience overall. Therefore, this definition contributes to the current understanding of what this concept can represent and how it is understood by parents.

Data Box 3

“I think it’s about learning the ropes.... you know, the rules and ways of doing things at school. Once he has managed to grasp that, he will start learning better. Oh, and to learn to behave appropriately”.

(Lauren)

Data Box 4

“It’s about learning to fit in... ...Learning how to learn properly... ...So I suppose, she will need to learn to be able to follow those rules and be able to learn when she is supposed to”.

(Anita)

Data Box 5

“It’s about learning, you know maths and English, spelling your name and getting on with other kids”.

(Tina)

Data Box 6

“I suppose it would be to fit in and obey the rules and regulations that the school sets. To listen and work hard when they are doing number work and writing”.

(Sheree)

“It’s also about learning the pecking order of things...the younger you are the less control you have...I think that is a big lesson when starting school”.

(Declan – Sheree’s Husband)

Ultimately, the statements were suggestive of some form of change that the child, in relation to their learning and behaviour, would have to go through to be considered to have successfully transitioned into the school’s environment. Interestingly, there were no comments made about how the school would need to change to accommodate the family. Thereby, acknowledging the normalisation (Foucault, 1982; Gore, 1998) of the ‘school ready’ child / family

rather than the 'ready school' discourse (see Chapter 2 for a full deconstruction of this discourse).

Additionally, the unique understanding (from the children's perspective) of what a school child means and involves was uncovered briefly during the pre-transition group interviews which took place with their parent/s. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I encountered some difficulties when asking the children questions. This was often due to shyness, uneasiness on both the children's and parents' part, or it was due to the children not understanding the questions I asked. Although, 7 out of the 12 children interviewed provided a response to the question: What do you think being a school child means? They all answered by suggesting in some way it meant they "...would be going to school every day" (Child A). When I asked them in the initial group interviews; What do you think you will be doing when you go to school every day? The 7 children offered the responses presented below in data box 7.

Data Box 7

"Lots of things, some fun but some not...like I know we get to play with the toys, but we also have to sit down and listen and do real work! And we can't go to the toilet when we want to! But I get to eat my dinner at school soon...I can't wait for that bit (smiles)".

(Child A)

“Getting told off (giggles)... cos I will want to play like we do in nursery but we not allowed in that big classroom.... we have to do number work and reading (whispers “boo” while pointing thumbs downwards)”.

(Child B)

“Learning about numbers and writing me name”.

(Child C)

“Doing PE, and playing power rangers...sitting on the floor and being quiet (puts his fingers over his mouth)”.

(Child D)

“My Mum said I will be painting and having lots of fun. But I have to listen to the teacher and not do any fighting”.

(Child E)

“I will be doing them books, and taking my big girl bag in with me... and... playing, oh and working, that’s right in it Mum?”

(Child F)

“Eating my dinner there, and I get to go in the car with my Dad in the morning!”

(Child G)

These responses are comparable with the responses that Dockett and Perry noted in their 2016 research. Their research also noted differences in individual responses; but, when analysed together the children focussed on potential practices that they were expecting to take place in school, just like the children in this research presented too. Thereby, the children were offering a definition of what they believed a typical school experience may look like even though they had not yet attended a standard school day. They were drawing on the discourse that was available to them to help them develop their own ideas of what it may look like. Their belief that a school day should be considered to be a practiced based activity, which is supported by previous research (Formisano, 2008), is like the ideas presented by the parents in the interviews so it is possible that the children's answers were influenced by their responses. However, according to Foucault (1972) and Burr (2015), this is how discourses are fermented through families and friends, so similarities should be expected.

5.2 Discursively Being Re-positioned

Being re-positioned during the transitional experience was a sub theme that was uncovered in the data analysis and will be discussed in this sub-section. What was particularly interesting in the children's responses, in data box 7, was that they showed an awareness that these practices were to be positioned by significant others. Child B, for example, discussed their ideas in relation to what they would like to do but also acknowledged that these activities would be positioned as inappropriate as they anticipated an expectation to *work* would be more important and appropriate within a reception classroom.

Positioning theory allows us to understand how psychological phenomena are often produced from discourse. As Harré and van Langenhove (1999, pg. 4) state: “Its starting point is the idea that the flow of everyday life in which we all take part, is fragmented through discourse into distinct episodes that constitute the basic elements of both our biographies and of the social world”. They suggest that discourse provides humans with the tools to learn how to talk and understand talk but also how to act and understand the social roles that are made available to them through the talk being produced. They argue, “not only what we do but also what we can do is restricted by the rights, duties and obligations we acquire, assume or which are imposed upon us in the concrete social contexts of everyday life” (pg. 4). The adults and children were showing that they had started to understand and explore what their roles would be in relation to the transition and this can be unpicked from the comments presented in data boxes 3 to 7.

The parents described the transition as a practice-based journey that only the children would undertake and interestingly they did not attempt to discuss their role within it; thereby, insinuating that being a school child is something only the children can work towards. Similarly, the children discussed the notion from their perspective and did not bring in any debate surrounding how their parents may be involved (e.g. they could have discussed how they may help with homework or other activities after school etc.). This means it appears that the discourses that these families were initially drawing upon were positioning (Davies and Harré, 1990; 1999) the parent / family in a peripheral position (Lave and Wenger, 1991) from the very start of the journey as the goal of learning to be a school child could only really be achieved within the classroom setting. This is an important

contribution to current knowledge as it needs to be considered when planning transition practices that aim to involve parents.

5.2.1 Not supposed to be this way!

Being positioned peripherally is in direct contrast to the discourse that has been provided for children, their families and schools. From a macro system level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the political, cultural and societal discourse suggests that this transition should be viewed as a process and should be supported by all individuals who will work with the child (CACE, 1967; OECD, 2001, 2006; DCSF, 2007b; DfE, 2010b; Sylva et al., 2010); this includes developing direct connections to the family and the child's parents on a meso level (Yeboah, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 2004; Sanders et al., 2005; DfE, 2012; Lindon, 2012). In a document written as practitioner guidance to the EYFS it stated, "Transitions should be seen as a process not an event... Settings should communicate information which will secure continuity of experience for the child between settings" (DCSF, 2007b, pg. 10). The idea of improving the continuity between both settings has repeatedly been investigated and acknowledged as being important by researchers throughout the documented history of transitional research (Fabian, 1998; Pianta and Cox, 1999; Broström, 2002; Brooker, 2008; Dockett and Perry, 2008; Ahtola et al., 2011; Allingham, 2011; Bateson, 2013).

However, interestingly, for many of the children who took part in this research, they had transitioned into the reception class from the school's on-site connected nursery class. After querying with school staff, what information the teachers

would be providing to each other and parents, to support the children's transition from nursery to reception class I was informed that no form of written communication or report would be produced as it was felt it would not be necessary. During the conversation between myself and two members of staff (Mrs Brown and Miss Lonsdale), an attempt was made to reassure me that instead of writing a written report, they would meet with the members of staff who would teach the children in reception class and they would discuss the individual children moving up into their class with them. For the other children who came from an outside pre-school environment (not attached to the school in any way), no report was provided to the school or parents from the pre-school, nursery or child-minder setting. When I queried this with the teaching staff at Holme Court, it was clear that although the Government's policies (DCSF, 2007b; DfES, 2007; DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2010b) and current research (Brooker, 2008; Allingham, 2011; Bateson, 2013; Marks, 2013; O'Connor, 2013) states this should happen, "it very rarely does, because people don't have the time to write it and to be truthful we don't really need it or use it. We prefer to make our own judgments of the children once they have officially started with us" (Mrs Brown).

The members of staff here are acknowledging that the usefulness of information based within a different setting is not as useful as it is assumed to be within the policies published because the context of the environment (e.g. nursery / child minders – school classroom) has changed. As mentioned earlier, this discontinuity aspect of the transition has been discovered within transitional research repeatedly (see Dockett and Perry, 2001; McInnes, 2002; Brooker, 2008; Bateson, 2013), where practitioners inform us that there is a difference

between the way nursery staff and school-based staff interact and work with the children they receive. It has been argued that this occurs because nursery – school staff assume their focus (see Perry et al., 2000 and Broström, 2002; for a review in this area) on the child will be different to that, which has been provided by the earlier practitioner and therefore this renders it less useful. This would align with the findings provided by Broström (2002) in which he argues that there may be resistance from both sides to providing a useful transitional bridge due to an “aversion to incorporating the other’s tradition” (2002, pg. 58). However, before this assertion can be fully supported it will need to be investigated more thoroughly now that the EYFS curriculum has been implemented; this is because the curriculum was designed to cover the age of 0 – 5 which includes this transitional age range meaning the focus of both practitioners should, in principle, now be the same.

At the end of a child’s nursery education, all the parents reported receiving ‘an end of year’ report from the school or from their nursery provider. This focussed on updating the parents about their child’s current level of development in relation to them meeting personal, social, physical and emotional goals. Therein, this was written from a developmental perspective and did not include any information on how the parents could support their child in their upcoming transition into the reception year of school. A small number of parents (2 out of the 12) expanded on this topic during the initial interviews and commented on how they thought they would be told what they could “work on” (Lauren) over the summer to help their child “achieve better” (Nicole) when they started school. Regarding this lack of communication, Lauren complained “I am not sure why they didn’t really, as I

could have done stuff over the summer, but they just didn't send me anything to help him or point out what I could do to support him. It made me feel a bit useless really, if I'm honest". She later commented on how she felt "...parents are forced to take a back seat" thereby acknowledging directly the peripheral position she thought she had been placed in.

5.2.2 Parents are equals, aren't they?

This repositioning of the parents is in direct contrast to some of the clear messages delivered formally via the British Government's (and associated agencies') publications in that the relationship with parents should be deemed equal and a shared responsibility for each child's learning should take place (DfE, 2010b; DfE, 2012; Early Education, 2012; 4Children, 2015). Furthermore, as noted by Shields (2009) a key principle of the new EYFS (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2012; 2014) curriculum framework has placed an emphasis on building 'Positive Relationships'. This principle commits all practitioners and providers to ensuring that parents are seen and used as 'partners' throughout the child's educational journey (DfE, 2012; Early Education, 2012). This was initially facilitated on a local level when the parents of the children were invited to a pre-transition meeting in the term before the children started at the school. Within this meeting (which I also attended), it was made clear to the parents / carers that the school's aim was to develop an open and equal relationship with parents as this would be beneficial for their child's learning journey. This was further consolidated in the school handbook that was given out which contained the school's aims, including their ethos and values (see Appendix 14 for full copy of the school's aims at the time of the study). An extract from the school's aims is provided below, in data box 8,

which indicates that the school wished parents were aware of how important it was that they worked together as partners in educating their children together.

Data Box 8

To develop strategies to familiarise parents with the ethos and educational philosophy behind the curriculum planning and organisation of the school. To develop parental awareness of the need to become partners in the education of their children and to feel at ease and welcome within the school at all times.

(Extract of School Aims document)

Sensing a loss of control approaching

However, before the children had entered the school for their first official day, it was clear that the children's parents were starting to construct this transition utilising another set of discursive notions. It can be seen in a selection of interview comments (example of a group interview can be seen in Appendix 11) that the parents anticipated a shift in power and control, from parents to the school plus its staff members. One parent commented:

Data Box 9

"...he (son) will just have to learn their rules and obey them so I can't do much for him. They are in control of the kids once they start... But, as in me doing anything to support him settling in...that's out of my control".

(Janice)

That parent spoke directly about control and how they felt they would lose much of this in relation to supporting their child's transition. Other parents were less direct, but it still appeared to be implicit in their comments that they felt they would lose some amount of control or power from within their children's lives. Below are three excerpts that demonstrate this point.

Data Box 10

"...because after that point they are on their own really...as a parent you can't help them anymore except when they come home crying because they were told off and you explain it is because the teachers are the boss now..."

(Tina)

Data Box 11

"...he (son) will have to learn the rules and listen to the teachers and headteacher instead of me".

(Pam)

Data Box 12

"I hate the idea that they (teachers) suddenly become the power in your child's life and we as parents are forced to take a back seat".

(Lauren)

However, it should be noted here that not all the parents perceived this lack of control in a similar manner. For instance, these parents commented in a different way to the previous examples by suggesting the loss of power was being perceived differently:

Data Box 13

“...they will teach him everything he needs to know, and they will be able to do that better than me. He hates reading with me but they can force him, so he will learn one way or the other with them”.

(Marie)

Data Box 14

“I feel sorry for the school if I’m honest, cos he is going to be hard work for them! (laughs)... But, he needs to learn he can’t have his own way all the time and at least school will teach him that. They will be able to control him better than I can at the minute”.

(Janice)

Data Box 15

“Don’t get me wrong, that is not a bad thing, I really like the school! It’s just, well it will mean she is growing up and learning to take responsibility for herself etc. They will force her to act more grown up, which again, I don’t think is a terrible thing...as all children eventually become adults”.

Within the excerpts provided by Marie, Janice and Jane, the parents used terms like “*force*” and “*better*” to indicate how they were perceiving the influence that a lack of control may have in their child’s life. Regardless of the way the parents initially perceived the shift in power (i.e. whether this was positive, negative or neutral) all the extracts suggest that the parents believed the transition to school signalled a new era concerning the power and control they would have in their children’s lives.

This awareness of a potential shift in power is aligned with O’Sullivan’s (2012) notion of ‘discursive subjectivity’ where discourse and discursive practices can influence our ideological thinking and actions which can affect how we would then experience our own worlds. As Drewery (2005) and Condie (2013) have argued, discourse can construct people as ‘objects’ and/or as ‘subjects’ by commandeering them into certain positions or identities. However, as can be seen in the language used in the above extracts, this does not necessarily mean that everyone will conform to an ideological ‘role’ (e.g. the standardised ‘supportive’ and ‘engaged’ parent that was outlined within Government policies) as these roles may be defined differently due to varying social, cultural, socio-economic and political influences. This is because the general understanding of what this ‘subject’ (i.e. parent) should be like is socially constructed via fluctuating, multi-faceted ecological systems (O’Dell, 2011; Burr, 2015; Burman, 2017). For example, some of the comments in the above extracts appear to

indicate that the adult feels positive about the use of power and control to the point that they seem pleased to be able to take a step back and allow the school staff to take charge of their child's learning and subsequent transitional experience (see Marie's and Janice's extracts above). Thereby, it appears that being placed in a peripheral position may be welcomed by some parents.

5.2.3 Influencing the parent – child relationship

This re-positioning that came with the transition experience for the parents also meant that they had to find a new space within the relationships that they had developed with their children. In the post transition interview, Summer explained further that she found the routine difficult to master but also the changes it caused to her relationship with her son. This can be evidenced in her excerpt found in data box 16, below.

Data Box 16

"I found it hard when trying to do everything all at once. You know, juggle him (son) going to and from school, work, cleaning the house, cooking while trying to do homework and reading books every night ...
** (son) found it hard to settle into the routine at home too, he hated doing the extra stuff when he got home. It became an issue at one point, as I hated trying to make him do it ... I mean I hardly get quality time with him now, except at weekend, otherwise it is always in between doing some kind of activity ... like reading, cleaning the house, taking him to his swimming lessons"

(Summer)

It is clear Summer found the changes in activities, i.e. going to and from school, completing homework and reading book sessions and outside activities like swimming difficult to manage due to the change in the amount of time she could spend with her son that was not activity focussed. She also declared that she had not expected the relationship between her and her child to change as much as it did as she informed me “you know, the one thing I didn’t anticipate is how much it has changed our relationship”. This supports the findings presented by Griebel and Niesel (2002) who argued that both the parents and child’s identities changed and evolved during the transitional period and the amount of time spent together decreased.

In a similar manner, Pam and Nicole raised similar concerns over the “loss” of contact time they had with their child once they had started school. It may have been that the parents were attempting to voice concerns about losing their child to the system which was briefly mentioned in the initial interviews. However, they did not expand further on this to be able to fully acknowledge this aspect. Although, Griebel and Niesel (2002) and Dockett and Perry (2007) make an interesting point when they argue that this transition often evokes a challenge by the children to become more independent from their parents. In their research, the authors found the children requested to carry out activities that would have been deemed unsafe or dangerous before they had started school; activities like riding their bikes alone and playing outside without constant supervision. This new developing independent identity for the children may have been an additional force that was restricting the amount of time spent together rather than it simply

being down to juggling the new routines (Griebel and Niesel, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 2007).

For some parents, the impact on the relationship had been perceived more positively. Janice described how she had started to get some time away from her son and he also got some time away from her and it had “helped us to just chill and we have started to enjoy each other’s company again”. She continued by stating, “I look forward to him coming home and he enjoys sitting down and watching some telly with me now”. This concurred with the views of Anita and Beckey, who both mentioned that their relationship seemed to have become less stressful and more relaxed since their child started school. They both stated that they enjoyed the break from their child and felt that once their child started school they did not feel as though they were required to be as attentive as they previously were regarding their child’s overall development. For instance, Anita explained that she does not “have to constantly think about trying to work maths or words or adding up into conversations” with her child anymore. This is consistent with the arguments put forward by many researchers (e.g. Crozier, 1999b; Suissa, 2009; Bradbury, 2013; Beauvais, 2015; Vincent and Maxwell, 2016) in that mothers often feel pressured through discourse to be constantly juggling and aiming to be the ‘good parent’. According to Sunderland (2006) and Suissa (2009), a ‘good parent’ is someone who is socially considered to be attentive to their child’s developmental needs at all times. Becky explained that she had started to leave the “development stuff” to the teachers and she just enjoys her daughter’s company, thereby implying she was happy to go against the ‘good parent’ discourse in this instance.

5.3 Tangled mess of parenting discourses

Discourses surrounding parenting were found to have influenced the experience of the parents and children involved within this research and this section will detail the two prevailing discourses that were discovered: the 'good' parent (Furedi, 2001; Suissa, 2009; Nelson, 2010; Dermott and Pomati, 2016) and the 'pushy' parent (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Freeman, 2010, Bradbury, 2013; Beauvais, 2015). Parenting discourses are like a parent's working (or non-working) life, usually a step removed from a child, meaning the child only receives information about these discourses if the parent discusses it with them. This means, according to Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, it is classed as the exo-system. This layer comprises of the environments that may impact a child's experience but not through the child's active engagement with them. For instance, according to Ermisch and Francesconi (2001), a parent's working life may influence a child's overall school experience. This would have a direct impact on their transition, for example, if the parent works long hours and becomes too tired during the school week to sit and listen to their child read. Alternatively, and as has been demonstrated in research by Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman (2001), an employer may provide extended maternity leave or flexible working hours that supports parents gaining better work/life balances.

In the interviews and conversations that I had with parents the influences that appeared to stem from their exo-systems were not as openly discussed as other systems. This could have been a methodological issue as I may not have asked the right questions which would have allowed this topic to be explored fully.

Although, as Coltrane (2000) suggested, it could have been due to parents considering this topic to be a more personal and private issue, which they did not feel needed to be discussed in relation to their child's transition. Connectedly, Janice firmly informed me that her "working life has nothing to do with **'s (child) transition". In fact, on a few occasions, the parents told me that their daily activities did not impact their child's school experience but then later commented something quite different. This finding is demonstrated in the excerpts below.

Data Box 17

"Yeah, I do work part-time but that doesn't influence how ** gets on at school"

"It's hard on her when I need to drop her off at breakfast club as it means she has to stay longer at school. It also means she is sometimes grumpy when she goes in class...her teacher told me she doesn't seem to like going to breakfast club as when she does she comes into class all grumpy"

(Anita)

"I don't think that matters really...what I do for work and that ... didn't affect him when he started school"

"When I changed jobs, his teacher mentioned that he was sleepy and she wondered whether anything had changed at home etc. I explained that I had changed my job and it meant that I was working later at night"

and since I didn't get to see him straight after school anymore I had started to let him stay up later. I just wanted to be able to spend some time with him, but I couldn't even do that as it was making him too sleepy during the day"

(Kerry)

It must be noted here that I did not expand on this area much further as I felt I was intruding when I asked about work life. It is possible this reluctance to intrude may be an influence of the general discourse that still, to this day, surrounds women and their working / caring responsibilities for their children. Paré and Dillaway (2005), Jackson (2014), as well as Burman (2017) suggest this discursive practice can make it difficult to discuss working / caring responsibilities with participants. According to Wall (2013) and Burman (2017) a reluctance to discuss parents' work has developed as a defence mechanism due to potential judgements being made against a woman in relation to whether she is adhering to the norms set by society in relation to her role as a mother. Johnston and Swanson (2003) describe expectations concerning working and mothering are set culturally and therefore can differ quite drastically.

5.3.1 Being a 'good' Parent

An interesting example from Becky is worth highlighting here as it demonstrates a difference in the way society perceives the responsibility and management of her child's education compared to other mothers. Crisp (2008), for example, acknowledges that there is a negative connotation held by society towards

mothers who claim benefits and their ability to carry out worklessness activities. In this example (see data box 18 below), Becky asked if she could rearrange her appointment time to claim her benefit as she wanted to support her child during her first school nativity.

Data Box 18

“I found it hard to explain that I wanted to go and see her play. They just didn’t want to listen. I was only signing for my benefits but they told me that if I had a job I wouldn’t be able to take time off to see my child’s first nativity unless I booked it off so I can’t ask for my usual signing day to change for that reason. It’s ridiculous really, I know that if I had a job most places let you if you repay the hours, my friend went to see the play for example and took a video for me, but she works. I was really upset though, it was her first school nativity play and I wanted her to see me there, supporting her like....like I’m meant to! But, they wouldn’t let me”.

(Becky)

Becky shows she is drawing on what Furedi (2001), Nelson (2010) and Tait (2017) termed the ‘good’ parenting discourse, which is where all parents are expected to conform to the culturally produced ideals that define what good parenting behaviours are. In this case, Becky explains that she is supposed to support her daughter in educational endeavours like these. However, for Becky, alternative discourses concerning ‘worklessness’ restricted her ability to carry out this action. Katz, Corlyon, La Placa and Hunter (2007) and Warin (2009) argued

that mothers deemed to be a part of a low-income family are often perceived as not always providing the best possible educational support to their children (for various reasons). Galtung (1990) would argue this perception of being 'less than' others align with his notion of cultural violence which is defined as culture utilising violence (i.e. direct or in structural form) in some way to control groups deemed inferior. From this definition, it is arguable that the British Government has been using cultural violence against low-income families by trying to, as Warin (2009) and Speight, Smith, Coshall and Lloyd (2010) suggest, entice mothers from low income families to sign up for extra early years education sessions to enable their child's education to start sooner. OECD (2001; 2006) suggest the reason this should be provided to low-income families, is that it has been found that without the support, the children of these families would start school more underdeveloped and less academically secure than those from families of higher incomes.

In contrast, both Gewitz (2001) and Field (2010) argue that these early years places were also designed to help mothers find the time to gain suitable employment as that would help remove them from the low-income family bracket; although, Hillman and Williams (2015) suggest the free early years provision was not necessarily designed to fit working patterns, leaving its real intentions debateable. What is interesting in the experience Becky details is that the expectation to find work and be confined by work related activities (i.e. claiming benefits) has been positioned as more important for her than attending her child's school nativity play. Therefore, it restricts her access to producing behaviours that would be deemed good and acceptable (Furedi, 2001) as a parent. This is

an interesting finding as it shows the transition, for Becky, was caught up with a number of discourses and in this case, it has impacted her ability to support her child's educational endeavour which Becky classed as a "missed milestone".

Regardless of the socio-economic background that the parents came from, Becky, Kerry and Anita have described exo-system influences that have had a direct impact on how their child has experienced their first year of school. When I asked how they attempted to manage these situations they all commented along the lines of what Anita eloquently said as "you just learn to adapt". They used words like "difficult" (Anita) and "hard" (Kerry) to describe the initial implications about both themselves and their child's experience. However, they all concluded that they accepted the issue and as Anita stated they "just got on with it" because, there was "nothing that could be done about it" (Becky). This highlights the potential power struggles that may exist in the exo-system that could travel through and influence the children's and parent's transitional experiences.

In an interview with Summer, she detailed a different experience to that of Kerry, Becky and Anita. This is because she disclosed that her employer had been very supportive of her son starting school and had been very helpful when they learnt he was starting school. Her positive evaluation of her employer's approach can be seen in the excerpt in data box 19, on page 227.

Data Box 19

“Yeah, I was lucky really with my employer. As soon as they knew ** (son) was starting school they asked me if my hours would still suit me. I explained what I wanted, you know like to be able to take him to school and pick him up and they let me change my hours. I am really glad I did, as I think it would have been a nightmare trying to find more child care and pay for it before and after school. My friend tells me how much she pays etc., and I just couldn’t afford to do it!”

(Summer)

In Summer’s dialogue, it is clear she was happy with her employer’s response; her response also indicated she felt she had been treated differently to most but in a positive manner by using the term “lucky”. Her experience certainly appeared to differ to those described by Anita, Kerry and Becky. One of those differences, was that Summer and her child were arguably empowered (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman, 2001) by the exo-system influence as it contained a reciprocal power-based relationship (Foucault, 1982; Speer and Hughey, 1995); whereas, the other parents were controlled by outside forces with which they felt powerless to control (no reciprocal power relationship).

Relationship Challenges

The parent-teacher relationship or the home and health professionals’ relationships is a part of the meso-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and consists of all the direct relationships that exist in relation to the child and their

environments. It consists of any relationships that the child may have a direct engagement with. In relation to the starting school transition, a child may have developed a *good working* relationship with a family support worker who is supporting the family due to parental separation. The family worker may have established several relationships with local schools close to the Children’s Centre where they are based; this could have a positive impact on a child’s transition. They may meet and see the support worker around the school environment and at home and this relationship could enable an extended service to be provided to the family, the child and the school themselves.

After the initial pre-transition meeting had taken place at the school, most of the parents talked about their relationship with the school and staff as an “open” “helpful” “good working” relationship; this is evidenced in the quotes provided below in data box 20.

Data Box 20

“I think the school will be good with us and allow us to have an open and helpful relationship”

(Marie)

“They seem keen to work together so it should be quite a good open relationship we can build up”

(Lauren)

“It should be a good relationship, they seemed nice and open today...looking forward to working with them”

(Kerry)

However, this positivity towards the working relationship the parents believed they would have with the school did not remain. This was shown on the first day of the school year when I held conversations with some of the parents (7 in total) about how they felt the first day had gone. Before holding the conversations, the class teacher told the parents they could enter the room with their child and stay for as long as they wanted to. However, once all the children were firmly in the classroom they asked all parents to leave. Most of the parents made comments about this and discussed it with each other about how “disappointed” (Kerry, Lauren, Nicole and Pam) they were that the process was rushed and that they felt “unsupported” (Kerry and Lauren) themselves. One of the parents, Sheree, told me that she broke down in tears and that the teacher quickly escorted her out of the classroom and left her at the front door. Sheree explained “it wasn’t a pretty sight, there I was blubbing like a baby, my face a mess and all that ** (teacher) was bothered about was getting me out of there”. Of course, the class teacher had simply tried to relieve the room of over 15 adults who were walking around with their children and she also needed to get back into the classroom as quickly as possible to help settle the children (as some had started to cry at that point). Being an observer in that situation, I understood the frustration that came from both sides (parents and staff).

Interestingly, when questioned directly about how their relationship with the school staff was developing the majority of parents said similar to what Janice stated, they were “...happy with the school and staff in general but...”. A comment made by Lauren in the post transition interview (seen in data box 21 below) helps to summarise the consensus that appeared to be coming from the

majority of the parents when discussing their relationship with the school and its staff.

Data Box 21

“I really struggled to find my feet with the school and what I was supposed to be doing with him at home. You know, it was never easy to get a straight forward answer out of anyone as to what we should be doing. I found it really hard, I wanted to make sure I was doing everything I could to help him but eventually I just came to realise that I am not really that ...‘needed’ ... by the system. They do what they need to do, which feels a little like ‘behind closed doors’ and I just bring him and take him home every day!

(Lauren)

5.3.2 Perceived as a ‘pushy’ parent

Other parents appeared to agree with Lauren as they used terms like “I just didn’t need to do anything” (Tina), whilst others maintained they “... just fumbled around outside waiting every day for them (children) to finish” (Marie). Some of the parents acknowledged (which is presented below) that they felt that if they challenged this non-engaged approach (Shields, 2009) being used they may have been seen as a ‘pushy’ parent (Beauvais, 2015). Consistent with Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Bradbury (2013) and Beauvais (2015), this was spoken of as if it would have a negative consequence for the relationship. Lauren provided an example of when she wanted to support her son’s reading and asked for

additional phonetics support so that she could work on this area at home with him. She described how she had to keep asking and was often told by the staff that “they do them throughout the day at school, so it wasn’t really necessary” that she do them too. She summed the experience up as “I was starting to sound like one of those pushy Mums at one point”. Similarly, in data box 22, Marie discusses her reaction to the first parents’ evening she attended.

Data Box 22

“You know they explained that his numerical understanding wasn’t that great, so I asked them to provide some extra materials for him and I would help him do them at home ... like homework. ** (teacher) was really supportive of this at the parents’ evening and she even mentioned how great it was that I was supporting him like that. Made me feel great. Then after a week, I still hadn’t received any extra materials, so asked. She explained she would pop them in his bag the next day. But, it never happened. I left it a week and then asked again and must have caught her on a bad day as she seemed a bit ‘snappy’ and said she would sort it when she gets chance. I left it after that, as I didn’t want to turn in to the class’s ‘pushy Mum’”.

(Marie)

Both examples provided by Lauren and Marie, indicate a loss of the hypothetical reciprocal relationship that they thought they would be able to develop with the school and staff. Shield (2009) reported similar findings in her research that looked specifically at how parents come to understand the working relationship

between them and school staff. In her study, her participants reported feeling let down by the system that was portrayed to be as supportive as the nursery relationships had been. Shield argues that one of the main problems facing the school staff is the larger number of children that they care for as this ultimately has a direct impact on the potential relationship between them and parents. Shield concluded that the transition to school brought with it a lowering of the expectations the parents held about the possible relationships with staff members.

5.3.3 Being 'pushed out'

This lowering of expectations, according to Shield (2009), stemmed from parents being positioned as an outsider or being made to feel pushed out by the staff members. There was evidence of this occurring in this research sample; insomuch as the parents discussed an issue that often left them feeling like they had been "pushed out" (Lauren) of their child's educational journey.

This initially appeared to start with issues surrounding being open and accessible which the school stated they would be for parents (school handbook and school website). This is evidenced, see data box 23 on page 233, in the dialogue that took place between me and Jane, concerning Jane's wish that the school was more accessible for her, so she could attend the meetings they were putting on for parents.

Data Box 23

“I found another problem that I couldn’t do anything about with the school, that was attending the meetings. I work all day, so can’t attend the meetings during the school day or the ones they put on after school ...at like 3:30pm. That was a hard lesson, as it upset me. I wanted to go to the reading meeting for example. I don’t get all this phonetics stuff so wanted to see if the meeting would help me understand it all. That way, I could help ** (child) at home with their reading. But, I couldn’t get the time off and they ‘couldn’t’ (uses her fingers like quotation marks) do a later meeting as the school building closes early. Seriously that was the excuse they came up with! They choose when to close it, don’t they!”

(Jane)

Jane was angry with the school’s response to her request to hold a later meeting for working parents as she used the term “excuse” to indicate she felt they could have done more to be more accessible. In another example, Nicole discussed how she drew on her own extended family’s experience and her chrono-system knowledge to help her understand where she and her child fitted regarding the relationship she was developing with the school and its staff. She informed me about her attempt to support her child in an educational activity and this discussion can be viewed in data box 24.

Data Box 24

“...he just looked confused, so I stopped trying and just left it to them (teachers). That is how they (teachers) wanted it in the first place anyway. My Mum did tell me I wouldn't be able to do much, but I thought the system had changed since I was a child but obviously teachers find it easier to just get on with stuff in the classroom and we just do the parenting stuff at home. I am ok with it now though... I guess”.

(Nicole)

Nicole's disappointment is evident in her response and this could have been further inflamed due to the good parenting discourse pushing parents to take responsibility of their children's educational attainment at home (Suissa, 2009). Just as gender is known to be something people perform (Butler, 1990, 2004), and just as femininity and the female body are known to be subject to particular scrutiny and gazes (Bordo, 2003), mothering is a product of social negotiation between adults as well as between adults and children. This may have been one reason, why Nicole wanted to have some input in this area. She indicates her lowering expectations towards the relationship between herself and the staff when she indicates that leaving the teaching to them (teachers) was the best option and was “how they wanted it in the first place”.

Lauren detailed a similar experience when she wanted to support her child's ability to read. She states “So, I feel, in that way, I was pushed out of his learning

to read experience as I still read to him, but I couldn't really help to teach him to read as I didn't understand the system they were using...and they wouldn't teach it to me". These discoveries concur with the findings that Shields (2009) presented, in that the parents in her study reported feeling like their input was no longer wanted, as did the parents above. It appears the parents within this study, perceived the school as failing to engage with them fully meaning they felt like they could not participate in their child's educational journey (Crozier, 1999a; 1999b) in the way they had envisaged.

5.4 Re-defining the Transition

At the end of the transitional year, I returned to the parents and children and asked them how they felt the transition had gone and asked them to try and tell me what they thought it was about again. Many of the comments still drew on the notion that the transition was practice based and was centred on "learning to become a school child" (Kerry, Anita, Janice, Marie and Summer) which includes understanding what the role comprised of.

For instance, Marie laughed that her child had "won the 'star of the week' award a number of times throughout the year, so he has definitely learnt how to be a good school child". She suggested that the awards reassured her "in a way that he had learnt to fit into the routine of being a Holme Court school child". Tina commented how her child, "...really struggled but she (daughter) has just started to blend those sounds now and we are reading so I think she managed to settle into the role eventually". Here Tina is linking her definition of a school child back

to developmental tasks that are an expected outcome of becoming a school child (OECD, 2006; Fisher, 2010; 2013; Penn, 2014; Burman, 2017).

Other parents, (e.g. Kerry, Becky, Pam, Sheree & Declan, Jane and Nicole) made similar comments to what Pam stated outright in that they felt their child must have “learnt what they needed to learn” as they had not been told by the teachers that their child may be struggling. In fact, they all commented that the school report reassured them that their child had “become a valuable and successful Holme Court school child” (taken verbatim from the school reports given out at the end of the school year). This in itself, offers an insight into how the practitioners may have been defining the notion of the transition as they visibly indicated to the parents that their child had been “successful” (school report) and that they were now considered to be a “valuable ... school child” (school report). The use of these terms may have developed discursively over the year as when I queried with staff what most of the ‘end of the day’ questions from parents tended to centre on they informed me it was “whether they (the teachers) felt their child was successful...settled...(and) developing correctly” (Mrs Brown). Therefore, as Fleer (2006) suggests the use of these terms in the school report could have been a reciprocal discourse taking shape through the interactions between staff and parents. This finding emerged at the very end of the data collection and it would have been interesting to follow this up further to see why certain terms were used on the school reports (i.e. were they standardised across the school or did the staff have independence on what was chosen); but, unfortunately the staff members changed and I was no longer able to access the

same members of staff who had originally written the school reports received by the parents.

The children offered their own ideas on how they thought the transition year had gone. After asking them how they knew they were being a Holme Court school child now the following responses were offered.

Data Box 25

“Me Mum said I done good, so I am happy. I wear my jumper everyday too, so my teacher says I belong to the school now”

(Child A)

“I do my reading book every night and am normally good at school for the teachers so yeah I am a good person really, aren't I?”

(Child B)

“I don't really like it that much but it can be fun sometimes....I don't like doing the writing with the pencils cos I can't do it right so I always take too long. I like playing outside though that's good!”

(Child C)

“Our class is the bestest! We wonned the bear twice! That's means we are the best!”

(Child D)

“I like school, I have lots of friends now, especially in my class”

(Child E)

“School is a long day, cos I afta go to breakfast club now cos Mum works but it’s fun in there...no writing to do, we just play and eat! But, I have to wear my uniform otherwise they might take me to a different school”

(Child F)

“Sometimes, I don’t want to go home cos it’s fun in school and we get to play with loads of cool things and make things and we can’t do that at home. I even like writing and reading books!”

(Child G)

“I do what the teacher tells me now, cos its easier...otherwise I miss my playtime and I like going outside with the others”

(Child H)

As can be seen, most of the children utilised the idea of practices commonly associated with being a school child (i.e. wearing a school uniform, doing activities like practising writing or reading), although a few of them also highlighted areas that suggest power struggles (Foucault, 1982; Blase, 1991; Hargreaves, 2017) may have helped them understand what it means to be a school child (Child B, F and H). This will be followed up in the next two chapters where I discuss the day to day practices that appeared to construct the children’s classroom-based experiences. Interestingly, the parents also drew on some of their own experiences when considering what they felt the transition was about afterwards. In fact, they tended to evaluate how the experience had been for them rather than focus purely on how their child would need to learn to become

a school child which was reported in the pre-transition definitions (which can be found in data box 2 to 6). Below are two examples of comments made by Marie and Summer when I asked them to define what they thought the transition was about in the post transition interviews.

Data Box 26

“I think it is learning to find your feet as a unit. I mean ** (child) settled into the routines of school but it took a while for me and the others (in the family) to find ourselves afterwards”

(Marie)

“It’s hard for everyone, I have realised since we last spoke about this, that it’s not just about ** (child) and how they learn the ropes etc. It’s also about us ... you know parents, finding ways of making things work or learning the ropes as to what I am supposed to do as his Mother. Figuring out how you fit with the school and how best you can help your child achieve”

(Summer)

In both descriptions, Marie and Summer, detail aspects that are purely from the parental perspective compared to the child focussed definitions given earlier. It is arguable therefore that their experience may have reciprocally altered their construction of the notion of transition; or as O’Sullivan (2012) would call it, their ‘discursive subjectivity’ altered it. For instance, Lauren described it as “...from

my point of view, it was overwhelming at points, but also liberating at other times”.

When I questioned her further on what she meant by liberating, she replied:

Data Box 27

“Oh yeah, I meant the freedom of not having him at home all the time. Plus, in a way, I guess, I also meant not having to worry about his development and his learning all the time too. It was a big fear for me, him growing up missing out on learning experiences, cos we never really got any when we were kids and I don’t want him to be held back like I was. So, I was trying to give him lots of things, toys and activities to do all the time and it got quite tiring ...if I’m honest.

(Lauren)

Lauren’s comments indicate that a link to the developmental discourse was firmly in place, but that Lauren was quite happy to be relieved of some of this responsibility by the end of the transition. This explains the appeal of school to some parents as it offers relief from the surveillance regimes (Foucault, 1972) produced by society in relation to supporting their child’s development which from the findings discussed earlier appear to be caught up with the discourses of being a ‘good’ parent or being deemed a ‘pushy’ parent. It could also be argued as a reason for why some parents dislike the idea of school as the control and support of their children’s education and development appears to no longer be controlled by the parents, especially during school times.

5.4.1 Transitions are socially constructed

What is clear is that when trying to define the starting school transition the discourses that surround it cannot be conveniently removed from it as they function as a part of the definition. Past research has found the notion is firmly entwined with the developmental discourse, as the notion of what a school child consists of is intrinsically linked to their ability to meet the developmental demands placed on children through the education system (Fisher, 2013; Penn, 2014; Burman, 2017). Furthermore, it also means the child is positioned as if they are in a constant motion of 'becoming' rather than just simply 'being' during their transitional experience (James and Prout, 1997). For the parents, they appear to be caught up in a number of parenting discourses that impact the way that they understand and experience the transition process.

After looking at the 'talk' that has filtered its way down from various systems of support (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the position taken within this thesis is that the term starting school transition is socially constructed by and within the community meaning there is no natural or 'absolute' understanding for the notion; rather it is messily understood for different reasons. Therein, from a social constructionist perspective, it is arguable that the idea of a 'starting school' transition does not exist in a pure vacuum that everyone can align to and understand. As an alternative, it would be more appropriate to consider that the notion of this transition is instead developed through the use of localised meanings and drivers (Jones and Welch, 2010). Taking a discursive approach to understanding the concept of starting school means the concept can no longer be seen as a monolithic one size-fits-all phenomenon. Additionally, this highlights the variety

of potential meanings that are available as, within this study alone, some of parents and children drew on national level discourses (i.e. Government policies), whereas as others based their understanding on their experiences from a more locally lived perspective.

5.5 Chapter Summary

The starting school transition is a social and cultural process that has been defined and understood in this research, by drawing on several differing discourses. It is clear children do not just understand the term or what the notion of transition is on their own. They think, feel, communicate, act and finally are controlled within social relationships in the different contextual settings, refereed by the differing cultural beliefs of what it means to be a school child. Therefore, this chapter helped to partially meet the overall research aims which were to explore the concepts associated with the transitional experience; understand how the transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children; and, finally, understand the implications / function of the discourses that surrounds this transition. However, to gain a fuller understanding of how it was constructed, because the parents and children in this project constructed it as a practice-based process, it was necessary to observe the day-to-day activities and practices that happened during the first year of school. The findings from these observations will be discussed in the next chapter, where the practices were themed into three sub-themes areas: The Rights, Rules and Routines of transition.

Chapter 6: Unpicking the 3 R's of Transition

Routines, Rules and children's Rights

This chapter seeks to make visible the discursive practices that helped to form the transitional experience of starting school. This will be done by discussing the three sub themes that emerged from the analysis of the field note and conversational data. These being, the implementation of routines, the enforcing of rules and finally the controlling of the children's rights. Throughout this chapter, various discourses are drawn upon and discussed in more detail in relation to the influence it had on the children's transitional experience. The children were often seen as becomings rather than beings (James and Prout, 1997; Jenks, 2015) meaning there was a messy mixture of understanding, implementing and controlling of the children's rights. Additionally, the socialisation (Elkin and Handel, 1972; Giddens, 2009; Maccoby, 2015) of the children appeared to take centre stage throughout the experience. A conclusion drawn from the analysis is that the three practices help to form a discourse of what is deemed to be a 'good' pupil and arguably this is used by children when attempting to understand what acceptable behaviours within schools are. Finally, this chapter will argue that the transitional practices observed at Holme Court were developed through a *regime* of practice rather than a community of practice approach.

6.1 1st R of Transition: Routines

It has often been argued that one of the biggest difficulties that children face when they start school is that they must be able to adapt easily to the changes in routines that come with the transition to school (Fabian, 1998; Broström, 2002; Dunlop and Fabian, 2002; Sanders et al., 2005; Dockett and Perry, 2007; Brooker, 2008; Evangelou et al., 2008; Peckham, 2017). Routines are a core part of most school system experiences (Shalaway, 1998) and were certainly a large part of the school experience for the children who took part in this research. What is less clear and often not discussed within academic literature is what routines are, which ones exist within the first year of school and why they are implemented.

6.1.1 What are routines?

Bailey (2006, pg. 4) defined routines as “the setting up of infinite, normatively regulated, miniature orders, in which a certain activity should be performed by certain people, in a certain way”. Similarly, Sfard (2008) defines routines as “well-defined repetitive patterns characteristic of a given discourse” (pg. 128). This means a child’s daily routine can change drastically from what they may have been used to before they started formal schooling (Brooker, 2008; Peckham, 2017), as when they start at school they will be facing new discourses. For example, some children enter school after taking part in nursery or pre-school education, whereas, some children move straight from the home environment into the formal schooling environment (Jackson and Warin, 2000; Fabian, 2002; Langston, 2014). Therefore, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Lave and Wenger

(1991) suggest this means the child's previous experience within their micro and meso-systems may help or hinder their ability to settle into the new routines which come with entering a new community of practice.

According to Corsaro (1993), all classrooms, regardless of their philosophy, have what he termed 'internal structures', which are invisible to outsiders and consist of the discursive practices that help children determine normative, accepted expectations for themselves. These are cultural guidelines that allow children to settle into a familiar pattern of behaviour and understanding in the world of school. Theoretically speaking, the knowledge children use to negotiate these internal structures is what Bourdieu (1990) labelled as habitus. A child's habitus is continuously forming throughout their experience within the family and preschool / school setting. Brooker (2008) argued that if the child's habitus and the school environment were different at the onset, the child's transition may be constrained.

Routines as instruments to support learning

Once it was evident this theme was popular for the participants and common within the data sets, I began to search the literature for a reason as to why schools employ various routines. This research led me to two discursive perspectives: the first declared routines are instruments used to support children's learning and development (Brooker, 2008; O'Connor, 2013; Langston, 2014; Peckham, 2017). The second discourse, purports that routines are instruments used for classroom management (Rademacher, Callahan, Pederson-Seelye and Rahman. 1998; Marzano, 2003). In relation to the first discourse, Fabian (2002) suggests that

the environment of school and the classroom in general must be planned well to allow the children to develop a sense of belonging. Having a structure to the daily life flow of the school and classroom therefore could help children to develop this sense of belonging but also a sense of independence as they can start to anticipate what will be occurring next (Willes, 1983; Brooker, 2008; O'Connor, 2013; Langston, 2014). Others propose that routines help a child's social, and emotional development by providing a safe and anticipated experience meaning that children are less likely to be caught unaware or surprised by the sudden inclusion of an activity (Dowling, 1995; O'Connor, 2013; Trodd, 2013). This stabilising impact was visible in the field data, as is illustrated in the two observational examples provided below.

Data Box 28

Example 1:

Three of the children are playing with the train set. Child A asks Child B and C if they want to play with the cars now. Child B looked down at the train set that was spread across the floor and then looked around the room. "No, not now ...cos it's nearly playtime which means Miss will shout out tidy up time soon" he replied. Child A states "that's ok, we can put the cars away then". But Child B points out "but look at the mess with the trains, it will take too long to tidy these up and the cars ... we can play cars after playtime if you want?"

Example 2:

Child D was stood at the door way, almost as if she was queuing up. Mrs Hoops asked her what she was doing? “D, why have you got up from your chair and decided to stand there? Have you finished your milk and fruit?” Child D replied “Yes, I showed Mrs Brown it was all gone and I am ready for computer class Mrs Hoops”. “Oh yes” replied Mrs Hoops “it’s your computer lesson now isn’t it ...well done for remembering D! Everyone else D has started the line for computer class so when you are ready line up behind her”.

The different children above showed awareness of what routine would be following next and the examples are suggestive that they used this information to make independent choices about their next actions. However, it is also arguable that their awareness of routine was learnt from the reinforcement and training provided daily within the classroom (Fink and Siedentop. 1989) and that this memorisation of practices curtailed the children’s activities rather than supported them to make independent choices. Although, discourse from the British Government states that routines make schooling “effective and enjoyable” (DfES, 2003). Therein, this discursive approach produces the notion of routines as having a positive impact on children as a practice provided to support their learning and development.

Routines as classroom management instruments

I would argue that the second discourse that objectifies routines, does so from an adult perspective rather than being used purely as a support for children (as was the case in the previous discussion); for instance, the literature purports that routines help teachers to control and organise the working day of the classroom (McGinnis, Frederick and Edwards, 1995; Malone and Tietjens, 2000; Marzano, 2003). According to Smith's (2004, pg. 104) classroom management textbook, routines should be thought of as "railroad tracks" and the content to be taught as the "train". In other words, routines are the essential component to a fully working educational experience. This was evidenced during the carpet time routine and the fieldnotes that captured this can be found below.

Data Box 29

Mrs Cornell informed the children that it was carpet time. The children all moved to the carpet and started to sit like they are expected to. However, they continued to talk and whisper. Mrs Cornell reminded the children that carpet time means being quiet and listening. As the children were learning about letter sounds, Mrs Cornell started to introduce the sound made by the letter 'e'. However, the children continued to whisper, and Child A started to turn himself away from facing the front. This motion was quickly followed by Child B. Mrs Cornell tried to carry on with the teaching. However, after a couple of minutes she instructed all the children to stand up. She then told them to go and find a seat on a chair at one of the tables. Once the children had followed her instructions, she explained that she "was

disappointed as I cannot teach you how to understand letters if you don't listen. You all know by now that carpet time means learning time and that means you must be quiet". The children went quiet and Mrs Cornell instructed them to "try again" and sit back down on the carpet area.

Mrs Cornell attempted to carry on teaching the content, but this was not working as efficiently as it could, so she decided to stop 'teaching' and start the routine again. This appeared to work with the children as they went back to the carpet area and listened well, enjoying the activities provided. Marzano (2003) has argued that children often misbehave to fill a stimulation gap. He suggests routines help to minimize this behaviour by constantly giving children something to do. He states if a child knows what to do and when, they will follow through with these tasks. The example provided in data box 29 indicates that the children had made the initial choice not to follow through with the routine and this did not change until Mrs Cornell delivered what Hargreaves (2017) would class as an authoritarian based review of the behaviour. It is questionable, therefore, in this example whether the routine helped to 'control' the children or whether the examination of the behaviour afterwards complemented the 'controlling' of the children. In another example however, it is clear to see how the routine was used as a way of controlling and managing the classroom / children. This is evidenced in data box 30.

Data Box 30

All the children were playing or completing activities with the adults in the room. However, then Child A, B, C and D started to play a game of power rangers and it was becoming a little noisy in nature. As the noise level had risen, Mrs Brown called out to remind the children to use their “inside voices”. Child E and F were playing in the home corner and appeared to have disagreed over something as items were being thrown at each other. Mrs Brown examined the classroom and called out that it was “tidy up” time. Some of the children looked a little puzzled and Child A asked Mrs Brown “Why, we have only just started to play Miss?”. “That is right” replied Mrs Brown, “but you are also starting to become noisy and messy... look at our lovely classroom children”. The children looked around and immediately started to clean up the toys that were laying around, they put items away that were not being played with and the noise level immediately went down.

In this example, Mrs Brown initiated the routine at a different time to normal, but its impact indicates she was able to regain some form of control over the environment and the children’s behaviour. Sherman (1996) proposed that the process of routine socialisation was a form of ‘schoolification’ (see Chapter 2 for a definition of this term) in which he argued the children’s compliance with authority, rules, time-keeping, routines and so on ensures the child’s continued inclusion as a pupil in the school world and ultimately as preparation for the world of work later.

6.1.2 Different types of routines

Regardless of personal philosophy towards routines, Maloney (2000) argues they are a fact of school life as they are built-in to the daily life flow of the classroom environment. Maloney's research involved investigating the rituals and routines that took place within a preschool setting and she found that there were variant and invariant rituals held. The invariant type, Maloney (2000) proposed, provided the stable framework that is known collectively as the school system experience. Indeed, Sherman (1996) reported that the children in her study were so accepting of the general routines displayed that they could not cognitively consider an alternative once they had started since the children had come to understand "the routine was school" (pg. 11). This was observed during the study, and one example is provided below in data box 31.

Data Box 31

Mrs Cornell finished filling out the register and she put it to one side. Child A asked who would be taking the register to the office today. Mrs Cornell informed them that it would have to go later as today they were going to go into an important assembly (the children did not normally have one on this day). They started to whisper and look around at each other. Child B put her hand up to speak and Mrs Cornell asked her what she wanted. "Miss how will the office know we are here though?" she asked. "Don't worry Child B" informed Mrs Cornell "they will know later when I take it up afterwards". Child C then called out "does that mean no-one has been good today Miss?" Mrs Cornell was shocked by this and asked, "why would you think that Child C?". He

replied with “cos it is always one of us that takes the register Miss, not you... and you pick the ones that have been good to do it”. Mrs Cornell appeared to think for a moment. “OK, since taking the register routine is so important to you all...” and with that she chose 2 children to take it.

Therein, the example provided above shows that the invariant routine (Maloney, 2000), taking the register to the office after it has been completed every morning holds a tangible link to helping the children understand what it means to be a school child and for this reason I have chosen to discuss these first. However, I will return to the variant type proposed by Maloney later in this sub-section.

Invariant routines

Invariant routines that were observed at Holme Court are included in table 6.1 (pg. 253) and 6.2 (pg. 254). These routines were generally determined by the school timetable and occurred at set times throughout the day. They either took place within the classroom environment or in other areas within the wider school environment.

Table 6.1: Examples of the invariant classroom based routines observed

Classroom based Routines	
Putting coats away	First activity of the day
Putting lunch bags in the right place	Second activity of the day
Register time	Third activity of the day
Carpet time	Happened three times a day
PE lessons	Twice a week on a Tues / Fri at set times
Computer lessons	Once a week on a Weds at a set time
Milk and fruit time	Once a day at set times
Collecting coats and bags ready for home time	Once a day at set times
Tidy up time	Numerous times a day but always before the children were transitioned to a new activity

Table 6.2: Examples of invariant routines that took place within the whole school environment

Whole School based routines	
Lining up to enter the school	Once a day at set time
Foundation stage assembly	Once a week at set time (Weds)
Whole school assembly	Twice a week at set times (Tues/Thurs)
Morning Playtime	Once a day at set time
Dinner time routine	Once a day at set time
Afternoon Playtime	Once a day at set time
Leaving school	Once a day at set time
Length of school day	Same every day

It is arguable that these types of routines help to build a positive culture and ethos across the different classrooms into one whole school culture (Weare, 2000). Whereas, Brophy (1986) suggest the essence of these routines was that they appeared to format the day into sections that the children could attempt to anticipate and, in some sense, feel comfort from (see example below in data box 32).

Data Box 32

Child A, B and C were playing in the sand pit. Child A rubbed his tummy and asked the two other children “did you hear that?” The two other children were busy playing and they did not respond. Child A left the sand pit and went to talk to Mrs Cornell. “Miss, my tummy just made a really funny noise!” he laughed. “Did it A?” asked Mrs Cornell. “What do you think that means?” she asked. Child A appeared to be thinking for a minute and then he replied, “It means it is hungry and it wants some food ...I had better get my dinner!”. “That’s right A, but it’s not dinner time yet so it will have to wait I’m afraid” informed Mrs Cornell. Child A fell to the floor and said, “but my tummy is hungry Miss!”. Mrs Cornell walked away, and Child A rolled around on the floor holding his tummy. He stopped after a few minutes and went back to Mrs Cornell. “Miss, is it nearly playtime?” “Yes, it is A, why?” queried Mrs Cornell. “Because, after playtime we get fruit and milk, so my tummy doesn’t have to wait too long now!” stated Child A. “That’s right A, play outside for a little bit and then your tummy can have something to eat” she laughed. Child A left to play again and seemed a little chirpier.

Register time was an important part of the morning routine within the reception classroom. All the children were told it is “register time” and they quickly learnt that this meant that they must go to the carpet area within the classroom and sit down and wait for the teacher to call out their names. I observed Mrs Cornell

explain how to carry out the practice on the first day and the children did not seem to need another explanation on the second day as they made their way to the carpet area as soon as the teacher called out “register time”. In fact, on the fourth day of them starting at school, one of the children anticipated the register time routine and asked the adult taking the session whether it was due beforehand.

Brooker (2008) comments that explicit and positive teaching about the ways of doing things can support children in achieving a positive transition. Bath (2009) developed this idea further by suggesting that adults need to support children in developing classroom habitus. This notion is similar to Bourdieu’s (1990) earlier work on cultural ideologies but Bath argues that children need to also develop specific knowledge about daily workings of the classroom and school life too. As can be expected, during the first week, a lot of my field notes noted conversations or activities that focussed on developing the children’s sense of normal routines. During that week, the adults took the time to explain how the children would be carrying out activities and, on most occasions, offered some form of a reason for the routines, as illustrated below.

Data Box 33

Example 1

Mrs Cornell asked all the children to sit down on one of the chairs at any of the tables. She explained that this was milk and fruit time and it would happen every day at the same time. She explained that when she calls out “milk and fruit time” the children must find an empty chair and sit down ready. She would then pick two of the ‘best sitting’

children (which was implied to mean quietly as the teacher placed her finger to her lips to demonstrate this aspect) and they will be chosen to give out the milk to all the children. This excited the children as they all began to whisper to each other amid trying to sit up straight.

Example 2:

Mrs Cornell asked all the children who had brought a packed lunch to raise their hand. Then she proceeded to ask them all to bring their lunch bags and boxes up to her. She was stood in front of a large shelving unit at the back of the classroom. She informed the children that their lunch bags and boxes must go on the shelving unit first thing in the morning when they enter the classroom. This was so that their lunches did not get trodden on or eaten by other hungry children or teachers! (the children laughed at this comment).

Example 3:

All the children were seated at the tables and Mrs Brown decided to explain the home time routine to the children. She explained that when the teacher tells them to, they will go outside of the classroom and collect their coats and bags. They will put their coats on and then sit back down in the chair. Once the teacher sees the child's parents outside and sees the "child sitting nice and quiet" the teacher will shout out their name and then they can go outside to meet their parents.

When looking beyond the activity and focussing on the potential hidden messages (Burr, 2015) that were fermenting underneath the practices, the routines in the above examples were also being used as a form of classroom management (McGinnis, Frederick and Edwards, 1995; Malone and Tietjens, 2000; Marzano, 2003) rather than to develop the children's learning and development (Brooker, 2008; O'Connor, 2013; Langston, 2014). In example 1, the adult used competition to control the children's behaviour during the start of the routine. She pointed out explicitly that only the children who were sitting nicely and correctly would be chosen to give out the milk. This instruction resulted in the children immediately falling in line with the requested behaviour.

Arguably, in example 2, the teacher has used the routine to categorise (Gore, 1998) this group of children as being different to those who will be eating hot lunches cooked by the school staff. This is because this routine does not apply to the other group of children and is an additional job for children who eat packed lunches (they must also bring their bags back to the shelving unit after lunch before they are allowed to play outside). Finally, in example 3, the adult uses this routine as a form of control over the children's behaviour due to them being in a position of power (Foucault, 1982; Mac Naughton, 2005, Burr, 2015) as they can choose when each child is released back to their parents. Additionally, as the teacher had informed the children that they would only be chosen if the adult decided they were sitting nice and quietly it's arguable that this instruction also instilled a sense of competition (Fink and Siedentop, 1989) between the children. This was demonstrated by the children as whenever one of the children was

called out they usually let out a loud “yes!” response or they would smile at the achievement of being chosen over the other children left in the room.

Variant routines

The variant types that Maloney (2000) proposed comprised of routines that had high levels of variance within them to allow for a more personalized and flexible approach to teaching and learning. Similarly, I observed on many occasions throughout the year, that some routines would appear to be highly irregular. Take for instance, the routine of the ‘literary hour’ (DfES, 2006a). Over time the children developed some awareness that during the day they would be working with letters, or books but would often not have any idea as to how they would be working (i.e. what the practice would involve or usually the exact time they would be undertaking the work). This is because the adults allowed the literary hour routine to be malleable so that it could be personalised according to the different teaching techniques required and to suit the different learners’ needs.

In a similar manner, the ‘wet play’ routine was variable depending on the decision made by the staff supervising the session. The routine was that if it was raining too much (decided by the adults only), play time would be held inside and the children would stay in their usual classrooms but would be supervised by the playground staff rather than their teaching staff. However, each time it occurred, the actual activity of wet play was different. Sometimes, the children would be asked to choose a book to read and to sit down quietly. Other times, they would be allowed to play with any of the toys within the room. On another occasion, I

watched wet play turn into a musical session as the members of staff encouraged the children to sing and dance along to a variety of songs.

Similarly, there was generally a different routine initiated by each member of staff when informing the children, they needed to be quiet. Mrs Cornell, for example, would stand in the middle of the room with her finger on her lips and would wait until the children 'hushed' each other in response. Whereas, Mrs Brown would clap her hands very loudly until all the children had stopped what they were doing and looked at her. Mrs Oldenage used a technique she called 'quiet fingers' where she would hold both hands up in the air and move her fingers back and forth until the children stopped their activities and went quiet. Mr Atkinson would make a loud "eerrmm" sound to indicate he wanted quiet. Finally, Mrs Thompson would simply sit down on a chair and put her hands on her head.

This variability in signalling or controlling a routine meant that it was difficult, even for me, at times to remember what they were being asked to do. It seemed to take the children longer to 'understand' these types of variant routines than it did the invariant ones. However, this could have been due to the difference in the number of times the children came across the variance. For example, Mr Atkinson would take them for assembly twice a week for half an hour, so they did not spend as much time with him as they did with Mrs Cornell who was a core part of the reception class teaching team.

Langston (2014) suggests that some form of predictability is required if a routine is to be deviated from. Furthermore, she states that routines are likely to alter from one situation or person in charge to another and this can become problematic for children if their behaviour expectations have not been clearly outlined beforehand. However, based on my observations, this was not normally an issue, as the adults within the school usually provided some form of instructions regarding the children's behaviour in relation to routines, as can be seen in the examples provided below.

Data Box 34

Example 1:

Mrs Cornell was introducing her quiet time routine. "When I do this ...(puts her finger on her lips) ...what do you think it means?" she asked the children. Child A shouted out "I know, I know Miss!" Mrs Cornell looked at Child A and said, "OK A, since you are keen on letting us all know, what do you think it means?" "It means be quiet Miss" smiled Child A. "That's right A, well done. It does mean that I want you to be quiet. It also means that I want you to stop whatever it is you are doing and look at me, OK?" informed Mrs Cornell.

Example 2:

"Eerrmmm!" shouted Mr Atkinson. The children continued to talk to each other and did not stop what they were doing. "Eerrmm!" he shouted again, louder this time. Some of the children looked at him, but others continued to talk to each other. Mr A banged on a table and

shouted very loudly “Right! Everyone look at me now!”. All the children stopped what they were doing and looked directly at him. Child A and B looked a little startled and appeared to be a little uneasy as they wriggled in their seats. “When I raise my voice that is a bad sign. It means I am getting a little cross and I don’t like to get cross. So ...if my voice starts to get louder it means I want you all to stop what you are doing and be quiet, OK?” The children nodded in response.

It is clear to see in the two examples above, that the adults used this moment to inform the children of what behavioural expectations were being assigned to each routine. The expectations were the same (to be quiet), but the way the adult initiated the call for quiet was different. Interestingly, related to the above examples, Laird, Garver and Niskodé (2007) argue that differences in teaching styles can be found according to the gender of the teacher. For instance, they suggest that females are often perceived to be softer and more caring, whereas males are perceived to be more in control of the children; although, this could be argued to be a product of what Connell (1987) termed hegemonic masculinity. This is a complex model of gender hierarchy, where males are perceived to hold more power than females (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

In 2015, Bullough showed in his research that the teaching styles used by each gender is no different but that there were differences in personality traits leading to a difference in approach. For example, he reported that the female teacher was softer and quieter with the children compared to the male teacher who

appeared louder and action-oriented yet they both carried out the same teaching practices. Therefore, the differences demonstrated in data box 33, could have been due to gender differences in teaching style but according to Bullough were more likely to be personal choices about how to carry out the same teaching practice. Therein, this practice, in this case calling for quiet, was variable but the outcome achieved was the same. Therefore, I would argue variant routines appear to be connected to personalised teaching approaches and used more for behaviour management to instil behaviour expectations. Whereas, the invariant routines, due to their unchanging function, are arguably the ones that are implemented to help children form a daily schedule and sense of understanding of what it means to be a school child.

6.2 2nd R of Transition: Rules

On entering the classroom on the very first day, the first words spoken to the children by Mrs Cornell in the classroom were “ok, the first rule of the day: we need to go over there and hang our coats up where your name is”. Rules are a core part of the schooling experience (Jackson, 1968; Boostrom, 1991; Fabian, 2002; Thornberg, 2007; DfE, 2011) and they were certainly an aspect that the children had to grasp whilst trying to navigate through their transitional experience. Recall, in Chapter 5, the parents made it clear they believed learning the school rules was an important part of developing an understanding of what it meant to be a school child. After analysing the fieldnotes, it became clear that ‘rules’ were an important part of school life. The rules observed included hanging coats up; sitting on chairs appropriately; placing your hand up to speak; letting

others talk; lining up to go outside; doing as you have been asked to do; always tidying up after yourself; washing your hands after going to the toilet; never shouting out etc.

Boostrom (1991, pg. 194) declares that the term “rules” mean the “dos and don’ts of classroom life”. On a superficial level, this is exactly what they appeared to be during that first day of term. The presence of these rules should not come as a surprise as it is widely accepted that they are socially constructed notions (Green and Dixon, 1993; Thornberg, 2007; Hestad, 2008; Bailey and Thomson, 2009; Kovalainen, 2013), often designed by authority-exercising adults that have some form of investment within the school environment (Jackson, 1968; De Vries and Zan, 2003; Thornberg, 2008, Pike, 2010; DfE, 2011). Nevertheless, rule forming within the classroom is slowly moving towards becoming more of a child-focussed exercise (Bath, 2009 Spalding, 2011; Fisher, 2013) since an approach of seeking out the perspective of the child was enacted by the British Government in section 158 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. Although, the usefulness of this approach has yet to be fully evaluated as it is historically influenced by what Bicard (2000) and Pike (2010) purport is a consistent power imbalance that can be difficult to challenge.

6.2.1 Understanding what rules do

Boostrom (1991) stated school rules could be considered as “guidelines for action and for the evaluation of action” (pg.194). He purported “rules are not the merely instrumental tools of management they are often taken to be, but rather that they

are structures of meaning used by teachers and students to make sense of the world” (pg. 193). Thornberg (2007, pg. 402) developed this definition a little further by suggesting that school rules are “prescriptions, legitimised by teachers, about how to behave in school situations, standards by which behaviour in school is officially judged to be appropriate, right and desirable, or inappropriate, wrong and forbidden”. Therein, rules help to “systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, pg. 54) by using discursive notions of normative and regulatory norms of expected behaviours. This can be evidenced below in data box 35.

Data Box 35

Child A, B and C moved to the sand pit. Mrs Brown informed the children that the rule about the sand pit was that there was “only ever three children allowed to play in it at any one time”. The children nodded and started to play. After approximately five minutes, Child D approached the sand pit to play. Child A instructed her that she was not allowed to play as there was already three children there. Child D attempted to pick up one of the shapes in the sand tray and Child B immediately picked it up first informing Child D “you are not allowed, it’s the rule! You have to wait, Miss said only three”.

In the example above, the children used the rule given by Mrs Cornell to help them make sense of the environment they were inhabiting (Boostrom, 1991). They demonstrated awareness of the rule when they then self-policed that rule

after Child D joined the environment; this suggests the rule had become objectified (Foucault, 1972).

Rules shape conducive learning environments

Boostrom (1991) proposed a duality of usage exists with regards to rules within schools. He argues that there are two purposes for their use by teachers: one is to allow instruction to take place and the other is to discipline the child. The first motive: instruction, refers to the discursive perspective discussed earlier regarding routines. It is based mainly within a classroom management approach which aims to establish and maintain a micro-system environment that is conducive for learning (Thornberg, 2008) and to keep order thereby ensuring a safe and non-violent environment exists (McGinnis, Frederick and Edwards, 1995; Malone and Tietjens, 2000). From this viewpoint, rules are used by teachers (or those in authority) to provide an environment that is orderly and manageable with the main goal being that learning, and development can take place (Jackson, 1968; Brophy, 1986; Roger, 2002; Little and Akin-Little, 2008).

This is reinforced in section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which instils the responsibility of regulating the children's behaviour lies mainly with the teacher and then with the head teacher and Governing body of the school. In 2011, the Home Office Education Committee stated "Good order is essential in a school if children are to be able to fulfil their learning potential. Poor and disruptive behaviour in the classroom reduces children's ability to concentrate" (pg. 3). Thus, the goal of setting up a conducive learning environment is

discursively supported by many classroom management textbooks and publications (e.g. Brophy, 1986, 1998; Fink and Siedentop, 1989; Emmer and Stough, 2001; Rogers, 2002, Evertson and Weinstein, 2006; Tauber, 2007; Hopkins, 2008; Ephgrave, 2013). In fact, for teachers and schools, the ability to control children's behaviour to ensure successful learning can take place is a core part of current OFSTED inspection visits which means it is an extremely important part of their role. Therefore, it was unsurprising to observe a brief conversation about this take place between one of the adults and the reception children on their first day at school (see data box 36 below).

Data Box 36

“OK, why do you think we have rules in our classroom children?” asked Mrs Cornell. A number of children put their hands up and some shouted out to get the adult's attention. Mrs Cornell pointed at Child A, “OK A, why do you think we have rules in class?”. “It's cos we need them to learn to be good Miss, that's what my Mum said” replied Child A. “Well, that's kind of right A, well done. It is so we can learn how to be good, but the main part is so that we can learn lots of different things! (uses her arms to make a big circle) ...if everyone does what they want, no-one will be able to learn anything so it's important to have rules so that we all know what we should do so that we can all listen to the teacher and learn lots of wonderful things!”

After this initial conversation began, Mrs Cornell moved onto explaining to the children what they must do when they wanted to talk (e.g. they must raise their

hands and not shout out). However, in that moment the adult is clearly drawing on the classroom management discourse of setting up a productive learning environment. However, the child who responded to the adult's initial question, also appeared to draw on the second alternative discourse that surrounds the use of school / classroom rules, which will be discussed next.

Disciplining conformity

This additional discourse, disciplining conformity, produces the notion that school, and classroom rules are produced to help children learn what behaviour would be deemed acceptable by society, usually by using discipline-based approaches (Rogers, 2002). Foucault (1972) would suggest that the disciplinary function of schools has evolved from a variety of discourses; these include the 'good teacher' (Bailey and Thomson, 2009; Cassen, 2015) who is expected to support children pastorally and morally as well as educationally. Another discourse is that of the 'becoming child' (Jenks, 1996; James and Prout, 1997) meaning society believes children need to be continually taught how to become an adult. This was evidenced during a conversation between Mrs Hoops and Child A and B, which can be found in data box 37 below.

Data Box 37

"Come on, A, get a move on we have to finish this work now" instructed Mrs Hoops. Child A put her head on the table and replied, "but, I don't want to ...I don't like writing, so I don't want to do it". Mrs Hoops stated "I'm afraid when you become an adult, life is not like that, A. You don't get to choose what you want to do and what you don't want to do. You

have to do what you're told to do by your boss. Writing is important, and it will help you get a job". Just then Child B interrupted with "Yes! My Mum writes lots at her job, Miss!" "That's good B, that is why we must all do our writing when we are told to ...so come on, A, back to your writing now" informed Mrs Hoops.

In the example above, Mrs Hoops focussed on relating the act of writing to enabling the child to "get a job" as an adult. There was also a focus on having to obey orders even as an adult, so Mrs Hoops implies that the child must do so now too. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2 (section 2.6), it has been argued that one of the goals of the education system is to deliver children into adulthood as fully functioning and conforming adults (Field, 2010; Schiro, 2013). Hargreaves (2017) states this is the philosophy often assumed by children as being the core goal of being educated. Although, Schiro (2013) argues there are three other philosophies towards educating children which are: (1) to transmit the knowledge of the child's culture; (2) to develop each individual child and draw out their unique intellectual, social, emotional and physical attributes; (3) to develop critically aware and reflective individuals who can contribute to the ever-changing social contexts and power imbalances of society. Although it could be argued that all of these proposed philosophies are part of one overarching construction, Schiro proposes that individuals working with children will have a preference for one of the philosophies and this becomes their driving force when interacting with children.

Connected to the idea concerning the purpose of schooling is, as previously mentioned in Chapter 2, is the notion of hegemony. Gramsci (1971) argued that hegemony implies that the dominant social class uses organisations like schools to instil their own values and beliefs on to the lower classes of societies, which Giroux (1981) and Boostrom (1991) argues is often enforced through the use of rules and punishment. Developing an understanding of rules is an early learning goal set out in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2014a). Thereby, the curriculum level being delivered to the children involved in this study has been interwoven with an expectation that they will also learn to behave appropriately and come to understand who they are in this world via this experience.

Bernstein (1971) once suggested “how a society selects, classifies, distributes, transmits and evaluates the educational knowledge it considers to be public, reflects both the distribution of power and the principle of social control” (pg. 47). Interestingly, Goodson (2005) used a quote that was made in 1986 by an English civil servant when discussing the National Curriculum to help sum up the Country’s discursive stance on the value of its Education system. The quote was “people must be educated once more to know their place” (pg. xii). Thereby insinuating that education was being used as a form of power and control over the people who undertake it. Although, as Schiro (2013) highlighted there are four philosophies that can align to an individual’s understanding (their version of reality) of what the purpose of schooling is for and he argued it depends on the individual teachers and head teacher’s alignment to these philosophies as to how the school environment and culture is then developed. Therein, each individual

philosophy may align or misalign locally with the messages being delivered via a national system which can impact the developing school culture (Prosser, 1999).

According to Gadda (2008), continual shifts in these relationships between local, national and international systems of knowledge and control directly impact the conceptualisations of childhood every day. She argues these changes are not rooted in just economic or nation state interests; rather they reflect the changes in the power relations currently in play around children. Finally, she argues, these changes result in the view of childhood repeatedly being scrutinised by antagonistic government and non-government organisations (i.e. The Children's Society, 2015) working at a national or international level. This has certainly taken place within the sphere of the UK's education system as the curriculum has undergone continuous changes overtime (i.e. the EYFS has been altered from its conception in 2008 three times, see DfE, 2012; DfE, 2014a; DfE, 2017a).

Social Conformity

From a micro and meso level of society, socialisation as a process has often been linked to the explanations put forward for the use of school rules (Boostrom, 1991; Fabian, 2005; Thornberg, 2009). For example, (Boostrom (1991) posits that one of the reasons behind their use is that they impart knowledge and understanding to children about what is expected and appropriate behaviour from a cultural perspective (rather than a dominant class system perspective). The generalised theory of socialisation purports that this is how we learn the norms and beliefs of our society (Elkin and Handel, 1972; Denzin, 1977; Giddens, 2009; Maccoby,

2015). From our earliest family and play experiences, we are made aware of community values and expectations (Handel, Cahill and Elkin, 2007). Carter and Doyle (2006) suggest school and classroom rituals (e.g. rules and routines), led by teachers serving as role models and leaders, regularly reinforce what our societies expect from children. Handel (2014) describes how this is often fermented through a process known as the 'hidden curriculum', the informal teaching performed by schools through the employment of various types of rules. This was observed during a conversation that took place between Mrs Hoops and Child A. This can be seen in data box 38 below.

Data Box 38

“Miss can you help me dress this doll please?” asked Child A. “Sure” replied Mrs Hoops “what are we dressing them for?” “Because they are getting married to each other Miss” replied Child A. “What, these two ladies? Let me find you one of the male dolls, A” responded Mrs Hoops. “No, it’s OK, my two ladies are getting married, Miss” stated Child A. “But, they can’t, A, they are ladies” remarked Mrs Hoops. “Why not? They love each other?” queried Child A. “Because that’s the rule, ladies and ladies don’t get married, silly ...they can’t have babies together, let me find you a man doll”. Mrs Hoops walked away giggling to find a male doll.

From a socialisation perspective, in this example, Mrs Hoops is informing Child A that society does not expect females to marry females and that it should be female and males that marry so that they can have children (Ackbar, 2011).

Interestingly, Mrs Hoops explains the information she is giving to Child A is based on a rule, but she does not explain where the rule comes from. West and Zimmerman (1987) postulated that “it is through socialization...that children...learn how to do gender in interaction and how to avoid sanctions for doing it wrong” (p. 457). Concurrently, Mrs Hoops is also supporting the gender socialisation process (Lindsey, 2015) that exists that surrounds females and their potential and expected roles as adults.

6.2.2 Types of rules

Upon reviewing the field notes, I categorised the rules observed based on their perceived usage. The three categories that were identified were **procedural rules** (i.e. how to carry out an activity), **protecting rules** (i.e. to ensure the safety of the children or environment), and finally **rules about behavioural expectations** (i.e. ways of behaving in front of or in relation to other individuals). The categories proposed align with Boostrom’s (1991) views on “rules about relationships with others in the classroom” (p. 194) and Thornberg’s (2009) view of relational rules being comprised of “rules about how to be and how to behave in relations with other people” (pg. 247). Within my study, the behavioural expectations category is the equivalent category. I chose to amalgamate some of the categories that Boostrom (1991) used. For example, I combined his non-academic procedures category, which included being directed to be quiet when the teacher is talking with his category of rules about how to do class work (which included examples like always drawing a line underneath old work before you start a new piece). This is because they represented similar categories and merging them into one procedural category made it more succinct. I also

amalgamated Thornberg's (2009) relational rules and personal rules categories as they had similar properties to the more encompassing category I choose to use which is titled behavioural expectations. The different categories of rules that the children needed to master were made a little more difficult to grasp at times due to the way that they were taught. For instance, some of the rules were explicit and were being continually shared, whereas, others were implicit and were only shared when a child needed to be informed of them, due to their interaction or behaviour.

Explicit rules

A selection of school and classroom rules were explicitly presented around the school building in various places (see table 6.3 for the exact rules displayed). The whole-school rules were made into posters which hung around the school in plain view of the children (e.g. on the doors of classrooms, in the main hall and along the corridors). The classroom rules were not as visible as it depended on which classroom you entered as to whether they were displayed on the walls. For example, they could be seen within several classrooms further up the school (e.g. junior level children); but, they were not displayed within the reception classroom. When I asked why they were not on display, the adults explained that the children could not read well enough at this stage, so they were reminded about them verbally rather than visually. This could be a reason as to why conversations about rules were frequently observed during my time in the classroom. There was one sign on the reception classroom toilet door that showed hands being placed under running water with the words "don't forget to wash your hands" underneath the picture.

Table 6.3: School and Classroom rules at Holme Court School

School Rules		Class Rules	
1	Be kind to others in all you say and do	1	Listen carefully and do not interrupt
2	Always stay in school	2	Speak politely
3	Always walk in school	3	Work quietly at your table
4	This is our school. Look after it	4	Look after the things in your classroom
5	Always be honest and tell the truth	5	Line up quietly when asked

If the school and classroom rules are analysed, they can be categorised (using the three categories I proposed earlier) according to their intended outputs. Inasmuch as school rule 2 and 3 are concerned with protecting children's safety (protecting category). School rule 4 and classroom rule 4 are concerned with protecting the environmental materials within the school / classrooms (again protecting category). Classroom rule 3 and 5 are informing children how to carry out a practice (procedural category). The rest of the rules are designed to produce what has been socially constructed to be deemed morally acceptable ways of behaving with other people (Behavioural expectations category). Interestingly, when I asked who had designed these rules I was informed they were based on the ideas of the school staff, and the school Governors. More

importantly, the children did not have any input into the 'making' of these rules. Although, the school has since redeveloped their school rules, after consulting with the children and parents, and has changed them into shared values that all children are asked to continually demonstrate. These are: Caring, Respecting, Responsibility, Honesty, Determination, Cooperation, Appreciation.

HSC Agreements

Within this area of explicit rules, it should be discussed that the school, like all others within England in 2009, were required to use a Home – School – Child (forth with known as HSC) agreement, which they obligated the class teacher, child, and family to sign at the start of each year (see appendix 15 for a copy of this document). According to the DfEE (1998) these were used by schools to ensure that the children and their families know and follow the school rules. It also provided the family with information about what the school would do to support their child and what they expected the parents to help support the school with. The Holme Court HSC agreement stated “together we will try to.... tackle any special needs, encourage the children to keep the school rules, support the child’s learning to help them achieve their best” (see Appendix 15). It also attempted to involve the children by asking them to sign the form to acknowledge that they were aware of the school / classroom rules.

It is worth noting here that HSC agreements were Government driven (DfEE, 1998) and not many schools or parents were openly supportive of their usage (Hood, 1999; Steer, 2010). In fact, since 2016, they have now become a

Government recommendation rather than a requirement within state schools (DfE, 2016a). The problem associated with HSC contracts, per Hood and Ouston (2000), was that they explicitly portrayed and required parents to be supporters of schools. Yet, if a child's attendance reduced or lessened or their behaviour became 'unmanageable' these agreements could be used by head teachers as evidence in court cases (Steer, 2010) and this may have then led on to a parenting contract or parenting orders being implemented (Ministry of Justice, DCSF and Youth Justice Board, 2007) thereby, discursively linking parents symmetrically as problems. It has been argued that some parents have become wary of HSC agreements for these reasons and they actively chose to disengage from the process (Hood and Ouston, 2000; Coldwell, Stephenson, Fathallah-Caillau and Coldron, 2003). This means the supportive talks between parents and children about obeying the school rules, which were envisaged by the Government (DfEE, 1998), may not have taken place as frequently as anticipated.

The explicit nature of the HSC agreement of Holme Court school was praised by some parents during the interviews and conversations during the year. For example, Pam acknowledged she "liked how they stipulate what the rules are so you can support your child to understand them at home". During an interview with Marie, she recalled how the HSC helped her understand why her son was stroking the school building on the way home every night during the first week of term. She explained, "**** (son) would do it every night so I asked him, and he explained he had to look after the school. It wasn't until I was asked to sign the HSC agreement that I suddenly understood what he meant!". The positive

approach to the HSC agreement was not reported by all the parents however as some complained that they would be “useless in getting their child to stick to the rules when they are in class and I am at home” (Anita). Others (Janice, Tina and Sheree), mentioned they “just signed them because they were asked to” but did not feel they meant anything. This supports the findings reported by Coldwell et al. in 2003 who reported that parents signed them because they believed they had to and that they felt like they did not provide any real term benefits for them.

Implicit rules

Some of the rules were implicit, and they required the children to learn these rules as and when they were explained to them. Table 6.4 shows examples taken from the fieldnotes of some of the implicit rules observed per the categories of rules proposed earlier.

Table 6.4: showing examples of the behavioural expectations, procedural and protecting categories of implicit rules observed throughout the year.

Behavioural Expectations	Procedural	Protecting
Say ‘Good Morning’ at register time	Line up outside before entering the building	No running

Carpet time means we need to be quiet and listen	When told its 'tidy up time', you must stop playing and help to tidy up the toys	No kicking the ball up
No looking around when in assembly	Line up at the start of the drawers	Don't throw items across the room
Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing	If adult puts finger to mouth you must be quiet	Clean up any mess made
No picking noses	No swapping of food at lunch time	No sweets allowed in school
No spitting	Put your hand up if you want to speak	No fizzy pop allowed in school
No prodding or touching other children	School dinners and packed lunches must not sit together	No eating whilst playing outside
Complete an activity when asked to do so	Play outside when told to do so	No splashing the water or sand trays
No arguing back with adults	Toilet breaks only allowed during playtime	

No hushing other people	No talking when an adult is talking	
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A substantial portion of what makes up the overall climate and experience of a classroom has been termed by Jackson (1968) as its implicit level or as Thornberg (2009), Rahman, 2013 and Handel (2014) termed it, the hidden curriculum. Recall, this consists of children learning things through attending school, rather than through the stated educational objectives of the curriculum. This means, the intentional learning that education brings is supported by the explicit rules and procedures used within the school. By contrast, the hidden curriculum is often supported through the use of implicit rules (Boostrom, 1991; Thornberg, 2009).

6.2.3 No rules about employing rules!

One of the biggest difficulties with the rules (whether they were explicit or implicit) was that they could quickly become contradictory or blurred and this made it difficult for the children (and me at times) to navigate through. From a social constructionist perspective, the context the rule is employed within will be utilised by all the individuals involved to aid understanding and consideration of any subsequent actions that should be performed. This is where an adult's or a child's understanding would often be different to that of the other, although the rule essentially was the same (Thornberg, 2007).

One rule, for example, was that a child should never 'hush' someone just so that they could then speak. When in assembly all the children were taught the procedural rule that no-one should be talking, except the adult leading the assembly. As rules are governed by disciplinary measures (Thornberg, 2007) they require a little more thought when reacting to them than routines do. For instance, if a child is caught in a conversation (even a one-way conversation) during an assembly they would likely be chastised by an adult (disciplinary measure employed). Therefore, the rule of no hushing becomes entangled with the procedural category of no talking. The child involved in this incident must make a choice over which rule ranks higher or which one would be deemed more important to the adult who, in this example situation, is in the position of authority. According to Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993) this decision can be difficult to make due to rule inconsistency amongst individual people. They stated, "yet as simple and as direct as rules sound when they are put into words ("Pay attention at all times", "No fighting", "Raise your hand when you want to speak"), they turn out to be quite complicated when we try to understand their enactment. This is partly because most such rules seem, at first, to be inconsistently enforced" (pg. 13).

Thornberg (2007) developed Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen's (1993) ideas further by proposing another useful term: rule diffusion. He used the term to explain what transpires when interpretation difficulties regarding which rules are in force occurs leading to additional complications in understanding how to respond to the situation. As school / classroom rules are often adult led (and were in this study), the child is usually left trying to juggle the homeostatic balance

of expected responses whilst attempting to deal with rule inconsistencies / diffusion.

Rule Inconsistencies

I observed similar findings to Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993) and Thornberg (2007) in that I observed rules manipulated, altered or ignored by some adults in relation to their consideration of additional contextual information. The rule about visiting the “thinking spot” was one such rule that was altered and manipulated on an individual basis. Below, is an extract that demonstrates how the thinking spot was initially discussed with the children by Mrs Cornell.

Data Box 39

Child A asked Mrs Cornell what happens when you are naughty. “Miss, when you’re naughty you have to leave the classroom, don’t you?” he asked, “or do the police take you away to a jail if you’re naughty?” he continued. Mrs Cornell decided to tell the children the rules about the thinking spot, “Since you’re all so keen to know what happens when you’re naughty” she stated. The rules were explained as: each child will be given an opportunity to stop any “naughty behaviour” as an adult will always give them a warning. “We will always tell you to stop doing the naughty behaviour, otherwise you will be asked to visit the thinking spot” stated Mrs Cornell. If the behaviour continued, the children were told they would be placed on the thinking spot where they would be given “time to think about their behaviour and why it was not acceptable” remarked Mrs Cornell. Finally, Mrs

Cornell warned the children that if they moved off the thinking spot before they were allowed to do so they would end up losing their playtime outside.

Yet, the employment of the thinking spot was managed in various ways depending on the adult and child involved. This is demonstrable through the use of a number of examples which can be found in data box 40, below.

Data Box 40

Example 1 – Consistent with thinking spot rule

Child A had splashed water all around the water tray. Mrs Cornell was quick to alert Child A that this was inappropriate, and she called out “A... if you do that again I will have to ask you to go on the thinking spot”. Child A carried on smashing the boats into the water and laughed out loud. Water poured over the sides again. “Right, A...on to the thinking spot, thank you. I warned you, but you didn’t listen. Now you will stay on that spot and think about what you have done” shouted Mrs Cornell.

Example 2 - Inconsistent with thinking spot rule

Child B was playing loudly with the dolls in the home corner. Child C entered the same area and Child B immediately pushed her back out of the home corner, shouting “No, this is my house today...you’re not allowed in here!”. Mrs Brown had seen and heard the exchange and

called out to Child B “B, please don’t be mean to C. Remember our school rule, be kind to others”. With this Child B attempted to re-enter the space but Child C pushed her back out. “B, I am giving you a warning...you will be put on the thinking spot if you do that again” said Mrs Brown. Again, Child C entered the space, only to be pushed out by Child B. Mrs Brown sighed, “B, come here, maybe you need to come and help me for a bit then”. Child B went over and sat on the table with Mrs Brown and worked quietly for a while.

Example 3 - Inconsistent with thinking spot rule

Instead of sitting on the carpet like the other children, Child D sat down on a chair like Mrs Hoops. Mrs Cornell quickly asked D to sit down on the carpet. Child D did not move. Mrs Cornell informed D to sit on the carpet this time. D did not move. It appeared as if Mrs Cornell chose to ignore Child D’s behaviour as she did not speak about it again until Child D was prodding other children in the back telling them “look, I am like the teachers”. At this point, Mrs Cornell told D to go on the thinking spot for a few minutes. No warning had been given. Child D did not move. Mrs Cornell went back to ignoring the behaviour and carried on with the session.

From the small selection of examples in data box 40, rule inconsistency surrounding the employment of the thinking spot is visible within the interactions highlighted. Each example shows a different child involved in the interactions

between the two class teachers (Mrs Cornell and Mrs Brown). In example 1, Mrs Cornell follows the thinking spot rule and consistently applies it by providing a warning and then following through with that warning later. This is in contrast to example 2 where Mrs Brown inconsistently applies the same rule. Mrs Brown provides Child B with a warning, but she does not follow this up afterwards. Finally, in example 3, Mrs Cornell chose not to apply the thinking spot rule at all; although I had observed it being applied in previous situations like this for other children. Interestingly, this shows it is not the rule that changes but the disciplinary measures chosen to enforce the rule that is inconsistently applied.

Differentiated Discipline

After observing these types of occurrences, during a classroom conversation with two of the teachers I asked why they sometimes change the rules or employ them differently. Mrs Cornell remarked “it’s so that we can differentiate according to the children’s understanding. Some of them are great at following instructions and behaving as asked but others need an alternative way of behaviour management techniques”. Whereas Mrs Brown stated, “I try not to, a rule is a rule and it makes it confusing for the little ones if you change them...but sometimes, one form of discipline won’t work for every child”. The two teachers indicate that they use their knowledge about the individual child to help them make the decision of which rule to enforce and how to enforce it. I remember thinking about what the children must make of these inconsistencies when I came across a conversation between three of the children (see data box 41).

Data Box 41

Child A had been kicking and screaming at Mrs Cornell for ten minutes now. He was clearly upset, and Mrs Cornell was comforting him the best she could whilst trying not to get hurt by his kicks. Child B whispered to Child C “I wish he would stop, I have got a headache now!”. “It’s ok” replied Child B “he will be put on the thinking spot soon cos he is being naughty”. Just then Child C responded quite ‘matter of factly’ “No he won’t, he never gets put on the thinking spot ...even when he is naughty”. To which Child B replied, “Oh yeah, silly me!”.

The conversation between the two children shows they had come to understand how discipline may be applied differently for some children. Child A in this example, was disciplined differently because his teachers acknowledged “that he thrives on attention, therefore, if we choose not to send him to the thinking spot and instead remove attention from his general direction we get a better result than we would in reverse” (taken from a conversation with Mrs Cornell). This means Mrs Cornell had chosen to use a negative reinforcement technique in this situation as sending Child A to the thinking spot would have had a positive reinforcing impact (Watson and Raynor, 1920; Skinner, 1935; Brophy, 1997). Differentiated discipline is therefore used within classrooms in the same way as a differentiated curriculum (Robinson, 1992; Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson, 1996; Baker, 2005; Tomlinson and Imbea, 2010). It provides alternative ways of regulating or managing children’s conformity to standardised rules and routines

which on the surface aids the continued management of the classroom. As Baker (2005) states, it also allows situational interventions to be implemented that often benefits marginalised learners. Baker argues marginalised learners are those that come from the lower social classes and are marginalised because of the ethnicity or gender grouping or even because of their sexuality preferences. In contrast, Robinson (1992) argued that the concept of differentiated discipline also has a deeper and darker nature engulfed within it as she argues it is often perpetuated through hegemonic ideologies against those considered to be marginalised. This means that punishments can be given out more freely to these groups of individuals as a way of trying to control their behaviours which go against the wishes of the ruling class.

A thorough review of the use of differentiated discipline is beyond the scope of this study but the impact of its employment means the children may have, as Thornberg (2007) originally reported, found it difficult to use their developing understanding of rules because of the continual differences observed. Per Thornberg's study, he made a further point of arguing that a potential lack of deep understanding could exist for young children and it could be counterproductive in terms of the hidden and explicit socialisation prospects of school rules. In that, if they cannot understand the confines of a rule (due to its ever-changing nature) they will be unable to predict what would be considered appropriate behaviour in particular situations, and how teachers would potentially react to their behaviour.

6.3 Value ‘addedness’ of rules and routines

Referring back to the community of practice theory of learning (see Chapter 3 for an examination of this theory), it was interesting to see first-hand how the children had started to make sense of the rules and routines. This was possible as one of the children joined the school and reception classroom three weeks later than the other children. Lave and Wenger (1991) have articulated their theory of learning as being a trajectory of participation. Thereby, as new individuals join the learning group or community of practice they become apprentice learners. They undertake to copy some of the practices and routines they see, but as Penn (2014) argues it is not until they can comprehend why they are doing the activities or practices and they can perform them without having to think about them; they can then become full members of the said community of practice. When this child joined the classroom, I expected the adults to inform him of the expectations associated with each routine as I had seen them do for the other children.

However, this task was delegated to the children in the room, empowering them into a position of master and the new child as apprentice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). On his first day, the class teacher (Mrs Brown) explained to the children that she expected them to “teach” him how they do things in school as it “can be a little daunting and scary when you first start, trying to figure out where you should be and what you should be doing”. The children undertook this role of mentor and in relation to mastering routines, empowered the new child to move towards full participation within their developing community. This can be

evidenced through the following examples. Note: the *** represents the new child's name.

Data Box 42

"It's ok, ***, don't worry that bell just means its playtime now!"

Child A

"Oh, its assembly now and if Mr A shouts, you gotta be quiet straight away otherwise you get in trouble"

Child A

"Miss, can *** sit with me for register time so I can help him be good for it? Cos, I know what we have to do"

Child B

Mrs Cornell had put her finger to her lips and the children became quiet, except ***. He continued to hum the tune he was humming and continued to play with the toy. Child C went over and informed him "when Miss puts her finger there, it means you have to be quiet and stop playing. OK ***?"

The small selection of examples above shows the children understood the routines and knew what and how to explain the expectations that surrounded

them. As Bailey and Thompson (2009) propose, routines play a central role in developing the notion surrounding the 'correct' way of behaving as school children (Note, this statement will be discussed further in section 6.5 on page 295). Yet, I would argue it is the collective discourse surrounding the routines that control the behavioural expectations placed, not the activity per se. For instance, it could be argued that the children had developed their own knowledge to a point that allowed them to understand what the internal structures were (Corsaro, 1993). Or, they may have developed enough understanding to access and reproduce regimes of truth (Foucault, 1972; 1977). Recall, regimes of truth are sets of understandings based on rules or generalised statements, whose directive is to define what is true or real at any given time. Therein, the children were utilising their knowledge gained from the regimes of truth to commandeer the new child's developing knowledge and understanding. Although, from a Foucauldian lens, it is also plausible that the children had reached a level of understanding of the routines that they became a part of a developing Panopticon (Foucault, 1977; Gallagher, 2010). Foucault (1977) proposed that once a system of routines and laws became a standardised part of people's habitus, the system would become its own Panopticon where self-monitoring would occur in order to preserve the system's equilibrium.

6.3.1 Rote Learning of Rules & Routines

I noted that the children were not sure why they had to carry out activities in certain ways, even though they appeared to understand when they should be behaving in specified manners. For example, one day, the new child (Child A) asked another child (Child B) why they had to line up like soldiers before they

went into assembly. Child B's response (see the field note extract in data box 43 below) indicates he wasn't exactly sure why, except that he had been told to do so.

Data Box 43

"Because Miss says so" replied Child B. Child A thought for a moment "but why? Why can't we pretend to be lions instead! Or be power rangers, I love being a power ranger" asked Child A. "eerr, ...uumm ... because Miss says so". "I know, you said that ...just don't know why" stated Child A. "Just because, ...she is the boss and she said so, so we have to" replied Child B

Wenger (1998) postulated that engaging in a practice, over time, should allow an implicitly understood shared repertoire to develop. He defined this to include "...routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, action, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (pg. 83). This was directly observed when the children were playing and making up the rules to a new game, see data box 44 for an extract of the play.

Data Box 44

Child A, B, C and D were sitting in a circle on the carpet area and they had a ball and a wooden cube. "OK we each get a go and you have to choose which to roll, the ball or the block" informed Child A. "Why?" asked Child B. "Because that is the rule B" replied Child A. "Why do we have a ball and a square thing though?" asked Child C. "I don't

know” replied Child A. Just then Child C excitedly shouted out “I know! We can choose which one to roll but we can only catch the ball and if you catch the block then you are out!” “Oh, that’s it ...that is the new rule everyone” responded Child A. Child B, C and D all replied “OK”.

The example above supports Wenger’s (1998) notion of shared repertoire as the children designed the ‘rules’ of their game together by adopting and redeveloping the practice as a community. Indeed, Wenger’s suggestion is supported by previous research that has investigated communities of practice within classrooms and found positive models and shared repertoires develop if the practices are centred on collaborative learning and co-construction of understanding (see Goos, Galbraith and Renshaw, 1999; Christiansen, 2010; Kapucu, 2012).

In contrast, however, during my time within the classroom and wider school, in line with Garrick et al. (2010), I struggled to note collaborative learning or co-construction of understanding between adults and children in relation to routines or rules (Note: the examples provided in data boxes 42, 43 and 44 suggest child to child co-constructing of knowledge and understanding). It should be highlighted here that the examples showcased in data box 42 show a delegation of power by the adults to the children, thereby insinuating a co-construction of knowledge was present between adults and children (Warren, 2014). Yet, for the majority of the time, the learning of rules and routines between adults and children was based more on didactic instruction on how to carry out activities. Due to the

power imbalance geared in favour of the adults (Boylan, 2010; Gallagher, 2010), the children may have learnt to understand the routines through what Claxton (1998) termed 'osmosis'. This is the ability to absorb information without conscious thought through observing, copying and living through experiences. This learning experience is similar to the old notion of 'rote' learning which the British education system originally embedded as its main teaching approach (Ball, 1990).

Interestingly, many would argue that the teaching approach used today to deliver content is and should be much more child-centred, collaborative and inquiry based (Fabian and Mould, 2009; Kaldi, Filippatou and Govaris, 2011; Rose and Rogers, 2012; Fisher, 2013; Langston, 2014). Yet, I would argue that the learning of the rules and routines, in this study, do not support this proposition. It is plausible that the 'approach' to teaching rules and routines is related to each individual school and teacher's philosophy towards disciplining children (Gore, 1998; Boler, 1999; Hart, 2010; DfE, 2016a). For example, Hargreaves (2017) details the experiences of children when they reside in a classroom where the teacher holds legitimate authority versus a classroom that uses coercive authoritarianism. The latter was often reported to induce fear and curtailed the potential for autonomous engagement by the children in their learning. Whereas, holding legitimate authority, or using what Warren (2014) deemed as an authoritative approach in a classroom was preferred by the children and allowed them to understand their place within the school system (Bath, 2009; Hargreaves, 2017). This is not to say that in a school classroom the teacher has a total monopoly on power, matters are more complex than this in the moment to

moment interactions in classrooms (Linehan and McCarthy 2001; Garrick et al., 2010) and this will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 7. However, in a classroom, it is plausible that the teacher's authority over the children and the lack of a trajectory for this to change (Briscoe, 2008; Boylan, 2010; Gallagher, 2010), means that the depth of learning achievable for rules and routines is very different from communities of practice proposed in other contexts (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

If learning is a socially based experience (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), children and adults should not have differences per se in the way that they learn. However, there may be more obstacles for children in relation to their understanding of the learning experiences they undertake. For instance, it has already been argued adults often hold power and control over children (Briscoe, 2008) which means they may not always provide explanations for why they must carry out certain aspects of learning. Per Lave and Wenger (1991), this is an important part of the child's journey to reaching full membership of their community of practice and being successful in their learning. Therein, if guidance is not provided to enable the child to make sense of the learning experience then they may be restricting the child's membership to the developing community of practice. This may impact or prolong a child's transition in learning to understand what it means to become a school child.

6.3.2 Developing ‘Docile Bodies’

It was clear from my fieldnotes that the children in this study developed some knowledge of what the expected behaviours were from a routine or rule. As an example, when I asked the children, during a lunch time conversation, how they lined up at the start of school they were able to provide me with all the required information (see data box 45 for the fieldnote extract).

Data Box 45

“You stand still behind someone and wait till Miss tells you to go in”

Child A

“Yeah, it’s easy, you just stand in the line of boys, not with the girls, and you have to wait for Mrs Cornell or Mrs Brown to come out and get us”

Child B

“It’s boring ...you just stand still, like a soldier”

Child C

“Your Mum is not allowed to stand with you, you gotta stand by yourself in the line with the other girls. Then when Miss tells us we can all go in together”

Child D

Yet, when I asked them *why* they have to stand in the line before they can enter school, the same children could only give me similar reasons to these: “cos that’s what we have to do” (Child A) or “because Miss says so” (Child B). Maybe this

was because explanations as to why routines were implemented were very rarely provided to the children and they did not ask for a reason. Lam and Pollard (2006) acknowledges that children often do this, as they state there is an implicit assumption that children will passively fit into and not question school routines because they believe that means that they are being good school children.

This suggests that children appear to develop their knowledge and, particularly in this study, their understanding of routines through the influence exerted by the regimes of truth that surrounds the concept. Hestad (2008) warns discursive knowledge is never objective and is "... intrinsically connected with power" (pg. 10). Foucault coined the term biopower in 1977 but was imprecise in his use of the term (Lemke, 2002). However, according to Pylypa (1998, pg. 21), biopower refers to "the ways in which power manifests itself in the form of daily practices and routines through which individuals engage in self-surveillance and self-discipline, and thereby subjugate themselves". This is why regimes of truth and biopower have been argued to help produce what Foucault (1972) termed, docile bodies. Foucault believed individuals who accept discursive information without really questioning (like the children in this study) are transformed into docile bodies which allows institutions like schools to govern and control their movements and behaviours (Pylypa, 1998; Briscoe, 2008; Ball, 2103).

6.3.3 CoP or Regime of Practice?

During my time within the classroom and wider school, I noticed that a there was no platform provided for children to develop a deeper level of understanding of

rules or of routines. Yet, as an adult, I had an expectation that some form of clarification would be given to me, and it usually was. For example, once the children had started to stay for full days, they also had to learn the dinner time routine (Blatchford and Sumpner, 1998; Alerby, 2003; Thorne, 2005). I sat with the children and ate my lunch with them. On the first day, one of the school staff came up to me and explained how I must eat my lunch (e.g. sandwich first, yoghurt second, fruit third and then any other items I have remaining). She explained this is how the children are taught to eat their lunch and as I was sitting with them, there was an expectation that I would also follow this routine. I had no problems with the instructions but looked up at the adult and was about to ask why we were being asked to eat in a sequential manner when they interrupted first and provided me with a rationale. The reason given was in line with Young's (1997) and Just and Wansink's (2009) advice on producing healthy eating policies so that the children eat the healthier foods first and if they leave anything it would be more likely to be the foods deemed less healthy, like chocolate biscuits or crisps.

During that first week of having lunch at school, I observed five of the 12 focal children ask a member of school staff why they must eat in a specified way and they were simply told "because that is the rule here" (Mrs Barker). There was no explanation provided to the children like there was for me. In relation to this use of power and control, Boylan (2010) argues that school classrooms or environments are like all communities of practice in that they all have some form of hierarchical power relations that exist. Within work environments this would be between management and workers and within schools this generally exists

between the adults and children (although, it also does reside within child – child relationships and between adult – adult relationships).

Boylan (2010) proposes that unless a more democratic approach to classroom practices is undertaken, the adult's power within the environment alters the formation of the community of practice in to what he called an ecology of practice or more fitting is his term *regime of practice*. He proposed a regime of practice is in a sense a community of learners but rather than being a co-constructed experience they are coerced into learning the set curricula. He suggests this coercion seeps through from many angles, from the compulsory nature of schooling and the national curriculum, to the day to day forcefulness that is used to take part in classroom practices. This forcefulness was observed in the third sub theme that emerged from the observation data: the rights of the child; or, the lack there of and this aspect will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

6.4 3rd R of transition: Rights

The discourse surrounding the rights of the child has increasingly been considered, especially within the discipline of Childhood Studies (e.g. Hart, 1992; Devine, 1998; Gates, 1999; Archard, 2004; Lundy, 2007; Alderson, 2008; Cordero Acre, 2012). Gadda (2008) highlights that momentum in this area gathered after the introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989). The convention which was ratified by the United Kingdom in 1991 holds 54 pacts that the British Government has officially agreed to support. However, Franklin (2002) once argued that the ambitions of the

UNCRC have never been fully translated in to common day practice within the UK, even though the ratification had taken place. In relation to the observations within the classroom and the wider school environment, there was lots of evidence that the children's rights, according to the UNCRC, were being upheld and followed. However, there was also contrasting evidence that some of these rights were being ignored, purposively withdrawn in certain situations or interpreted in an idiosyncratic manner. Therefore, this section will discuss a selection of these situations to understand the discursive practices that were observed and how this may have subsequently helped to construct the children's experience of this transition.

6.4.1 Four Pillars of Rights

Firstly, it is repeatedly argued across the academic literature (e.g. Franklin, 2002; Alderson, 2008; Gadda, 2008; Jones and Welch, 2010; Peleg, 2013; Kanyal, 2014) that the UNCRC has enshrined all the rights into four pillars; these being: the right of children to *survive*, the right to *stay safe*, the right to *belong* and the right to *develop*. Furthermore, it is also made clear that all rights should be considered equal in importance and are to be used to reinforce each of the remaining rights (United Nations, 1989). The education system within the UK was designed and put into practice well before any of these rights were mandated (Ball, 2013). Although, when the education system is accessed in further detail it is clear to see how, on the face of it, the system supports all four categories in one way or another.

As Walkerdine (2015) argues, the education system, within England, enables children to learn to survive by teaching them the life skills required and by providing them with the qualifications to become economic contributors once they reach adulthood. It provides a safe environment for every child during the day, away from the strains of child labour demands (Ball, 2013). According to the EYFS (2012) and Ephgrave (2013), it provides one community facet that a child can learn to belong to and is also a valuable learning tool environment that will teach children about different cultures and backgrounds; thereby, assisting children's understandings of belonging. Finally, it has been designed to enable children to develop each and every year through a progressive system of physical, behavioural, emotional and social development (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997; Billman and Sherman, 2003; EYFS, 2012; Boyd and Hirst, 2016).

In contrast, Harcourt and Hägglund (2013) explain that the rights based on the UNCRC should be perceived as "gifts" to the children as essentially, they believe that is what they are. They are not the rights that children themselves would choose. In their research, they found children wanted to claim rights based on their lived experiences, rather than what is perceived to be in their best interest. For example, some of the children highlighted the right to climb a tree as being important to them. Harcourt and Hägglund claim the rights were often chosen by the children based on the reactions they received from the adults around them. For instance, tree climbing is often seen as risky play (Sandseter, 2007; Moyles, 2010) and tends to be restricted by adults (Gill, 2007; Frost, Wortham and Reifel, 2012). However, it could be argued that these adults are simply adhering to the stay safe pillar of the UNCRC.

During the observations that I carried out throughout the school and the reception classroom, I observed numerous occasions where the right to survive, stay safe, belong and develop were being upheld and instigated in a variety of ways.

Data Box 46

Right to survive

Child A had appeared tired as he was laying his head down on the table and trying to go to sleep. Mrs Brown asked him if he had eaten breakfast this morning. “No Miss, we didn’t have time ... I got up, got dressed and we came to school. I didn’t even get a drink” he replied. “Oh! It’s nearly fruit and milk time so you can have some fruit then, but for now let’s get you some water to drink. We all need to be able to have a drink when we need one otherwise that can make us tired” informed Mrs Brown.

Right to stay safe

Child A’s behaviour was becoming an issue for the other children as he was throwing the duplo bricks directly at their faces now; even though he had already been told to stop by two adults previously. The class teacher eventually pulled Child A to one side of the room and explained “Child A, every child in this room has the right to play and be safe, but your behaviour is stopping them from being able to do that. I have asked you already to stop throwing the bricks at Child B, C and D but you have chosen to continue. Therefore, to keep those

children safe, I am going to have to ask you to sit outside in the hallway for five minutes while you try to calm yourself down”.

Right to belong

The children were very excited to go back into the reception classroom and tell their teacher that they had won the attendance bear for the best class attendance across the school, in the previous week. The teacher praised the children and explained that if they continued to work together as a class, by encouraging each other every day, they would be able to “continue to support their little developing community”.

Right to develop

A face painting activity had been designed to get the children to think about what they all looked like. What aspects were similar (i.e. two eyes, a mouth and a nose) and what aspects could be different (i.e. eye colour, hair colour and length and skin shade). It developed into an opportunity for the children to ask various questions about cultures and similarities and differences and why these may occur.

Each of the examples above, provide an insight into one incidence that supports the four pillars of the UNCRC. According to The International Save the Children Alliance (1999, pg. 5) “over the past ten years [referring to the UNCRC] it has

helped to establish an internationally accepted framework for the treatment of all children, encouraged a positive and optimistic image of children as active holders of rights, and stimulated a greater commitment to safeguarding these rights”.

However, the more the UNCRC has been studied academically, the more the convention is criticised because of its perceived infiltration by childhood discourses of power and control (Alderson, 2000; Pupavac: 2001; Franklin, 2002; Freeman, 2007; Gadda, 2008; Jones and Welch, 2010; Peleg, 2013; Kanyal, 2014). These discourses have been previously discussed in earlier chapters (see chapter 2). Relating the UNCRC directly to the education system and the starting school transition, Save the Children (2006) argue that “Article 29 of the UNCRC refers to the purpose of education as being the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin” (pg. 6). This quote by Save the Children indicates that the education system is designed to develop and assist children in their journey into adulthood. This was evidenced previously in data box 37 (page 268), where Mrs Hoops discussed developing the skill of writing as it would help Child A to “get a job” when they became an adult. Arguably therefore, at the very heart of article 29, there is an intrinsic link being made with education systems and the developmental perspective of viewing a child as a ‘becoming’ rather than as a ‘being’ (James and Prout, 1997; Lee, 2002).

Peleg (2013) argues that the UNCRC provides five articles (which he outlines as article 18, 23, 27, 29 and 32) that connect children's rights to their development through eight specified domains of development (e.g. physical, mental, moral, social, cultural, spiritual, personality and talent). Furthermore, Peleg postulates that the importance that the convention sees in protecting children's development is further reinforced through its use of the four guiding pillars as children's 'right to development' is one of them. Finally, he proposes that the right to develop takes precedence over the other three pillars, even though the UNCRC states they should all be equally adhered to. The reason for this, according to Peleg (2013), is that there are no known valid definitions that explains what is meant by the term 'right to development' and this is causing a number of professionals, and parents alike to draw on the more familiar 'becoming' discourse.

6.4.2 Children as 'Becomings'

From the observations carried out, this can be evidenced using an interesting example which occurred early in the first week that the children attended school full-time (i.e. they stayed all day and ate their lunches at school). See data box 47 for the fieldnote extract.

Data Box 47

The children were eating their lunch during the normal dinner time routine. However, Child A declared that they did not want to eat any more of their dinner as they were feeling full. This was immediately met by one of the adults in the room attempting to control the situation

(and the child's wishes); in that, the child was informed they could not go out to play unless they ate all the food they had been given.

I was intrigued after observing this incident as to why Mrs Barker (non-teaching staff member) dealt with the situation in the manner that they did as I originally presumed that there may have been a school-wide policy or rule about how to deal with this type of situation. Therefore, I followed this up with a conversation with the adult after the lunch period had ended where I asked her why she dealt with the situation in the way that she did.

Data Box 48

"Because that is what we are expected to do, you know? My role is not just to look after the children, as in keep them safe, we are kind of like...their surrogate mums when they are in school, you know? That means we must act like a Mum would and that means making sure the children eat all of their dinner....you know, these children are so little that they don't really understand yet when they are really full and when they are just too excited to go and play outside for a bit. So, we have to encourage them to eat up all of the food that is served up for them or sent in by their Mums. I mean, as a parent, you know how much your child can eat so we go along with that idea and insist that children try to finish all the food that is sent in...you get what I mean? I mean, parents only send in what they know a child can eat don't they... I know I do! So, when they are telling you they are full, it is usually just because they want to go out rather than them actually being full.

From the conversation with the adult it became clear that discursive practices were one of the main guiding factors in why Mrs Barker made the decision she did to override the rights of the child in their own decision making (Burr, 2015). For example, they stated that “they are expected to do [that]” which was not linked to any formal school policy or rule but, as Burr (2015) would support, it was an expectation made on them by other adults. Vogt’s (2010) research reported that those who work within schools are often expected, by society, to have an ethic of care and that the potential ethic chosen was found to be based on a continuum. It could range from: caring as commitment, caring as relatedness, caring as physical care, caring as expressing affection (such as giving a cuddle), caring as parenting and caring as mothering.

Vogt (2010) argued that the ethic, caring as mothering was implicitly linked with the westernised notion of femininity and Wood (2016) has argued that this notion has influenced how non-teaching staff appraise their role. In the extract found above, Mrs Barker shows signs of what Gutek and Cohen (1987) term ‘sex-role spill-over’ as her gender-based role from home ‘spilled’ into the school setting. For example, it was interesting to see the use of the term “surrogate Mum” being used as this indicates an expectation was placed on the adult to look after the child as if they were their own (Osgood, 2005; McGillivray, 2010). This was further demonstrated when the conversation led to assertions being made that parents know how much their child can eat and therefore the child should be able to eat it all; the adult even makes a direct connection to how they, themselves, parent and relies on this as evidence to back up their own ideas.

Additionally, there was then a direct reference to the child needing protection drawing on the child in need discourse (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000), (which was discussed further in Chapter 2) resulting in them being controlled as they “are so little” and that “they don’t really understand yet when they are really full...”. Therefore, it appears, they were using Kagan’s (1998) notion of adultomorphism, overriding the child’s wishes with the best of intentions in mind as they had concluded that the child could not possibly be *competent* enough (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000; Jones and Welch, 2010) to understand if they were physically full. Thereby, drawing on the ‘becoming’ discourse of childhood (Prout and James, 1997; Uprichard, 2008) meaning the child was being granted the status of incompetent, dependent, powerless and politically silent (Jones and Welch, 2010).

Wyness (2012. pg. 83) postulates that children are seen as ‘less’ than adults because most practitioners are “future oriented” and this impacts the way children are perceived. Jenks (1982) argued that the “child is never ontologically established in its own right” (pg. 14); again, meaning children are perceived as becomings versus beings. The differences between these two perspectives, especially in relation to how the child, adult and their relationship are perceived are shown in Table 6.5 (becoming) and Table 6.6 (being). The tables are based on the perspectives provided by Archard (2004), Alderson (2008), Gadda (2008), Jones and Welch (2010), Cordero Acre (2012) and finally Kanyal (2014) on what it means to be perceived as ‘becoming’ or ‘being’. The presentation of the table is adapted from Jones and Welch’s (2010, pg. 50) similar tables.

Table 6.5 showing the status of children, adults and child and adult relationships when children are perceived as 'becomings'.

	View of the Child	View of the Adult	Child-Adult Relationship
Perceived using the <i>becoming</i> discursive perspective	Passive recipient of adult protection and provision	Strong and capable and knows what is best	Unequal power relationship
	Lacking adult competencies of rationality and agency	Able to make rational decisions and take responsibility	Adult as protector, provider and decision maker for the child
	Dependent on Adults	Independent	Child responds positively to adult control
	In need of control		Where does not respond positively: the relationship becomes one of challenge and conflict

Adapted from Jones and Welch (2010. pg. 50)

Table 6.6 showing the status of children, adults and child and adult relationships when children are perceived as 'beings'.

	View of the Child	View of the Adult	Child-Adult Relationship
Perceived using the <i>being</i> discursive perspective	Active participant in their family and immediate community	Active participant in their family and immediate community	Mutually respectful relationship with an appreciation of the strengths and weakness of each other
	Developing but is resilient with many strengths	Able to make rational decisions and take responsibility but also understands they make mistakes	Adult is sensitive to the growing capabilities of the child and supports them in decision making
	Economically dependent on others but also contributes to the family and community	Economically independent	Children are encouraged to contribute and take responsibility within the family and community

Adapted from Jones and Welch (2010, pg. 50)

Do adults always know best?

The same child from data box 47, raised an issue with the instructions to finish eating her dinner. The child explained that her “Mum says not to eat when I am feeling full up”. The statement made by the child indicates she has formed a decision that she feels full up. Article 12 of the UNCRC argues that children’s views should be given due weight, where a child is deemed capable of forming their own views. However, as the term ‘capable’ is an undefined term this often means adults resort back into protective and rational mode meaning their perspective overrides the children’s individual views (Bühler-Niederberger and Sünker, 2011).

This preference for the adult’s point of view to take precedence over the child’s appeared to take place in the interaction as the child’s comment was met with a quick reprimand of “well your Mum isn’t here now, and I am telling you, you need to finish eating all your food” (Mrs Barker). The child appeared to be drawing on the knowledge of her parents within the school setting, potentially acknowledging them as being the holder of her ‘rights’. This was quickly challenged by the adult who insinuated that within school they (e.g. the adults within the school) are the ones that have power and control over the children’s rights. This was a lesson that I observed again during the transitional year.

For example, on another occasion, some of the children were caught up in an argument, with an adult, over playing out in the rain. Mrs Cornell had informed

the children to get their coats on and any hats or gloves they may have as it was “raining a lot” outside.

Data Box 49

Some of the children ran to the window and then Child A started to moan “Oh man! That means I can’t play outside!” Mrs Cornell quickly followed this up by informing the children that they can “and most certainly will be playing outside”. She explained that just because it was raining, it does not mean they must stay inside. She continued to state “...getting fresh air is better for us than staying inside”. Child A, challenged these comments by insisting that his Mum does not allow him to play out when it’s raining, and he argued “I don’t want to get wet today, so I will just stay in today, thank you”.

Mrs Cornell appeared to think for a moment, then she firmly stated, “A, when you are at school I make the rules, I said you need to put your coat on and go outside and play therefore you will get your coat for me and you will go out to play, OK”. Child A paused for a moment too. “Miss, are you coming out with us too? To get some good fresh air?” Mrs Cornell replied, “Not today, it’s not my turn”. Child A quickly enquired about what she would be doing then and was told “I will be sitting down and having a cup of tea to recover from this conversation” she laughed.

This dislike of playing outside during rainy periods was also reported by Biston in 2007. In her study, the children reported a similar dislike of being made to play outside when it was raining. Interestingly, it could be argued that there was no whole school approach being applied here, evidenced by Mrs Cornell's reluctance to carry out the same activity the child had been requested to do (Weare, 2000). When I attempted to discuss the reasoning behind Mrs Cornell's action with some of the adults within the school they explained "it's good for them" (Mrs Brown) ..."it won't do them any harm (Mrs Cornell) ... "we had to do it as kids" (Mr Atkinson). The use of these phrases indicates that the adults who put this forward as a reason may have viewed the activity as a 'rite of passage' (Von Gepp, 1967) or as an activity that was in the child's best interest (Kanyal, 2014). The best interests being subscribed to here tended to be considered from a developmental aspect.

There was clearly a power imbalance (Briscoe, 2008; Burr, 2015) evident within this conversation, in that once Child A explained he did not want to go out to play and get wet the conversation turned from a friendly discussion into the adult feeling the need to assert her control over the child's wishes. This involved explaining to the child, as directed to do so by Lightfoot (2004) and McConaughy's (2008) teaching textbooks that she (i.e. Mrs Cornell) controls what he must do within school thereby insinuating that she has more control than his parents do in the school environment. This example, again, like the previous one in data box 47, appears to be positioning the child in a less favorable place to that of the adult (Davies and Harré, 1999; Linehan and McCarthy, 2001; Jones and Welch, 2010). Connectedly, if this example was to occur during an average

working day for two adults the incident would, more than likely, have stopped where the first adult explained that they did not wish to go outside. Understanding this difference between adult and adult and adult and child relationships made me more intrigued as to why the child's right to make an informed decision on whether to play out was overridden so easily.

I pushed a little further with this consideration, it appeared that these same adults all commented in a similar way to this comment provided by Mrs Cornell: "well they have to learn to get used to it otherwise we would never get a break from them". This begs the question as to whether it was really in the child's best interests or whether the decision to force the children to play out in the rain was also caught up in the adult's best interests too. If it was, the adult's interests outweighed the children's in this activity (Jones and Welch, 2010; Kanyal, 2014). Finally, in the previous comment made by Mrs Cornell, it is clear to see that having their right to make an informed decision removed was something the children would need to get used to, as it was a component of the socialization of children (Handel, 2014) into the role a school child.

6.4.3 Children are perceived as < adults

I make the case, that learning to undertake the role of a school child (i.e. being socialised) also means learning to accept that your perspective is generally held as less valuable as that of adults (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000; Dahlberg and Moss, 2005; Wyness, 2012). Inasmuch as children's voices do not carry as much weight as those of adults and their rights are therefore frequently overruled in the

name of welfare protection (Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000; Handley, 2009; Jones and Welch, 2010). This was certainly observed in various situations throughout the transitional year. For example, from a simple activity of choosing the colour to use on a picture, to controlling the decision of what to make with plasticine, to having the final say on whether a child could go to the toilet when they requested it. In all of the incidents, the adults tended to force their preference over the original choices voiced by the children. McDowell Clark (2016) purports that the idea that children are not yet 'fully formed' adults is often used as a means for denying children (as a cultural group) full citizenship rights and this is often actioned by reducing the value of any of their potential contributions and certainly by controlling their level of participation.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), an individual's perceived contribution and potential participation is an important element that aides the development of the community of practice process. Therefore, if the value of children's contributions to a community are reduced then it would appear that it is more like a regime of practice that is formed rather than a community of practice. In the context of schooling the term 'community of practice' is something for educators (and pupils) to work towards developing rather than a description which neatly fits with what commonly exists.

6.5 The 3 R's help produce 'good' pupils

The three discursive practices discussed within this chapter: Routines, Rules and the reduction of the Rights of the child appear (within the confines of this study)

to have been used as disciplinary and regulatory practices. Cannella (1997) argues that institutions that employ these types of practices over children are using them with the intention of discursively producing something. I would argue the aim is to produce the notion of being a 'good' pupil / school child. The 'good' pupil, defined by Thornberg (2009), is a socially constructed child who "obeys the whole rule system". In other words, a good pupil is a pupil who behaves appropriately by following all the formal rules in school (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2009). Throughout my time in the classroom I observed occasions where the children received feedback from adults or peers about their behaviour. Although some illustrations have already been displayed (for instance see data box 34), two more examples are presented below.

Data Box 50

Example 1

Child A and B were playing on the computer when Child C tried to join them. There were only two chairs in front of the computer as the 'rule' is that only two children are allowed on it at any one time. Child A told Child C he could not play as he was playing with Child B. "I don't care" stated Child C "I want to go on it now!" Child B turned to Child C and informed him "That is not very nice C, you are not nice to say that. You can't go on yet because me and A are playing on it and that is the rule". Just then Mrs Cornell walked past the three children and praised Child B "well done on remembering the rule B, what a good boy you are. C, you can have a go as soon as A and B have finished now go play with something else for a few minutes".

Example 2

Child A had been caught running in the classroom again. “Erm, A I have told you repeatedly about breaking the school rule. You are being a naughty boy today”.

Example 1 shows the children self-policing the expected behaviour and the teacher reinforcing this by offering praise to Child B (Watson and Raynor, 1920; Skinner, 1935; Brophy, 1997). Example 2 shows the notion of the ‘naughty’ child being used by Mrs Cornell, potentially as a disciplinary measure (Hempel-Jorgensen, 2009; Thornberg, 2009). As has been discussed throughout this chapter, there are various potential reasons for children being controlled in the manner that they are, i.e. socialising them into becoming responsible economic contributors to society, for example (Jenks, 1996; Giddens, 2009; Schiro, 2013; Corsaro, 2015). In connection to this, Foucault (1982) argued that power should not be seen just as a hierarchal concept as he stipulated it was as a force that could be either a positive or negative, repressive or productive. More importantly, Foucault (1982) did not deny the potential for power to be used oppressively, however he also argued that individuals always have agency: the capacity to act of their own volition – and as such, they possess power too. Cannella (1997) linked a similar argument directly to the discourse of being deemed a ‘good’ pupil where she states standards are produced from the practices “... which individuals judge and limit themselves [to], through which they construct a desire to be ‘good’, ‘normal’ or both” (pg. 137).

6.6. Chapter Summary

School rules, routines and children's rights are a part of the everyday life of schools, they embody a way of life, and arguably therefore are a source of moral influence (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1993; Fenstermacher, 2001; DeVries and Zan, 2003; Thornberg, 2007; 2009). They are the 'do's' and 'don'ts' (Boostrom, 1991), right and wrong, or desirable and undesirable behaviours that contribute to the construction and maintenance of the 'good' pupil construction. According to Boostrom (1991) the child who embraces school rules and routines not only shows short-term behaviours that are liked by adults (and their peers), but they also learn from these responses "in far-reaching ways" about themselves and their position in the world. He stated (pg. 201) "rules are not chains that drag children about or rough hands that pick them up and move them. Rules do not embrace us; we embrace them. We may respond positively and comply, or we may respond negatively and define ourselves in opposition to the rule. Either way, we embrace a tradition, for either way, we use the rule's terms for defining order".

It could be argued then, that the children within this study were provided with routines, rules and a reduction of rights to enable them to choose whether they would conform to the standard of behaviour known as 'good', 'naughty' or 'normal'. The next chapter will detail and discuss how the 3 practices outlined here produced and positioned the children in one of these fluid identities and how the children often chose to accept or declined to be held in the constraints of that identity.

Chapter 7: Uncovering PPA activities during the transition

(Positioning, Power and Agency)

Childhood researchers have discussed Foucault's theory of power as being related to social control (e.g. James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Valentine, 2000; Blackford, 2004; Mac Naughton, 2005). Therefore, this chapter aims to mobilise Foucault's concepts of discourse and power to analyse and theorise the use of classroom regimes to develop the normative school child identity embedded in this transition. As the transition has previously been described as a process of learning *how to become a school child* (which was provided in Chapter 5) and the discursive practices that outline what a good school child should do are related to the *rules, routines and rights of the child* (which was outlined in Chapter 6) then this chapter will address why, by attending to theory, it is possible to understand that all children cannot become 'good' school children. It will question, why some children become positioned as something different and whether it is the transition they have struggled with or something else like the discursive practices laid out for them. It will then acknowledge Foucault's original ideas around power in that it should be understood as not necessarily repressive, but as a generalised and productive relational force (Foucault 1982).

7.1 Understanding Identity

Identity is a term that is used when referring to who a person is to another and it is believed to be produced (Burr, 2015) on many different levels and through spoken interactions and written texts (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006). Goffman (1959) and Berger and Luckman (1966) argued that social constructionism suggests that human beings focus on the interactions that they have with others and they use the knowledge gained from them to construct who they believe they are. This is known widely within the identity literature as 'identity work' (Goffman, 1959; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Creed and Scully, 2000; Beech, 2008). Identity work is not only how people categorise themselves or are categorised by others. As Beech (2008, pg. 52) suggests "It is also concerned with how the images and representations (physical, symbolic, verbal, textual and behavioural) become imbued with meaning and are taken as being part of one's identity". Therefore, an individual's identity is based on the continual evaluations of their surroundings (Goffman, 1959; Gergen, 2009; Burr, 2015). This means, according to Burr (2015), that identity is thought of as flexible and malleable and will often change according to any new information received. To keep it flexible, requires us to pay attention constantly, observing, evaluating and reconstructing our identities in accordance to what is happening (or not happening) in the environment around us (Goffman, 1959; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006).

The different types of information that humans tend to pay attention to has been termed identity categories or attributes (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Bradbury, 2013). Several identity categories have now been

acknowledged; these include gender, sexuality, race and social class (Money and Ehrhardt, 1972; Foucault, 1978; Helms, 1990; Butler, 1990, 2004; Bennet, 2013). In addition to these categories (and with direct relevance to this research) is the notion of developing a school child identity.

According to Falsafi (2010) and Bradbury (2011, 2013) the categories related to educational identities are less well understood as there has been a reluctance (or maybe a difficulty) to research them further. This appears to be the case in relation to understanding the category of school child as the literature on this subject is limited; although, Thornberg (2009) looked directly at the school child identity. A similar term was used by Falsafi (2010) and Bradbury (2011) where both authors use the term learner identity in their research. Interestingly, Falsafi (2010) argued that learner identity is a prerequisite of any other form of identity category as identity construction in one way or another requires learning. Learner identity is purported to be a tool that academics can draw on to understand how children construct meanings about themselves as learners. Therefore, in relation to this research, I will be drawing on some of the ideas discussed in relation to learner identities but will be applying it to how children learn to understand and develop their school child identities within the reception year experience.

In line with Falsafi (2010) and Bradbury (2011), this research supports the claim that all learning identities are based on discourses that form the normative models of what it means to be a learner. This was revealed in the parental interviews discussed in Chapter 5 where the parents outlined that the starting school

transition was about learning to become a school child. Their understanding of what learning must take place to meet this goal was influenced from a number of various discourses which were historical or political in nature. Then, in Chapter 6, the 3 R's of transition were highlighted as helping to frame what being a school child is about. The role of a reception class school child is to follow the school rules, abide by the routines and to succumb to the reduction of their individual rights in favour of aligning with the collective rights assigned to the group. Therefore, this chapter aims to consider theories that might explain how the children develop their individual school child identities.

7.2 Positioning theory

According to Benwell and Stokoe (2006), positioning theory allows a concept related to identity (i.e. in this case, the school child and its associated categories of good or naughty, settled or not settled) to be considered utilising aspects from identity theory and role theory (Shotter and Gergen, 1989; Butler, 1990; Wenger, 1998; O'Brien, 2002; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Bennett, 2013). According to Harré and van Langenhove (1999, pg. 17), the concept of positioning refers to "the assignment of fluid 'parts' or roles to speakers in the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts". Consequently, Ritchie and Rigano (2001) argue positioning theory is a dynamic alternative to just using the concept of role. Benwell and Stokoe (2006) further this by suggesting positioning theory has an ability to make connections between the macro (e.g. discourses) and micro levels

of interactions (e.g. classroom-based interactions) which this research has focussed on, in terms of its analysis.

Positioning theorists (Davies and Harré. 1990, 1999; Linehan and McCarthy, 2000; Harré and Moghaddam, 2003) outline that the act of positioning, helps construct the fluid identity of the speaker in the moment by moment interactions between the speaker and their audience. As Davies and Harré (1999, pg. 37) suggest positioning is a “discursive practice whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines”. This means the discursive actions enable storylines, or sometimes termed subject positions, to be produced and each person involved in the conversation receives some sort of information that they can use to inform their own understanding of the discourses and regimes in play. In data box 51 there a few examples of where such information was provided to the children from an adult or from their peers directly.

Data Box 51

Example 1

The children had been taken into the hall for assembly. “OK children, assemblies are part of our school lives. You have an important role to play in them. You are the school children and I am the teacher. Does anyone know what that means?” asked Mr Atkinson. None of the children raised their hands. “It means you are the listener and I am the speaker. Your role is to listen to me and my role is to tell you

exciting stories and let you all know what is going on in our school” explained Mr Atkinson.

Example 2

A small group (5) of children were discussing reading books. “But that is how you know they go to school...because they carry a bag with a reading book in it” explained Child A. “No, it’s not, my Grandma takes a book with her on the train, but she doesn’t go to school” replied Child B. “But your Grandma is bigger than us so that doesn’t count. I mean, you can tell if a boy or girl goes to school because they will have a reading book bag with them” informed Child A.

Example 3

Child A is complaining to Mrs Cornell about having to wear the same blue school jumper every day. He states “Do you know what I don’t like Miss? Having to wear this jumper every day for school” (pulls at his school uniform jumper) “My Mum says I have to, but I really wanted to come in my batman suit today”. Mrs Cornell appeared to think for a moment then replied “I know it can be frustrating not being able to wear what you want but look at all the children in this room today...you are all wearing a beautiful school uniform which means you all belong to Holme Court school. It is a really nice feeling to know you belong to a group Child A...and that is what wearing a school uniform gives you”.

In the three examples above, the children involved have been provided with discursive information to help them produce a story line (Davies and Harré, 1999) that helps the children understand how they are perceived and their positioning as a school child. In example 1, it is provided by the adult, quite clearly, so that they understand what their role is when attending assemblies. Yet, it also aligns with the normative model of what a usual activity would be for a school child (Thornberg, 2009). In example 2, the practise of carrying a reading book bag to and from school is used to produce the storyline of what a school child is thought to do. Dockett and Perry (1999b) also acknowledged that the carrying of a school bag / reading book bag was an important tradition that the children in their study looked forward to doing as much as the children in this study did.

In example 3, Child A learns that wearing the school uniform is an essential part of the normal day to day expectations of being known as a Holme Court pupil. Mrs Cornell could have been drawing on the EYFS curriculum (DfE, 2014a, 2017) here and also the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) by using this opportunity to highlight the feeling of belonging to a group. However, as both of these are discursive objects (e.g. EYFS and the UNCRC) in themselves it is arguable that Mrs Cornell was utilising the interaction to provide the storyline or subject position of being a Holme Court child to enable Child A to understand the discursive intentions behind wearing school uniforms.

7.2.1 Psychologically Invested in Subject Positions

Drawing on discursive intentions is one of the reasons why Harré et al. (2009) aligns positioning theory with discursive psychology; although, Burr (2015) also argues they are aligned within cognitive psychology too. For Harré and Dedaić (2012, pg. 45) acknowledged “psychological phenomena are produced as a result of active agents drawing on bodies of knowledge to accomplish intentions and projects”. In other words, they believe our actions derive from our perceived meaning of events. Harré et al. (2009) argues during social interactions we unconsciously monitor, define and redefine the situation and draw individual conclusions about the implicit positions being offered. As Burr (2015, pg. 155) stated “positions are not just social locations from which a person may speak, but also consist in the beliefs that a person holds about the nature of the unfolding interaction and the possibilities for their own role in it, in other words the personal meaning it holds for them”. This means positions can be understood from many different perspectives as each participant in an interaction may evaluate the interaction and positions produced differently. In Data Box 52, I introduce an example of the children considering school uniform again, but this time for one of the children the personal meaning meant he was positioned quite differently to the other children involved in the interaction.

Data Box 52

A small group (4) of children were discussing school and what they thought about it with Mrs Hoops. After Mrs Hoops had finished talking, Child B decided to ask why they had to wear blue school jumpers because as a girl she would prefer it to be pink. Mrs Hoops explained

it was because that was the colour chosen by the school and wearing the uniform showed that they were Holme Court children. She also explained that all the children looked the same, so it did not matter if it was pink or blue really. Child C then excitedly stated “Oh yes, we are all wearing the same aren’t we! Aren’t we good!” Child A, B, C and D started to look at each other and just then Child D noticed that Child A did not have the school motto on his jumper. “But Child A isn’t! He don’t have an owl like me!” Child C, who was sat next to Child A, started to pull at Child A’s jumper so she could see better “No, he doesn’t! That means you’re not like us and you are not allowed to go to Holme Court” she exclaimed. Child A immediately looked down to where the school motto should be and covered the place with his hand. He looked at the adult and then back at the children. Mrs Hoops looked unsure on what to say and eventually tried to appease the situation by explaining that Child A still had a blue jumper on which was the school colour. However, Child A was no longer listening as he pulled away from the table and went and sat down to stare out of the window by himself.

It is possible that Child A evaluated this incident in many different ways, as Harré and Dedaić (2012) argue that any event or interaction is a social construction therefore it can be read in a variety of ways. For instance, it is arguable that there may have been some form of gender (Butler, 2004; Lindsey, 2015) or social class bias (Giddens, 2009; Bennett, 2013). However, his movement away from the group of children may have been a sign of him not feeling a part of the group at

that particular moment. In fact, this evaluation was later supported during a conversation the children had with Mrs Cornell concerning the dropping off of the harvest collection goods at local homes. Mrs Cornell explained that they would be choosing some of the children from this class to go on the visits and it would be those that wore their uniform “with pride”. Child C (from the earlier incident) called out to inform Mrs Cornell that Child A wouldn’t be able to go then. Mrs Cornell queried this with Child A directly and the conversation that followed is shown in Data Box 53.

Data Box 53

“Why can’t you go on this outing Child A” asked Mrs Cornell. “Erm, I don’t have the right uniform Miss” replied Child A sheepishly covering the position where the school motto should be. That means I am not a Holme Court pupil, doesn’t it?” he asked. “Of course you are!” exclaimed Mrs Cornell. Child A pointed to the empty place on his jumper and informed her “No I’m not, I don’t have an owl like everyone else so I am not the same. I am not good”

It appears Child A has taken up a position of being an outsider to the group and as “not good”. In other words, he became ‘othered’ (Paechter, 1998; Johnson et al., 2004). Being ‘othered’ is a process that is related to the context of social group dynamics (Johnson et al., 2004) in that it is a process of identifying individuals considered to be different from the mainstream (Paechter, 1998). As Johnson et al. (2004) argue it can “reinforce positions of domination and subordination” (pg. 277). It stems from the belief that an ethnic, cultural, religious or social group for example

is inferior to another. In short, the process of othering is essentially the same as making 'us vs. them' groups (Allport, 1954; Tajfel, 1970).

In the example in data box 53, the 'othering' process that occurred potentially stemmed from the earlier incident (see data box 52) but was also reinforced when Child C used this opportunity to remind Child A of the abnormality (e.g. non-conforming uniform) that the children were attempting to govern. Mrs Cornell decided to spend some time explaining that some people do not have the school mottos on their jumper but that does not mean they are not part of the class or school. In fact, she drew on the adults in the room who were not wearing uniforms as examples. Child A listened to the conversation, but he later chose to re-address this issue which I present in another example in Data Box 60. However, before moving on to look at how he has come to understand his position within the classroom and school and use his own agency to challenge the position it is important to fully consider the influence of discursive power and where it can be seen in the classroom and how it can constrain or produce the morally judged subject positions available.

Positioning is a process where the speakers "adopt, resist and offer 'subject positions' that are made available in discourses" (Benwell and Stokoe, 2006, pg. 43). In relation to this research, the subject positions available were varied as the speakers (e.g. the children) could position themselves or others (or be positioned by others including the adults) as good school children or as naughty, well settled or not settled, good learners or not so good learners, good listeners or not, rule abiding children or rule breakers, productive pupils or time wasters,

school ready or not ready etc; or, they could be positioned as something in between. These subject positions (Davies and Harré, 1990) are often provided by the macro level discourses that are fermented throughout the environment; but, they can also be locally produced regimes of truth (Foucault, 1980). Arguably, in data box 52, Child A met a locally produced regime of truth which had been manipulated within that momentary interaction by the group of 4 children (e.g. they had investigated the missing motto, not the adult) but which had originally been presented from a macro discourse of wearing school uniforms in general (which had been provided by the adult). Therefore, this example supports the notion that subject positions are often locally produced but that they can also be implicitly influenced from macro level systems (Linehan and McCarthy, 2000; Harré and Moghaddam, 2003; Burr, 2015).

7.2.2 Producing Moral Actors through Subject Positions

Connected to the power and control instilled within discourse (Foucault, 1982), Burr (2015) suggests that positioning theory casts people as moral actors. She purports this means becoming a person who is regulated by the rights and duties discursively attached to the positions they occupy in any given situation. She argues (pg. 156) “the person is primarily located within a local moral order within which they have to negotiate a viable position for themselves. For the person, the functions of their accounts are primarily those of offering explanations and excuses, making justifications, apportioning blame and making accusations”. This can be seen in the example provided earlier in data box 53. Child A attempted to offer an explanation for his position of being “not good” where he blames his uniform because it does not fit the moral code produced by the

children (i.e. must have the school motto on it). Additional examples are provided below, in data box 54, where two more children offer explanations to help form the subject positions they were declaring.

Data Box 54

Example 1

Child A interrupted Mrs Cornell's request to come and join her at the table for some writing practise by stating "I don't do writing anymore Miss". Mrs Cornell replied, "Oh and why do you not want to do writing anymore?" Child A responded, "because it is hard, and I can't do it...so I am not doing it anymore".

Example 2

5 of the children had lined up ready to go outside to play. Child A and B were at the back of the line. Child A moved herself to the front and called Child B to join her. Just then Child C (who had been at the front of the line originally) started to get annoyed at Child A. "Oi, I was here first, get back to the back of the line or I am gonna tell Miss!" she shouted. Child A appeared to be ignoring Child C and she called Child B again to come to the front. Child B looked at the front of the line and then informed Child A "no, I am going to stay here because I am trying to be good today. If I come to the front I won't be being good anymore".

In these two examples, the children were drawing on discursive information about potential subject positions made available to them. For instance, in example 1, Child A had positioned himself as a 'bad writer', thereby drawing on the macro developmental discourse surrounding children (Burman, 1992; 2017), and had declared he was no longer going to carry out that activity. Arguably, he was implying that he does not enjoy the subject position of being a 'bad' writer and as Drewery (2005) would suggest by choosing not to carry out the activity he was potentially aiming to remove the position altogether. In example 2, Child B positioned herself as a 'good' girl and explained why she could not act in the manner that Child A wanted her to because it would change her subject position to be the opposite of what she wanted it to be (Harré et al., 2009). The examples illustrate how the two children understood their subject positioning in that moment and also indicate some of the external cognitive processing (Burr, 2015) that they had carried out concerning their positions (i.e. whether they wanted to keep the position etc.)

This is in line with Thornberg's (2009) research on the moral construction of the good pupil identity where he outlines the school rules as the moral compass that guided the children's moral development. However, I would argue that the moral construction of the school child identity is made up of more than just the school rules. As was shown in Chapter 6, the three R's of the transition experience (e.g. Routines, Rules and Rights of the child) are all discursive practices that helped to form an understanding of what the school child should be like. Therefore, the relevant positions made available during the transition are also an important element that contributes to the understanding of what the moral school child

identity should look like. These positions are discursively produced and are often offered to participants in a controlled attempt to persuade them to conform. This will be unpicked in more detail in the next sub-section where Foucault's ideas on power and control through the use of a number of disciplinary techniques will be discussed.

7.3 Foucault's notion of Power and control

Recall in Chapter 2, Foucault acknowledges that power and control is often delivered through his notion of governmentality. Governmentality is the creation of governable subjects. This allows Governments to control, normalise and shape people's behaviour utilising various techniques known as disciplinary powers. These disciplinary tools help to control people's behaviours by utilising the information they receive from others about their actions. It helps them to understand how they are perceived by others so that they can continue with the action or alter it depending on the outcome the action achieves.

7.3.1 Disciplinary powers

Mac Naughton (2005) informs us that disciplinary tools produce rules that help organise and guide behaviour. Many have argued that they are often used to help children conform to the requested behaviours expected by the majority (Giroux, 1981; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Burr, 2015; Mayo, 2015). Interestingly, these tools were observed during the study on several occasions. Examples from the data are indicated in data box 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 and are then individually discussed following each example.

Normalisation

The normalisation tool proposed by Foucault has been considered to be a part of the mechanisms of cultural hegemony (Osgood, 2006). In other words, it refers to the social processes in which ideas and behaviours become ‘taken for granted’ and seen as ‘normal’. This can be evidence below in data box 55.

Data Box 55

Example 1:

“Come on Child A, as a school child, you need to be able to hold your pencil correctly...let’s try that again shall we” remarked Mrs Cornell.

Example 2:

All the children were told that they should be able to get undressed by themselves when they have a PE lesson. Therefore, if they cannot, they need to “urgently” practise at home.

Example 3:

“See children, this is what we expect from you all... Child A shared his toy lovely then” stated Mrs Brown.

The examples provided in data box 55 indicate that this tool is often used to compare the children to the ‘norm’ or to Burman’s (2017) ‘mythical child’. This is the notion of the perfect westernised, well developed child. This could be linked to the developmental discourse (Burman, 2017), as in the first two examples

provided in data box 55. The first is related to the ability of writing and holding the pen correctly and the second to the ability to dress and undress independently. Both of these skills are objectified in the *Development Matters* publication (Early Education, 2012) which is drawn on by early years' practitioners and teachers (Fisher, 2013; Langston, 2014). Or, it could also be based on culturally expected behavioural norms of sharing (Rohner, 1984; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Burr, 2015), as can be seen in example three. All three examples show how the behaviour expected by the adult had become (example 1 and 2) or was becoming (example 3) normalised. Therein, this disciplinary tool (i.e. normalisation) appeared to entice children to conform to the anticipated or expected behaviours that society believe should occur during this transitional experience which had been discursively mapped out for the children.

Surveillance

Foucault's surveillance revolves around his notion of the "panoptic machine" (1977, pg. 217) which details how society uses a similar approach to Bentham's panoptic design for prisons. Foucault described Bentham's work as a system that could house prison guards in the centre of a prison allowing them to see the prisoners wherever they were, but the prisoners could not see the guards. In his model, the prisoners could not interact with each other and they would be confronted, constantly, by the panoptic tower. Foucault argued for surveillance to work effectively the prisoners must believe that they could be watched at any moment: "the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so" (1977, pg. 201). Thereby, it is the presence of constant surveillance that forces a form of social

order into the individuals. For Foucault however, the real danger was not necessarily that individuals are repressed by the social order but that they are "carefully fabricated in it" (Foucault, 1977, pg. 217). This was observed in the examples provided below.

Data Box 56

Example 1:

Child A was messing with the pencil, he did not want to do the drawing anymore. He looked around the room and saw that none of the adults were looking at him, and continued to push and pull it using his fingers. After a few minutes, the pencil snapped. Child A quickly looked up and around the room to where the adults were stood to see if they had seen what he did. Mrs Cornell had been watching him, she told him "that was naughty Child A, now I have one less pencil for all the other children". Child A quickly interrupted her to say, "I didn't mean to!" to which Mrs Cornell informed him "oh but you did, I was watching you". A number of children started to watch the interaction unfold and Child A also realised this as he looked around the room.

Example 2:

Child A was riding the scooter outside, when Child B decided she wanted to have a ride on the scooter. Child B proceeded to march up to Child A and stood in her way and demanded the scooter. Child A politely informed Child B that she had not finished yet and tried to move away. Child B pulled her hand back as if she was about to hit Child A

when she stopped her arm in mid flow and turned to look around the playground first. She looked over at the adults in the yard and appeared to be looking at what they were doing first. By this point, Child A had left the scooter and moved away to another toy.

From data box 56 above, it is clear to see that the tool of surveillance involves the belief that children are constantly being observed surveilled by an adult or by other children. In the first example, Child A quickly looks around to check whether he had been seen breaking the pencil, even though he had previously checked whether the adults were observing him. This shows he must have been developing a sense of constant surveillance coming from the adults and the potential impacts this may have. He also appeared to show some awareness of the other children surveilling the incident as the interaction between himself and the adult unfolded. In example two, Child A shows her awareness of constant adult surveillance and its impact by stopping the behaviour she was about to carry out (e.g. hitting Child B) to check whether she was indeed being observed. Therefore, interestingly this tool can help children to self-regulate their own behaviour due to the knowledge or presumed knowledge that they are constantly being observed (Foucault, 1980). This is highlighted in the EYFS Child Development Overview publication (DCSF, 2007a, pg. 1) which specifies that children between the age of 4-5 years old are “learning to ...be more controlled in their own behaviour”. Therefore, this is a normalised behavioural expectation and is often surveilled by the adults and measured as part of a learning outcome for each child (Fisher, 2013). This means the children are being, as Foucault (1977, pg. 217) would say, “fabricated” by the constant surveillance.

Categorisation

Categories have been considered to be conceptual structures (Rhodes and Gelman, 2009); yet, Snyder (1984) argues Foucault's use of the term produced it to be much more than just a conceptual object. According to Snyder (1984), Foucault envisaged them to be social instruments. Their purpose is to be a powerful code, that functions to define, exclude, confine or incarcerate human objects (Foucault, 1977). In other words, they isolate individuals and regulate them at the same time. This is done by assigning them to partitioned groups like classrooms, year groups, or ability groups. This disciplinary power was witnessed during my time in the classroom and examples are provided below in data box 57.

Data Box 57

Example 1:

Child A and B were playing with the Barbie dolls. They were talking about going shopping with their dolls and needed a car to drive them there. They saw that Child C, D and E (all boys) were playing with some cars so went over to ask for one. "You can't play with cars, you're a girl!" exclaimed Child C. "Why?" asked Child B and Child C immediately replied "Cos, you won't be girly then! Silly!"

Example 2:

Child A informed me that they were a part of a specific group for reading. She said, "I am part of the triangle group" she beamed. "Well,

I am part of the square group” teased Child B “... and squares are better than triangles, so I must be better than you!” continued Child B.

Example 3:

“I have done all my reading practice at home yesterday, so I am a good girl today, aren’t I Miss?” asked Child A.

From data box 57, it appears that the examples showcase different classifications that the children have given themselves. In example 1, the classification resides around gender and expected ways of behaving as a girl etc. (Butler, 1990; 2004; Lindsey, 2015). The categorisation of Child A and B meant that they were excluded from playing with the cars, thereby, regulating what the children understood as the expected discursive behaviours of girls and boys. In example 2, the classification is based on perceived abilities and the different groupings used by adults (Kutnick et al., 2005). The shapes they are referring to in this example were the groups they had been allocated to, based on their reading skills. The use of ability grouping has been found to incite competition, seen in this example, but also bullying (Weinstein, 2002; Kutnick et al., 2005). Therein, the categorisation helps to confine the children and the competition / bullying could be thought of as assisting to regulate the children (Foucault, 1977). Finally, in example 3, it was focused on the expected behaviours of a classification formed from the discourse surrounding the notion of being a ‘good’ girl (Burr, 2015). To have been categorised as ‘good’ means the child has succeeded according to behavioural norms associated with schooling (Thornberg, 2009).

From the examples provided, it could be argued that this tool can help children implicitly understand how they are being discursively positioned within the classroom environment, but it also helps to implicitly exclude, confine and regulate their behaviours.

Totalisation

Foucault (1977) believed that totalising was a technique of power used by humans to govern or regulate groups by producing knowledge concerning the norms and expectations for those groups. This means, when considering teachers as a group, the expectations are that they hold authority over the children (Hargreaves, 2017) and that they would usually decide what activities will be carried out in the classroom on a day to day and year to year basis. They are thought of as a collective and their behaviour is governed as such. This can be seen in the EYFS guidance document (DCSF, 2007b) produced for all Early Years Practitioners which attempts to govern all of their actions as a collective unit when working with children. It was also observed in the classroom in conversations between the teachers and children and examples are provided below.

Data Box 58

Example 1:

The children had been told to sit still repeatedly. Mrs Cornell was getting cross with the children as they kept fidgeting. “Do you know children!” she exclaimed “I know for a matter of fact that you can all sit

still for five minutes at least! Now stop this silly behaviour and stop fidgeting!”

Example 2:

Child A asked if he could go to the toilet, just then Child B also attempted to ask, and this was followed by Child C asking. “Right, let’s stop this nonsense now. I know you were all told to go to the toilet at playtime. I also know that you are capable of not needing the toilet within the first ten minutes back from playtime. The rule is no toilet breaks unless it’s playtime so everyone sit down and hold your toilet needs” informed Mrs Brown.

In data box 58, the examples show that this tool involves the discursive knowledge gained from the cultural group to understand what is expected developmental norms or expected behaviours achievable by all children by certain points in the transitional period. In example 1, Mrs Cornell makes it clear that she expects all the children to be able to sit down for at least five minutes without the need to fidget. This is regardless of any special educational needs or disabilities that may be present. Thereby, treating all the children as a homogeneous group. The same is implied in example 2 when Mrs Brown reverts from an individualistic perspective (which may have taken place if only Child A asked) to seeing the children as a unit that are all capable of meeting the standard she has set. This tool is similar to the notion of stereotypes. Stereotypes are defined by Steele, Choi, and Ambady (2004) as an oversimplified belief about a

group of people. In example 1 and 2 overgeneralisations are made about all the children being able to sit still or hold their toileting needs. However, this tool can help children self-position themselves against the other children in the classroom by using the knowledge they can gain from these experiences to see if they 'match' up with the other children (Gore, 1998). Thereby, again helping to regulate, confine or incarcerate their behaviour (Foucault, 1977).

Regulation

Foucault (1977) believed that the other disciplinary tools were useful for regulating the expectations of humans, but the tool of regulation had one main job and that was to be the invoker of control. Hence, regulation was defined by Gore (1998) as "controlling by rule, subject to restrictions, invoking a rule, including sanction, reward, punishment". As can be expected within a school environment (Foucault, 1982; Gore 1998), regulation was observed frequently and many of these were highlighted in chapter 6. However, two additional examples are provided in data box 59.

Data Box 59

Example 1:

"I saw Child A picking her litter up today during the lunch break" Mrs Cornell informed all the children. "Our school rules tell us we should look after our school doesn't it, and picking litter up is an excellent way of doing that. What reward could we give to Child A today, children?" she asked.

Example 2:

Child A hadn't brought his PE kit back after the half term. He asked if he could do PE in his uniform like he did last time he forget it. Mrs Brown informed him that as this was the fourth time he hadn't brought it back into school he would have to miss his PE lesson today and would instead have to sit and watch the other children doing theirs.

Data box 59, shows two examples of different rules and the children were either rewarded or punished for the behaviour they displayed. In example 1, the child had followed the school rule and was being rewarded (Skinner, 1935; Brophy, 1997; Woods, 2008) for this. Whereas, in example 2, the rule of leaving their PE kit in school (at all times) was broken by Child A so he was punished (Skinner, 1935; Brophy, 1997; Woods, 2008) by not being allowed to take part in PE which was his favourite lesson. Thereby, this disciplinary power involves the controlling of behaviours or expectations through the use of rules, often by invoking sanctions or rewards. This tool helps children learn what is acceptable and expected behaviour during the transition and the 3 R's of transition (discussed in Chapter 6) are largely based on this disciplinary tool.

7.3.2 Discursively Primed Subject Positions

The employment of the disciplinary tools discussed above also helped to produce the morally judged subject positions of 'developing well', 'under-developing', 'well behaved', 'rude' or 'cheeky' etc. (terms used by Mrs Cornell, Mrs Brown, Mrs Hoops during conversations with me or the children). The subject positions were

observed repeatedly throughout the transition period but especially at the start of the year when the adults and children were trying to develop an initial understanding of each other. For example, one of the children informed Mrs Cornell that he could not “see because of your big fat bum”. Mrs Cornell giggled at the response and moved out of his way but later discussed the child as a “cheeky chappy”. Therefore, in relation to Thornberg’s (2009) argument, it was more than just the school rules that was shaping the subject position that Mrs Cornell produced for this child. It was her psychologically invested considerations (Harré et al., 2009) of the child’s current and previous behaviour that enabled her to perceive the interaction as ‘cheeky’ and not as ‘rude’ which could have been an alternative evaluation. This may help explain why I observed rules being inconsistently applied and why differentiated discipline was employed (see chapter 6 for further examination of this matter).

It appears the subject positions on offer were an amalgamation of the discursive knowledge surrounding the behaviour but also allowed the individuals’ psychological / cognitive evaluation to be an important part of the final decision as to which subject positions would be offered. This fits with Foucault’s ideas that acknowledge that society uses power as a force for both good and repressive, supporting his view that “if power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 1978, p. 12). Therein, theoretically the individual cognitive evaluation

of the interaction is also driven from a power and control basis, be that in a productive or repressive sense.

To Foucault (1982), the individual is both subjugated and constituted through power and an actor who then disseminates it. Schools act like disciplined societies in that they function to help control the behaviour and norms of individual children (Saldana, 2013). Thereby, schooling is an example of the state using objective, benevolent institutions to discipline populations. Using these methods, the state operates not through a simple, top-down power structure, but rather through a multiplicity of institutions that attempt to use each and every individual as a part of state control. The population becomes the police.

7.3.3 Self-Policing

This notion of the population becoming the police, can be seen, emerging, in the example outlined in Data box 52. In that example, Child A had been positioned by the children as not being a part of the group and judged 'unacceptable' because he did not have the school motto printed on his jumper. In Data Box 53, Mrs Cornell attempted to reposition him by explaining that he was indeed an important part of the school and classroom group regardless of the missing school motto. However, Child A did not appear to accept the position offered by Mrs Cornell. Rather, he appeared to have taken up a position of being non-normative or of being deemed unacceptable to the children. However, it appears this was not a comfortable position for Child A and he refuted his membership to

it. This was shown in the events that followed later on that day in the classroom (see Data Box 60).

Data Box 60

Child A had been working alone at the arts table for a while. When I approached, it was clear he had been working on something specific. It was in fact a drawing of an owl that he had coloured in. He had attempted to write something around the owl which made the whole picture resemble the school motto found on the school jumpers. Mrs Brown had noticed what Child A was working on and asked what it was. "It's the school owl...I am gonna stick it to my jumper...then I will be able to stay at Holme Court like everyone else" he beamed. A discussion ensued, provided by Mrs Brown that attempted to reassure Child A that he would be coming to Holme Court again tomorrow and the next day. However, Child A was still reluctant to accept this information. "I tell you what Child A, since this means so much to you...why don't we make this picture into a badge that we can then pin to your jumper?" asked Mrs Brown. Child A appeared excited by this and quickly helped Mrs Brown turn it in to a badge that was then pinned on him.

After Mrs Brown left the table, Child A started walking around the classroom showing his badge to the children "Look, now I am like you!" he exclaimed. "Oh yeah" acknowledged the children.

Clearly Mrs Brown acknowledged and valued Child A's desire to make the badge as she helped him to complete the task. What is also insinuated through her actions, is some form of understanding that Child A needed to reposition himself by producing an action. He appeared to want to produce a social action that would enable him to challenge or refute the original position provided to him by the group of children. Interestingly, Lemke (2002, pg. 56) postulates that power relations, like the children's self-policing of uniform, do not always end in the "removal of liberty or options available to individuals" but can, from a Foucauldian perspective, result in empowerment as it forces individuals to make decisions that may be based more on freedom (like Child A above, freedom from his original position).

Making decisions about one's actions or subjectivation by institutions (Biesta, 2015) implies the use of agency. It has been argued by Craib (1984) that Foucault did not support the notion of humans having any agency due to the confinements of discourse, believing instead that discourse essentially produces the human. However, Sawicki (1991) and Burr (2015) have argued against this stating that Foucault did believe that the person was constituted by discourse, but that they also had the capacity to critically reflect on the position this provides and exercise some choice as to which position they take up.

7.4 Agency of children

Positioning theorists (Davies and Harré, 1999; Linehan and McCarthy, 2000; Drewery, 2005; Jones, 2006; Harré et al., 2009) suggest there are restrictive sets

of subject positions usually available, however they argue people can resist, negotiate, modify or refuse these positions. Thereby, they instil individual agency in their own identity constructions (Day Sclater, 2003; Bamberg, 2004). However, recall from chapter 2, there appears to be an ongoing debate surrounding the ideas of structure versus agency (Bourdieu, 1990; Devine, 1998; Qvortrup, 2011; Wyness, 2012; Corsaro, 2015; Wright, 2015). From a functionalist / Marxist perspective, social structures like families, schools, peer groups and work places are believed to be the most important influences on a person's behaviour (Bourdieu, 1990; Corsaro, 2015). This perspective advocates that these structures socialise individuals by becoming "socialising agents [who] teach, serve as models and invite participation. Through their ability to offer gratification and deprivations they induce cooperation and learning and prevent disrupting deviance" (Elkin, 1960, pg. 101).

Agency on the other hand, has been argued to be actions that are produced purposefully or meaningfully (James and Prout, 1997; James, 2011; Oswell, 2013; Wright, 2015). Supporters of this perspective (Devine, 1998; James, 2011; Qvortrup, 2011; Oswell, 2013; Wright, 2015), suggest agency reflects the idea that people always have a choice about how they behave, although they acknowledge it is often influenced by social structures. Drawing from this perspective, I observed, on several occasions, where the children seemed to be using the information they were receiving about their positioning within the classroom and actively trying to alter that position (as was seen in Data Box 60). For example, within the following extract (located in data box 61), Child A had previously been positioned as a 'naughty and cheeky child' by the adults within

the room. She appeared to have taken this on board at some point as on this particular day she tried many times to showcase what she considered to be 'good behaviour' and even made sure the adults acknowledged this behaviour.

Data Box 61

Example 1:

Child A sat down with some colouring pencils ready to draw a picture. She spilt the pens all over the table and floor. She then immediately shouted "sorry". She looked for the nearest adult who happened to be Mrs Hoops. She called out to her to get her attention, but Mrs Hoops did not respond. Child A did not move from the table but gradually raised her voice whilst repeatedly shouting "sorry" towards Mrs Hoops. Eventually, Mrs Hoops raised her head and looked at Child A and asked her why she was apologising, and Child A explained to her about the pens. Mrs Hoops informed Child A that "it was very nice of her to apologise" and then looked at me and said "aww, isn't she cute really". Child A smiled after watching this exchange of information between me and Mrs Hoops.

Example 2:

Mrs Brown was cleaning some sand up and Child A approached her and instructed her "Miss, I will do that I didn't make the mess, but I will clean it up for you". Mrs Brown handed Child A the brush and walked away. Child A did not start brushing and seemed to be thinking about something whilst watching Mrs Brown leave. After a minute or

so, Child A walked over to where Mrs Brown was (who was now interacting with another child) and she asked her “Miss, I am being good aren’t I? Sweeping up for you?” Mrs Brown looked a little annoyed at being interrupted but replied “well Child A, when you actually do the sweeping up then you are being good. Thank you for being helpful today though, I like this new version of you!” This made Child A produce a big grin and she eagerly went back to the sand on the floor and started to sweep it up.

The two examples in Data Box 47, suggest that Child A was working hard on altering the position she felt she had been given by the adults in the room. As Butler (1990) would argue she was performing the identity she wanted to have in each of those moments. Although, it is also plausible that she may have been trying to instigate interactions with the two members of staff as she wanted to develop stronger attachments to each of the adults (Bowlby, 1969; Fisher, 2013; Penn, 2014). However, what is clear, is that she was actively producing actions, she had become within each of the examples an agentic social actor (Mayall, 2002; James, 2011).

7.4.1 Being a Social Actor

As Mayall (2002) acknowledged a social actor is a person who does something with someone with the intention of making things happen which ultimately (knowingly or unknowingly) influences in some way the social and cultural discourses surrounding the experiences. After these two incidents had taken

place (presented in data box 61), on the same day, this child was involved in another incident where she had broken a school rule (always be kind to one another). During an incident with another child, Child A had snatched a toy from another child and pushed them over. Mrs Cornell had observed the incident and rushed over to discuss it with both children. The dialogue that followed is shown in Data Box 62.

Data Box 62

Mrs Cornell sat on the edge of the table so was looking down at Child A who had been told to sit down on the chair. “Do you know what Child A, I am disappointed. Do you know why?” Mrs Cornell asked. Child A looked at the floor and quietly said “cos I pushed her Miss”. Mrs Cornell then stated, “well yes, I am disappointed that you pushed Child B but I am more disappointed as you have been trying all day to be really good and I have noticed this. In fact, me and Mrs Brown were talking about how well behaved you had been today and how much we enjoyed seeing you like that”. Child A looked up at Mrs Cornell with a big smile but then realised that Mrs Cornell wasn’t smiling back so looked down at the ground again. “Because you have been trying to be good today, maybe you can just say sorry to Child B for now and we won’t have to put you on the thinking spot ...what do you think Child A, can you promise me you won’t be doing any more silly things? Are we going to see the good girl again now?”. Child A nodded her head and said sorry to Child B.

Prior to this incident, Child A had often been reprimanded for not sharing and being aggressive when taking toys from other children. This had reached the point that usually when this type of incident occurred she would be instructed to go on the thinking spot straight away (without receiving a warning as it occurred so regularly). However, on this particular day, her previous identity work (Goffman, 1959; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Creed and Scully, 2000; Beech, 2008) appeared to impact the way in which the discursive disciplinary tools were employed. The tool of regulation (Foucault, 1977) was employed differently in that instead of initiating a form of exclusion (e.g. placed on the thinking spot alone, segregated from the rest of the children) the adult decided to draw on the positioning information that had been gathered and evaluated earlier where Child A had positioned herself with the adults as being an accepted, well-behaved child. This resulted in Mrs Cornell implementing the categorisation tool (Foucault, 1977) of pointing out that Child A had been categorised as a 'good girl' and could be again if she demonstrated the normalised behaviours expected. She had therefore offered a form of positive regard towards Child A as she was pleased with her prior behaviour, but she made it clear that this was a conditional acceptance of her behaviour (Rogers, 1956).

The end result meant, whether it was a considered aim or not by Child A, that the usual discursive patterns associated with this child had been modified for this interaction. Child A had used agency and her own source of power to manipulate what Bourdieu (1990) would call her individual habitus and to change the local relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Candela, 1999) between herself and the adults in the room and in this interaction, it appeared to have positive

consequences. Her behaviour supports James and Prout's (1997, pg. 8) comments that children are "active in the construction of their own lives". This is further reinforced by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) notion of reciprocity which can be thought of as the constant negotiation between self and environment.

Reciprocity

As Bronfenbrenner (1979) explains, reciprocity means: "...the growing person is viewed not merely as a tabula rasa on which the environment makes its impact, but as a growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides. Since the environment also exerts its influence, requiring a process of mutual accommodation, the interaction between person and environment is viewed as two-directional, that is characterized by reciprocity" (pg. 21). In other words, within the environment, the discursive practices that surround the transition experience impact each child's daily activities; however, each individual child also has some form of power that can influence the discursive practices available too.

However, as Foucault (1982) would argue, the amount of power each child can enact depends on the discourses surrounding them and the interactions that may take place. It would also depend on the child's gender, age, sexuality, race and social class etc. but also on that of the other participants within the interaction (Bourdieu, 1990; Devine, 1998; Gore, 1998; Bennett, 2013; Burr, 2015). Benwell and Stokoe (2006) have argued that certain identity categories are provided with more productive or restrictive types of power and control depending on whether

they are male or female, working class or middle class etc. Linking this to the consensus on the social category of children, Hargreaves (2017) argues a large impact on the ability of children to claim or be given any power within a classroom setting comes from the authoritarian school framework that has been discursively set up. This framework positions the teacher or adults as the legitimate power holders and this is asserted through coercion rather than consent (Devine, 1998; Hargreaves, 2017).

Yet, Devine (2003) and Hargreaves (2017) claims children can and do claim some power and agency over their actions within classroom settings. Examples of this are captured below:

Data Box 63

Example1:

Child A had started the line ready for playtime, but she was positioned too far forward. Mrs Cornell informed her, "Child A, you know by now that we do not start the line there. It starts from the edge of the cupboard, now move yourself backwards". Child A shuffled backwards, she positioned herself behind the start of the line and Mrs Cornell thanked her. Once Mrs Cornell moved away, Child A slipped one foot forward so that it was clearly before the start of the cupboard (she kept the other foot behind the start of the unit). She then flashed a quick grin.

Example 2:

I had accompanied a group of children to their ICT lesson in the library suite. Child A was struggling to concentrate and looked tired of the lesson. He started to complain he needed the toilet (not normally allowed during lesson time). Mrs White allowed him to go which meant leaving the classroom and going to the infants' main toilets. After a few minutes, Mrs White asked if I could just 'check' he was ok. I opened the library door and started to make my way to the infants' toilet area but found Child A sitting on a chair playing with a piece of paper. "Did you manage to go to the toilet Child A?" I asked. "Oh, I am ok, I didn't need it really" he replied and with that he set off back to the library suite. On entering the classroom, he proudly announced to Mrs White he had "been to the toilet Miss". He did not look in my direction and he just settled back down in his chair and carried on working.

From a Foucauldian perspective, the idea of schools is to ultimately produce a body that is persuaded to do what it should do. The school's aim therefore is to produce children that submit to the authority and values of the system at large (Raby, 2012). Yet, the previous two examples show the children resisting (Devine, 2003; Hargreaves, 2017) against the school's desire to produce docile bodies (Foucault, 1977). The children were implicitly attempting to reposition themselves as having some form of control over their movements whereas from an adult's perspective the adult still appeared to be in control (Devine, 2003).

This is similar to the work reported by Quick (2015, cited in Hargreaves, 2017) in which she argues children use 'tricks' to claim some form of power.

7.4.2 Repositioning tricks

Hargreaves (2017) details the work carried out by Quick (2015) which was based on some observational research and interviews with year 5 pupils in a UK primary school. Quick was interested in documenting how the children experienced the teacher's control and rules. The children explained they saw the control and power the teachers had over them as excessive but that they had accepted that it was the way of life within school. However, interestingly, the children also detailed the 'tricks' they used when they wanted to reposition themselves in some way. For instance, Quick uses examples of children looking like they had crossed their legs when asked to do so but they had only crossed one leg. Although, this action seems quite small and non-intrusive, it was a direct challenge to the teacher's authority. In the interviews, the children were able to articulate that they felt like they were in control when they used these kinds of tricks and that they were "cleverer" than the teachers.

Within the study, the children suggested they felt positive feelings whenever they initiated a trick (and did not get caught) which Quick (2015, cited in Hargreaves, 2017) acknowledged appeared to mainly be feelings of autonomy and competence. Thereby, she summarised they carried out the tricks as a way of resisting the control and power that was placed over them. It was their way of acknowledging that they were not docile bodies but bodies with some autonomy

and agency. Quick did not draw directly on positioning theory but I suggest the link could be made as from this theoretical perspective, the children appeared to be repositioning themselves through the actions (e.g. tricks) they produced. For example, the children in the study used words like “you’re being yourself”, “we control them”, “clever”, or “king of the school” as descriptions of who they were or how they felt when carrying out the tricks (cited in Hargreaves, 2017, pg. 46); arguably, they were *doing* identity work (Creed and Scully, 2000; Beech, 2008). This repositioning by using ‘tricks’ was observed in another example, discussed in Data Box 64.

Data Box 64

The children were drinking their milk. They had been told that they could not get a piece of fruit until they had finished their milk. Child A called out to Mrs Brown “But Miss, I really like bananas and they will be all gone soon”. Mrs Brown informed her that she needed to drink her milk quickly then or she would have to have an apple. “I don’t like apples, I have had enough of my milk now” responded Child A and she got up out of her seat to take the milk carton to the bin. “Err, Child A, sit back down and drink your milk. You cannot just throw it away that is wasteful”. Child A sat back down and started talking to Child B. Child B had finished their milk and went and got a piece of fruit. They had left their empty milk carton on the table. Whilst they were choosing their fruit, Child A checked whether there was any milk in Child B’s carton (by shaking it) and then she swapped her carton for theirs. Mrs Cornell noticed Child B was picking fruit and asked him if he had

finished his milk to which he replied yes. Mrs Cornell did not reply, and she turned to talk another child instead.

Once Child B returned to the table, Child A declared she had finished her milk and got up from her chair. She picked up both cartons and informed Child B she would put his in the bin too. On her way to the bin, Mrs Cornell called out to her “err, Child A I hope you have drunk that milk?” Child A stopped and replied that she had. Mrs Cornell did not appear convinced so asked her to bring the carton to her. Child A did and handed over one of the cartons and informed Mrs Cornell that the other was Child B’s and she was putting it in the bin with hers. Mrs Cornell shook the carton and appeared satisfied that the milk had been drunk. Child A proceeded to throw both cartons in the bin and managed to pick the last banana.

This example was interesting to observe as Child A clearly had an agentic intention (Mayall, 2002; James, 2011) to her actions when she swapped the milk cartoons over. She had been positioned as being potentially wasteful if she disregarded the contents of her milk cartoon. Therefore, she chose to ensure this position was removed by swapping the cartoons (initiating the trick) so that hers was the empty one. Child B was not subjected to the surveillance (Foucault, 1977) that had been employed against Child A meaning the position of wasteful was never produced for Child B (Drewery, 2005). This finding, that experiences can differ according to the positions made available, can be added to my earlier

assertion, made at the end of chapter 6. That assertion was that the experience of the 3 R's of transition appears to differ for individual children and I would now argue this could be because of the positions that are made available for and by the children during the transitional process.

7.5 Chapter Summary

An important finding that has already been highlighted within this work is that the 3 R's were the discursively primed practices that shaped the identity category of being a school child. However, this chapter has contributed to this finding by showing that the positions offered, taken up or realigned by the children meant they all interacted and were influenced by the three R's in a different manner. This needs to be considered when attempting to design universal transition programmes etc. and this will be discussed in the next chapter which will provide a brief review of the three findings chapters and will also reflect on the value and contribution of this research project in general.

Chapter 8: Lessons Learnt!

The research carried out aimed to: (1) explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition experience. Furthermore, it aimed to: (2) develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children. Finally, it aimed to: (3) understand the implications / functions of the discourses that surround this transition. Therefore, this chapter will address whether the findings have helped to support the aims of the research overall. It will then briefly summarise the main findings that have been highlighted in chapters 5, 6 and 7. This will lead onto an examination of the implications from the findings which will end with a summary of the recommendations to be made from the research project. After which the research project will be reflected upon, limitations acknowledged, and the methodological, epistemological and ontological considerations will be discussed. Finally, the research project will be concluded overall.

8.1 Summary and Discussion of Findings

The approach I undertook and the methodology I chose to use in this research project means I have only been able to provide a snapshot of the transition activities and practices that shaped the staff, parents' and children's experience. In attempting to meet the three aims of the project I have reduced interview and observational data and document analysis into a few thousand words of analysis. This means I will have inevitably overlooked other important factors and can then only really claim to have partially met the aims of the research. Therefore, I am

not offering my findings as “fact”. Instead I see the research as a contribution to our understanding of the experience related to undertaking the starting school transition. I have sought to make the implicit practices in the transition explicit and attempted to analyse those influences.

8.1.1 Socially Constructing the transition

The findings that developed from the discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Harré and Stearns, 1995; Potter and Hepburn, 2008; Condie, 2013) approach showed that the transition is socially constructed by a wide ranging ecological system often unique to each child, parent and/or the community involved with the families and school. In this research, by drawing on several differing discourses, the starting school transition has been a social and cultural process that has been defined and understood differently; but, in general it has been related to developing a school child identity. It is clear children do not just understand the term or what the notion of transition is on their own. They think, feel, communicate, act and finally are controlled within social relationships in the different contextual settings, refereed by the differing cultural beliefs of what it means to be a school child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Meadows, 2010). Therefore, this understanding helped to partially meet research aim 1 and 2 which were to explore the concepts associated with the starting school transition experience and develop an awareness of how the starting school transition is understood, interpreted and experienced by school staff, parents and children.

The parents in this study, constructed the transition by drawing on a number of discourses. They highlighted how the various discourses that surround the transition helped them formulate their ideas about what this transition process involves. For example, in Chapter 5, the parents drew on a number of parenting discourses; i.e. being perceived as a 'good' parent (Furedi, 2001; Sunderland, 2006; Suissa, 2009; Nelson, 2010; Dermott and Pomati, 2016) or as a 'pushy' parent (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Freeman, 2010, Bradbury, 2013; Beauvais, 2015) which tended to position them as peripheral participants (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) in their child's transitional journey. Yet, the discourse provided by the wider communities and British Government offer the transition as a welcome opportunity to become equal partners with the child's teacher and school (DCSF, 2007a; 2007b; DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2012, 2014, 2017).

The positioning or (for some of the more proactive parents) repositioning to a peripheral position was further cemented when the parents and children discussed how they believed the transition was concerned with learning to become a school child as the achievement of this goal could only be achieved within the classroom setting. Some of the parents (like Lauren, Jane and Nicole) detailed in Chapter 5 stated how they felt excluded from assisting their children in this endeavour. It ranged from items like trying to help their child to learn to read the 'school way'; to being pushed out from attending meetings because the parents felt the school did not accommodate their need for flexible meetings very well. One contribution to stem from this finding is that it does not support the definition of the transition being an ecologically primed process as has been postulated by many (e.g. Johansson, 2002; Tobbell, 2006; 2014; Fabian and

Dunlop, 2006; Brooker, 2008; Vogler, Crivello and Woodhead, 2008; Dockett, Perry, and Kearney, 2012; O'Connor, 2013; Trodd, 2013; Dunlop, 2014; O'Toole, Hayes and Mhathúna, 2014; Symonds, 2015). This is because the parents felt they were often removed from the process by the school staff; whereas, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argues they are an essential and core aspect of any reciprocal relationship.

8.1.2 The 3 R's of transition

Within the findings, the notion of a 'good' school child was particularly prevalent, and as such, I considered this concept as hegemonic in terms of upholding the idealised, socialised child, as a culturally dominant position of fact (Gramsci, 1971; Mouffe, 1979; Mayo, 2015). This led to me observing the classroom environment to understand the practices that took place during the transition process that may have helped the children learn to become school children. The practices that were observed can be broken down into three sections: the routines, the rules and the reduction of the child's rights were used to help the children understand what is expected of school children. This means the discourse of being classed as a 'good' school child was entwined with this process and the children utilised the 3 R's to help them navigate and come to an understanding of this discourse.

This research has contributed to knowledge concerning the lived experiences of children's developing school child identity (Thornberg, 2009; Meadows, 2010) and how notions of becoming a school child permeates dialogue around

transitional practices. The transition can be defined as a practice-based process that involves learning to position and reposition oneself as a school child. This means developing an implicit understanding of the discourse surrounding the expectations of what a 'good' school child should do and should not do, whilst understanding the positions made available for and by each child.

In line with developing this understanding of what a school child should act like, the findings also suggest that Holme Court tended to use a school wide approach which Hargreaves (2017) described as having an authoritarian ethos. This means that essentially the power and control was held by the adults. Although, it should be noted here that Husu and Tirri (2007) acknowledge that individual teachers' can have differing values and beliefs in relation to the power relationships between adults and children and these can be in direct contrast to the school wide ethos (Weare, 2000) which, Hart (2010) states can be perceived as a unifying influencer towards behaviour management. This potential for a discrepancy between individual values and beliefs and the ethos portrayed as a whole school approach needs to be taken into account when considering what messages, the children may be receiving concerning rules, routines and rights.

In this study, the approach taken by the staff members meant that the children were often instructed to follow the rules and routines but were not provided with explanations as to why this was the preferred option. This meant that the children could not fully develop into legitimate participants (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and instead they were coerced into not questioning their participation status (Boylan,

2010). It was as if a regime of practice was being offered instead. Boylan (2010) described a regime of practice as a community of learners but rather than being based on co-constructed experience they are coerced into learning and accepting the set curricula which in this case was the rules, routines and reduction of their rights.

8.1.3 Repositioning during the transition

Positioning theory advocates that there are always several positions made available to an individual during a social interaction (Davies and Harré, 1990; 1999; Linehan and McCarthy, 2000; Burr, 2015). This was certainly observed during the research project. The children were provided with a number of positions either from the adults surrounding them, from their peers or were self-made positions. These were often attached to the notion of being a 'good' or 'naughty' school child. Interestingly, it appeared the children had a sense of agency surrounding the positions that they choose to partake in and if they did not want to be held by a particular position they could attempt to reposition themselves into another (Drewery, 2005). This was shown in the example where Child A had been 'othered' (Paechter, 1998; Johnson et al., 2004) by the group of children he was interacting with. He did not appear to want to be held in this position and he worked hard to change this by attending to the reason he had been 'othered'. However, more research is needed that could investigate the way power influences positioning for children. For instance, it could investigate how children navigate the positions they are offered but look specifically at why some children take up the positions they are provided by others rather than attempt to reposition themselves. It would be interesting to see how aware the children are

of the power struggles surrounding them and their ability to use agency so using child-centred research methods (Clark and Moss, 2011) may allow this perspective to be sought.

8.2 Implications of the findings

Each school needs to consider how their community of children, parents, supporters and wider macro-system influences are constructing the transition at their school. This is important as it has been shown in this research that the school which took part, was influenced by a number of different discourses and these discourses influenced parents' conceptions and experiences of the transition differently. It appears there were confusing messages being given to parents from Government policies (DfEE, 1998; DCSF, 2007b; DfE, 2011; 4Children, 2015) that did not always match up to the experience they received from the school (Shields, 2009). Schools need to consider how they can ensure that clear messages about the expected parental contributions made during the transitional year are provided but more importantly adhered to by the school and parents together.

Policies being drawn up in the future, surrounding this transition, need to be aware of the flexibility that is associated with a socially constructed notion. For instance, they need to be in line with the discourse of the unique child that is provided by the EYFS curriculum framework (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2012; 2014; 2017). This notion suggest that each child should be perceived as a unique child in all they do; yet, when transition plans are drawn up a collective approach is

usually taken (Fabian, 1998; Fabian and Dunlop, 2002; Dockett and Perry, 1999a, 1999b, 2001; O'Connor, 2013). This misalignment with the messages being fermented by macro influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and what actions actually take place within the school environment could be influencing the transitional experience in a negative manner as the 'unique' child becomes lost and the mythical child (Burman, 2017) takes centre stage. A more personalised learning approach could help to ferment a more holistic nature to the notion of the starting school transition (Warin, 2009). In relation to developing a more positive working relationship between policy, schools and parents I would suggest schools utilise Warin's (2009) concept of 'mutual reach'.

According to Warin (2009), the notion of mutual reach is a counter-discourse to the normalised approach of problematising parental relationships with schools. She argues policy documents (i.e. those surrounding the starting school transition) often use a rhetoric of parental respect but offer little room for a democratic partnership to develop. This was certainly highlighted in the findings of this research. She goes on to state that there is policy blindness related to what educational practitioners can learn from parents and I believe this may have contributed to the peripheral position the parents in this study were provided. I would suggest that schools need to work towards destabilising the orthodoxy of teachers being deemed experts and parents seen as novices (Warin, 2009). Instead, teachers could visit the children's home before they start school and again sometime after (i.e. end of term one) to help them learn from parents and the community that surrounds each child. This would help a more democratic

relationship to develop from the very start of formal schooling which, in this research, was lacking.

Another implication from this research is that schools need to pay attention to the way that they manage and design their activities around the learning of school rules, routines and children's rights. More needs to be done in relation to examining the impact that the teaching of these can have on children's developing school child identities. For instance, training teachers to be aware of the how they teach and use the school rules, routines and control the children's rights would help them understand the impact they can have on the children's experiences (Boostrom, 1991; Thornberg, 2007). Developing a supportive whole school approach towards the transition process (Weare, 2000) would enable the practices to become more in line for all members of staff helping to form a more consistent approach.

A potential issue when contemplating the ethos of the whole school approach (Husu and Tirri, 2007) is that Mouffe (2013) argues that society is permeated by its hegemonic nature in that power relations become all encompassing. She calls this political approach antagonism. She argues that by taking an agonistic approach, which is centred on developing democracy and valuing all individuals, a better and more functional society can be achieved. A good way of moving forward in a whole school approach, in an agonistic manner (Mouffe, 2013). would be to allow an open and honest relationship to develop between children and adults and allow explanations to be at the centre of the learning experience

(Hargreaves, 2017). Schools need to accept that children can and should challenge adults (Mouffe, 2013) and this is an easier notion to accept if children are perceived as 'beings' rather than as 'becomings' (Prout and James, 1997). Taking an interest in how these challenges are dealt with would assist a school which is looking to reflectively improve itself.

Finally, this research has endeavoured to extend rather than summarise transition by applying the concept to an under-researched (Thornberg, 2009) area of school child related identity development. From this approach, it found that the children were able to 'try on' new positions that were discursively orientated to providing them with information about whether their actions would be considered as 'good' or 'naughty' and this helped them to position and reposition themselves continually throughout the transitional period. Therefore, the use of positioning statements is vitally important to the children's understanding of what it means to be a school child. Therefore, I believe it is central that staff are aware of positioning theory and what they are doing when they use terms like 'good' or 'naughty'. They need to be able to recognise when a child is trying to reposition themselves and offer appropriate supportive assistance to them when this occurs.

8.3 Summary of Recommendations

Taking an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), to support the notion of mutual reach (Warin, 2009) to develop a meeting that invites children, parents and the school staff to discuss what they believe the transition is about could be

organised. This should take place early in the transition process, preferably in the summer before the children start at the school in the autumn. This meeting should be an opportunity for everyone to feed in their perspectives about what they believe the transition will represent for them. This will allow a construction of the transition to occur that everyone is aware of, but which also takes account of the unique child (DfE, 2012) and their family. This means the children, parents and school can discuss various ideas and come to a democratic group consensus about what they will choose to focus on each year. Thereby, if the school carries this task out each year they will be allowing the differences between each cohort and their families to evolve the practice each year (Brooker, 2008).

Schools need to re-evaluate their everyday practices, like rules and routines and the children's rights within the school in accordance with their school's whole school approach (Hargreaves, 1995, Weare, 2000) to authority. The school's culture (Prosser, 1999) can impact the way that individual schools choose to use power, control and authority when working with children. Hargreaves (2017) argues that many schools still use an authoritarian approach rather than an authoritative approach. She continues stating an authoritarian approach removes the freedom from children to choose what they learn, how they will learn and why they must learn it. Based on the findings from this study, it instigates a regime of practice (Boylan, 2010) rather than developing a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) with the children. As Bush (2003) and Hargreaves (2003) acknowledged, the confines imposed from the top-down approach of the British education system means that teachers unfortunately end up using this approach to ensure they are meeting the requirements set out by Government

policies and quality checks (DCSF, 2007b; 2008; DfE, 2011; DfE, 2012, 2014a; 2016; Early Education, 2012). However, they could aim to be more authoritative in aspects of their practice, especially in relation to providing explanations to children as to why they are being asked to learn certain practices. As Hargreaves (2017) states this would help the children construct knowledge and to make learning meaningful, as well as develop their sense of self. Schools need to interrogate their cultures (Hargreaves, 1995; Prosser, 1999) and seek to understand why they carry out practices in the manner that they do. Therefore, a training programme that aims to illuminate how the staff use rules, routines and control of children's rights may help them understand the impact they can individually have on a child's developing school child identity.

Allowing children and parents to develop their awareness of school and its related practices should be a prime focus at the start of the transition (Margetts, 2002; Fabian and Dunlop, 2006) but also during the transitional process. For example, it has already been made clear that teaching children about routines and rules of the classroom can help children to function well (Boostrom, 1991; Perry and Weinstein, 1998; Perry, Dockett and Howard, 2000; Fabian and Dunlop, 2006) as they acquire the specific school language and social knowledge of expected behaviours (Thornberg, 2009). However, there is more that schools can do during the transitional process, including offering sessions that aim to develop a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) between staff and parents so that they can understand the 'ins' and 'outs' of school life. For instance, together they could develop, using child friendly methods (Clark and Moss, 2011; Kellett, 2011), a rule and routine book that is used to explain why the rules and routines

are in place. This would encourage the adults to decentre (Piaget and Inhelder, 1962) and see these practices from the children's perspective (Fabian and Dunlop, 2006) and this would enable a community of practice approach to develop to learn the everyday practices to take place rather than using the regime of practice that was found in this research. Additionally, the booklet could be sent home so that parents are aware of the classroom practices but also so that they can discuss them openly with their children allowing their knowledge to deepen (Fisher, 2013; Langston, 2014; Penn, 2014). Corsaro (1996) identified activities like these as 'priming' events as they help to build a learning bridge between one situation and another. This type of 'priming' event could also assist the developing meso-system surrounding each child as the relationship between school and parents would be strengthened (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It could also support the mutual reach of the relationship between staff and parents (Warin, 2009). However, it should be highlighted that the findings in this study indicated that a democratic partnership between parents and schools may be a difficult concept to develop; this conclusion is in line with previous research findings concerning home-school relationships (see Crozier, 1999a; 1999b; Whalley, 2001; Hughes and Greenhough, 2006; Shield, 2009; Cottle and Alexander, 2013; Wood and Warin, 2014; Wood, 2017) and this needs to be acknowledged when considering the recommendations made above.

8.3.1 Existing power differentials

All of the recommendations noted above have been made without being confined by the complexities and nuances that exist in power relationships (Foucault, 1982; Burr, 2015; Tait, 2017). They are recommendations made on the basis

that a partnership could exist between parents and schools. According to the discourse produced by schools and Government policies a partnership between parents and schools should be perceived as an expectation, and not just as an aim (DCSF, 2008; DfE, 2010b; DfE, 2012; 2014; Early Education, 2012; 4Children, 2015). Yet, some of the parents in this study disclosed (see Chapter 5 for further details) how they felt that they had been positioned peripherally rather than as equals partners, and that they felt 'pushed out' of their child's education. Some of the parents then went on to acknowledge that they felt that if they were to challenge this non-engaged approach (Shields, 2009) being used by the school they may have been perceived, in a negative light, as a 'pushy' parent (Beauvais, 2015). This demonstrates that although there is a positive message being delivered by the Government that schools and parents can work together, a power imbalance exists which influences how the relationship can work on a day to day basis (Crozier, 1997; Shields, 2009; Warin, 2009; Tait, 2017). For instance, Crozier (1997, p. 327) contends schools continually "communicate superior attitudes to parents which maintain the barriers between home and school".

According to Tait (2017), the education system was never designed to work in partnership with parents. He states that the system was designed so that the Government could 'govern at a distance' through mass schooling, using the power associated with the expertise of the teacher to control and govern the social regulation of children. Whereas, according to Tomlinson (2013), the notion of the family unit, in contrast to a national system of schooling, is portrayed to be private, separate and autonomous. She states that the family is essentially "a

private entity where parents make choices for their children and take responsibility for them” (pg. 33). Yet, it has been argued that due to hegemonic influences the family unit is also controlled through the power of expertise, through that associated with services or disciplines like family guidance, welfare, psychology, community medicine, counselling and pedagogy (Rose, 1985; Tomlinson, 2013; Tait, 2017).

Tait (2017) argues that the expert knowledge, delivered through community services and academic disciplines, helps to construct the ‘good’ parenting discourse which confirms the separate nature of schools and families. It achieves this by suggesting that parents are the most important driver of their child’s learning and development whilst the child is at home (Lee, Macvarish and Bristow, 2010; Jezierski and Wall, 2017); therefore, they are perceived as, what Dale (1996) termed, the ‘expert’. Yet, this same parenting discourse also informs parents that when their child starts school, they should take up a supportive role in their child’s learning, if asked to do so by teachers (Furedi, 2001; Suissa, 2009; Jackson, 2014; Dermott and Pomati, 2016; Beauvais, 2017). This means that discursively a parent changes from being the expert in their child’s life to being perceived as a ‘novice’ (Dale, 1996); thereby, positioning the expertise of teachers as more powerful than that of the parent (Warin, 2009). As previously mentioned, discourse can construct people as ‘objects’ and/or as ‘subjects’ by commandeering them into certain positions or identities (Foucault, 1978; Drewery, 2005; Burr, 2015). Therefore, as Bennett (2015) has suggested, policy makers need to be aware of the potential contradictions that exist between the discourse produced by Government policies concerning schools and parents

working in partnership with those being produced that help to construct what a 'good' parent is.

Yet, it is also important to note that a power imbalance is not always repressive as it can be productive (Foucault, 1978; 1980; 1982) and this was supported in this study when Marie and Janice (see section 5.2.2 for interview extracts) indicated they were happy that the school and teachers had power and control over their child's learning and transitional experience and that they were pleased to be positioned peripherally. This difference in understanding across the parents in this study suggests the power relations held between schools, teachers and parents are messy and complex and more research is needed that will help uncover the complexities and nuances that exist. A deeper understanding of these intricacies is needed if we are to enhance the home-school relationship which this research has proposed would support the starting school transition experience. Therefore, future research may wish to employ a critical discourse analysis approach to parental and teachers' interviews concerning their expectations and actual experiences of the home-school relationship during the transition to school. One of the aims being to understand the influences and impacts of the power imbalance associated with this relationship.

8.4 Reflective Considerations

The recommendations previously provided need to be perceived in light of the limitations associated with this research (Crotty, 2003). For example, the use of one school will have had an impact on the findings in this research. This is

because investigating only one school means there is no form of comparison that could take place across two or more institutions. It has been shown that schools and their functions vary due to several influences. These influences can be geographical (Coleman, 1987; Battistich et al., 1995; Johnson, 2012). For example, this study took place in the North West of England, but findings may have been different if it had taken place in central London where the population is known to be more culturally diverse (Hickman, Crowley and Mai, 2008; Arnot et al., 2014). Another influence can be based on type or size of the school (Hallinger and Murphy, 1986; Chubb and Moe, 1988; Lee and Smith, 1997). For example, the school involved in this research can take one intake of reception children per year and does not always receive a full class (30 children maximum). However, there are other schools who are larger who may take in two or three intakes of reception children meaning they potentially could receive 90 children at the start of the reception year. Finally, another influence is the organisation and school culture of each individual school (Hargreaves, 1995; Prosser, 1999). This can differ for many reasons, like the leadership quality (Donaldson, 2001; Fullan, 2011) or relationship between the rest of the school (Beatriz, Deborah and Hunter, 2008). It can also influence whether the school has a top-down approach to the organisation of the school or the freedom to develop a bottom-up process of classroom management (Beatriz, Deborah and Hunter, 2008).

The small collection of participants and lack of detail provided due to ethical concerns (discussed further in Chapter 4) about each family, child and teacher means that, as de Laine (2000) would argue, representative information is not available. In a similar manner, due to the small sample size, generalisability is

also not appropriate (Ashworth, 2008). Although, it should be noted that this was never an aim for this research. The information received from the research would not have been uncovered if other research methodologies had been employed.

Qualitative methodologies can assist and inform quantitative methodologies in the attempts to address the “top-down” approach of educational policies which are based upon measurements of children’s development and academic achievements (Burman, 2017). However, the findings of this research demonstrate how the complexities of transitional practices cannot be reduced to a measurement or a point on a data scale. Asking people to explain their understanding of the transition on questionnaire scales arguably forces a monologue on the social aspect of socially constructing the transition concept. Whereas, this research has demonstrated that a dialogue is often developed concerning transitions and transitional practices by the children, parents’ and teachers involved. Therefore, engaging a qualitative approach has provided a fresh insight into the transitional practices that help to form the notion of the starting school transition. Moss and Petrie (2005) argue that by using different lenses we “...can make the invisible visible, the familiar strange” (pg. 10). This is what this research aimed to do, as well as provide one possibility out of many possibilities (Moss and Petrie, 2005).

8.3.1 Ontological and Epistemological Contemplations

The change in my ontological and epistemological perspectives influenced my research project greatly (Maynard, 1994; Darlaston-Jones, 2007). When I first

started this process, I was based at the University of Huddersfield and I joined there as a committed positivist. Now my journey has come to an end, I am based at a different University (Liverpool John Moores University) and I am an avid social constructionist. These changes took time to complete and the use of a reflective cycle was required surrounding my ontological and epistemological beliefs (Schön 1983; 1987; Kolb, 1984). For instance, this research project started off with different aims than the ones used due to my different beliefs about what could be researched around this transition. This aim was to investigate what it means to be successful during this transition. This meant that the literature I submerged myself in originally was geared towards a different perspective I had of the transition landscape; it was related to the discourse that problematises the transition. This can be evidenced from my previous publications (e.g. Cartmell, 2011). Once I started to read Foucault's (1972; 1977; 1980; 1982) work and learnt more about the social constructionist perspective I could no longer see the issue from the same viewpoint (Foucault, 1982). I knew I could no longer use this literature to secure an unbiased landscape of the topic. This meant taking a different stance and looking at the discourse that surrounds the transition instead to see where the problematising of the topic originated from.

Reflectively, the biggest difficulty I had was choosing the most suitable methodology (Maynard, 1994; Darlaston-Jones, 2007) as it originally went against my positivist outlook; yet, I knew that it was the right decision to make to be able to research the transition to the depth that I wanted to reach (Crotty, 2003). It has been stated (Dunleavy, 2003; Phillips and Pugh, 2010; Nicholson-Goodman, 2012; Stanley, 2015) that a PhD qualification is a deep and meaningful

journey for the traveller and it has certainly been one for me. This journey brought me into the world of Childhood Studies which I had not come across before. This meant also realigning myself professionally from a dedicated developmental psychology position to that of a reader of Childhood Studies. The discipline brought me knowledge about how discourse positions children (Prout and James, 1997; Uprichard, 2008; Walkerdine, 2015; Woodhead, 2015) and ethically this caused me to reconsider the way that I was already working with the children in the study. This meant the research I carried out within this project went against my evolving ethical stance of carrying out research with children.

8.3.2 Ethical complexities of research involving children

My ethical radar (Skanfors, 2009) is still evolving and I feel it will require more attention in future research work. This is due to my unresolved tensions over collecting children's consent via parents and using gate-keeping systems of consent (Homan, 2001; Bogdan and Biklen, 2003; Wanat, 2008; McFadyen and Rankin, 2016) and then using the data collected, whilst not having the children's full informed consent. Now that I have learnt that we tend to position children as 'becomings' (Prout and James, 1997) and allow adults to make many of their decisions for them (Jenks, 1996; Prout and James, 1997; Wyness, 2012), I can no longer carry out research using these options without finding myself adding to the discourse itself (Foucault, 1982).

A number of academics have acknowledged that a researcher's understanding of childhood will inform what methods, ethical practice, analysis and interpretation they make of the data (Christensen and Prout, 2002; Punch 2002; Danby and

Farrell, 2004; Alderson and Morrow, 2011). This is an interesting argument as my understanding of children changed substantially over time, as already discussed earlier (see pg. 145). This meant that my ethical considerations in relation to children changed over the course of the research too. I moved from being in a position where I was happy to accept just parental consent to now knowing that any future research I undertake with children will seek to prioritise children as the key consent givers (Morrow, 2001; Munford and Sanders, 2004).

It is only within the past few decades that society has begun to recognise and respect the rights of young children and support the need for ethical guidelines that enable their participation in research (UN, 1989; Alderson, 2008). This is still an evolving topic (Christensen and James, 2000; Archard, 2004; Children's Rights Alliance for England, 2008; Jones and Welch, 2010) and one that I had to navigate during my research when I became concerned that I had not collected the children's full informed consent. Additionally, I was concerned that I had not provided the children with enough information about how the findings would be used and what kind of story they may have produced about the children; although, I had discussed this with each adult participant. Please see section 4.2.4 for a full discussion of this issue. Essentially, at the start of the research I had treated the children as incompetent (James and Prout, 1997; Moss, Dillon and Statham, 2000), believing they would not be able to understand that level of detail. However, this has evolved into a perspective that young children should be encouraged to participate, where possible, in ethical decisions which may impact them (Morrow and Richards, 1996; Einarsdóttir, 2007; Woodhead and Faulkner, 2008; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Alderson and Morrow, 2011; Powell et al., 2012).

Bogolub and Thomas (2005) have argued that a child's ability to give full informed consent depends solely on the quality of the explanation given. There have been a number of articles that describe a variety of ways that researchers can provide a child-friendly explanation of their research (Einarsdóttir, 2007; Fargas-Malet et al., 2010; Clark and Moss, 2011; Kellett, 2011). Yet, as Dawson and Spencer (2005) have noted, the information needs of children who are being asked to make informed choices about research has largely been neglected and I agree with them that this requires urgent attention. For instance, in the context of enabling children to consider the full remit of informed consent, I would like to recommend that, in line with Flewitt (2005), Mayall (2008) and Alderson and Morrow (2011), researchers contemplate having conversations with children regarding what will happen with the findings produced by their study. Furthermore, I would argue that these conversations need to go beyond saying "it will be written into a big book". It needs to enable the child to understand what that might look like, with regards to qualitative research, what kind of 'story' might be written about them. Examples could be produced that are written in a child-friendly manner to assist the children in understanding how findings from a study may be potentially documented after the research has ended (Fargas-Malet et al., 2010). An honest explanation should always be given, as this is the usual process for adult participants (Punch, 2002; Mayall, 2008). For example, in this research, I could have explained that the story might have "made them look like a naughty child sometimes" or that it may make them "look like a good child" etc. Allowing a child to develop an awareness of what impact the findings may have

on them, in the here and now, can help towards children providing full, informed consent (Flewitt, 2005).

8.3.3 Using multiple theoretical frameworks

Finally, I have undergone an interesting journey in relation to my theoretical thinking during the course of this research project. For instance, when I first investigated the starting school transition literature it appeared, in agreement with Tobbell (2006), that many of the articles published choose not to theorise the transition. As Fabian and Dunlop (2002) suggest, this may have been due to the goal of the research being to isolate certain factors that could potentially be impacting pre and post experiences of the transition. Those that did theorise their findings drew from a small number of theoretical ideas (see section 3.3 of a review of these). Interestingly, according to Dunlop (2014) one of these theories appeared to be considered as more dominant than the others as it was used more frequently, and this was Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological theory (see section 3.3.1 for a discussion of this theory).

In the early stages of the research project, my understanding of social constructionism was only just developing meaning I had not contemplated what possible discourses may surround the transition or that it may be understood differently by each person involved. Therefore, I came to understand that Bronfenbrenner's theory could allow me to consider multiple potential influences where other previously used theories could not. Yet, as outlined in section 3.3.1, Bronfenbrenner's ideas could not help me explain how a child may go about

engaging and participating within a setting or how this may impact their developing identity. Nor, could it account for children who choose to actively *not* participate in a microsystem setting (i.e. school setting).

This led me to discovering the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and their Community of Practice theory. This theory aims to explain how an individual undergoes a transformation in their learning from a position as an apprentice to that of becoming a full participant within the community of practice. It also acknowledges the link between practice and identity (Boylan, 2004, 2010) by emphasising learning to do as learning to be. This allowed me to conceptualise the transition as an opportunity to undertake identity work (Goffman, 1959; Berger and Luckman, 1966; Creed and Scully, 2000; Beech, 2008).

Yet, even with both of these theories I still could not understand how influences from a macro system, like Government policies or cultural philosophies related to gender roles, could influence the participation or non-participation of a child during their transitional experience. From my reading of social constructionism, I had come to understand that a child can be positioned (Davies and Harré, 1990; 1999; Drewery, 2005) within a classroom, through discourse and this would impact their participation or non-participation. Therefore, to understand the power of discourses and understand how and why they are fermented so freely by society I turned to the work of Foucault (1977; 1978; 1980; 1982).

As mentioned previously (see section 1.4), the revelation that changed my theoretical thinking completely was Foucault's definition of discourses as being: "practices which form the objects of which they speak" (1972, pg. 49). This made me reconsider what 'transitions' may be and how we (i.e. society) have come to discursively produce them. To truly understand how this transition is conceptualised by people I needed to uncover the discursive practices that are intertwined with the experience. Therefore, Foucault's theoretical concepts, unlike Bronfenbrenner and Lave and Wenger, provided a more apt and robust means of understanding such experiences. Although, I came to realise that Bronfenbrenner and Lave and Wenger's theories would be, nevertheless, helpful conceptual tools (Tobbell, 2006) which would support my understanding of any exposed discursive practices.

Therefore, I have used three theories in this research, one as the overarching theoretical framework that supported the collection and analysis of the data, and two others as conceptual tools used to assist the understanding and explanation of the analysed findings. I would argue that through the use of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) and Lave and Wenger's (1991) ideas I have been able to conceptualise the reach and 'messiness' associated with Foucault's (1982) notion of discourse and power. For example, Bronfenbrenner's ideas concerning his ecological system has enabled me to describe how different discourses can originate from various ecological systems (e.g. micro, meso etc.) and how they can influence a parent's developing understanding of the transition. Additionally, Lave and Wenger's ideas have enabled me to understand that, in this study, a community of practice (in relation to learning to be a school child) was not made accessible

to the children because there was an ingrained discursive system of power and control being used meaning a regime of practice (Boylan, 2010) had developed instead. I would argue therefore, that this research has made a theoretical contribution to the starting school literature by using an alternative theoretical perspective to consider the transition from, whilst drawing on conceptual ideas which are more commonly used within the research area (Dunlop, 2014). Finally, as the social world is a complex place, it would be limiting to draw from single ideas, authors and theories (Ashworth, 2008; Bernard, 2013), and so by making use of a range of theoretical perspectives this research has been able to unpick and explore the transition concept fully and thus, has achieved a depth of exploration.

8.4 Concluding Thoughts

As Tobbell (2006) has argued, considering transitions as a problem means there is a risk that the children involved will be perceived as objects (Nind et al., 2004) of that transition rather than the subjects of it. She continues to state that this can result in transitions being perceived as something that is done to children, rather than understanding them from the child's perspective in which they are active participants just as the adults, and school and wider community are. If schools are to demand certain behaviours from their children, then they should be willing to provide explanations for these demands (Tobbell, 2006). With this in mind, it is important schools interrogate their own cultures (Hargreaves, 1995; Prosser, 1999) and seek to understand why they carry out practices in the manner that they do. As Lave and Wenger (1991) argue, behaviour is

underpinned by meaning therefore schools need to understand what these meanings are. By carrying out this exercise, new members of the community can potentially reach full participant status rather than being held in a peripheral position (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Tobbell (2006, pg. 298) suggest, "If someone can tell you why a particular practice has evolved, a greater understanding of the organisation will inevitably evolve". This would help to remove the regime of practices (Boylan, 2010) that may be developing within schools today and help move us forward towards developing communities of practices within classrooms instead.

When given the opportunity, children can organise and manage themselves through complex and demanding tasks. This means transition should not be seen as a problem, as for some children it provides positive opportunities for learning and development. In a world where transition is not considered a problem per say, it can become a source of possibilities. As Bennett (2006, pg. 15) once said, "I think that we must learn to use the transitions in children's lives far more positively, with greater insight into their potential, rather than seeing transitions as problematic for every child".

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Description of the School

Holme Court School:

Holme Court is a small village school set in a picturesque landscape in the north of England. The school is positioned in an area designated by the British Government as ‘socially deprived’ and in 2008 was provided with additional funding to enable the school to build and open a children’s centre. The centre shares office space, some of the school’s grounds and facilities (e.g. playing fields and playing equipment) and its main entrance with the school but in all other manners is generally run as a self-sufficient unit.

At the start of the research project, the population surrounding the school (i.e. catchment area) was itself undergoing a transition. For example, prior to 2009, the intake for the school, in general, consisted of local families who lived in significant pockets of deprivation, which according to OFSTED reports showed that many of the children lived in workless families and / or were dependent upon Government benefits. The population consisted of mainly white British families and there had been a history of racial tensions within the area for many years. There were four main housing areas surrounding the school and these consisted of two council owned ‘social housing’ estates, one permanent and well used travellers camp site, and one more prosperous area that generally consisted of privately bought or privately rented housing.

However, during the academic years 2008 – 2010, the area received a vital injection of new businesses and new housing estates, as well as the introduction of the Children’s Centre based at the school premises. This started to shift the ethos of the village and it soon had an impact on the school population and intake. This meant the intake rose repeatedly during the following years and recent OFSTED reports (produced in 2017) indicate the make-up of the school population dramatically changed too. However, the research data only represents the children at the school during the academic year 2009 – 2010.

At the start of 2009, the school had 142 pupils on its primary school roll, which is slightly higher than average for a small village / rural school which is usually around 100 pupils (Hargreaves, Kvalsund and Galton, 2009). Yet, it was significantly lower than the average sized primary school which during the years 2006 – 2011 reportedly had 237 pupils on roll (DfE, 2016b). However, Holme Court had an attached nursery provision that provided up to 52 children with staggered nursery places (e.g. children were allowed to start their nursery place on or after their 3rd birthday), meaning that by the end of the academic year the total school roll stood at 194 children enrolled. The nursery places were often quickly taken, and the school had to instigate a waiting list approach to this aspect of their school roll. Yet, a large number of these children did not stay on at the school after leaving their nursery education. For instance, from the 2008 – 2009 cohort of nursery pupils 16 out of the 52 children transitioned into Holme Court’s reception class. This meant that, according to Wilson and Brundrett (2005), the school had to take the usual approach of most village schools and utilise mixed year groups / classes as they did not have the required number of pupils (i.e.

financial capacity) to facilitate the standard four class approach to junior school years. At Holme Court, the junior 1 class contained children aged between 7 and 9 who were generally working at the National Curriculum level of year 3 pupils. The junior 2 class contained children aged between 8 – 10 who were generally working at the National Curriculum level of year 4 / 5 pupils. The junior 3 class contained children between the ages of 9 – 11 who were generally working at the National Curriculum level of year 5 / 6.

Of those 142 primary pupils, 62% were declared by parents as 'White British', 20% declared as 'Gypsy / Roma', 11% were 'undeclared' and 7% declared as 'mixed race'. This is broadly in line with the average percentage of pupils reported ethnicities in primary schools nationwide (DfE, 2016). Interestingly, there was an overall even gender split of children across the school; although, this was not always the case in individual classes. This was especially true within the Reception class which had a total of 22 children enrolled (ranging from 4 – 5 years of age) of which 8 were female and 14 were male.

The staffing consisted of class teachers, a range of teaching assistants (e.g. teaching assistants employed as Higher-Level Teaching Assistants [HLTA], teaching assistants at level 3, 2, and 1), Traveller Education Service staff, Extended Service staff (after school clubs), Library staff, Office Managers, and School Clerks, Site Supervisors and Cleaning staff and finally Lunchtime Welfare Assistants and Catering staff. In total, there were 39 members of staff employed at the school; although some of these staff members held a number of part-time

positions within the school. Langston (2014) suggests that the staff composition at Holme Court is comparable to that of other schools.

School grounds:

The entire school comprises of several buildings that have been added onto and interlock with the first ever building which was built over a century ago. The main building (as it contains the hub of the school) is an old Victorian building built in the early 1900's which now houses the junior classrooms, the head teacher's office, staffroom and office / meeting spaces, the children's centres space (e.g. community room and sensory play room) and a bright and airy, newly renovated shared main entrance to the school and children's centre (see figure 10.1 below). Leading off to one side of the main entrance, is a shared office space which contains the school's office manager and school clerk and finally the children's centre staff.

After leaving the confinement of the main entrance and entering the school directly the building becomes dark and dreary in design. It is often creaky, and echo's most noises made meaning many people walk through this part of the building with gentle footsteps in the hope of not distracting the three classes who are usually hard at work. Up on the walls, there are usually lots of wonderfully colourful displays which are designed and kept up to date by each of the junior classes. It is an opportunity to showcase their work to the wider school and for parents to view whenever they enter the building. However, it also appears to be an attempt to brighten up the melancholy design of this old building which towers

high over the children with its spacious ceilings but is dark from its lack of sunlight through the limited number of small windows installed.

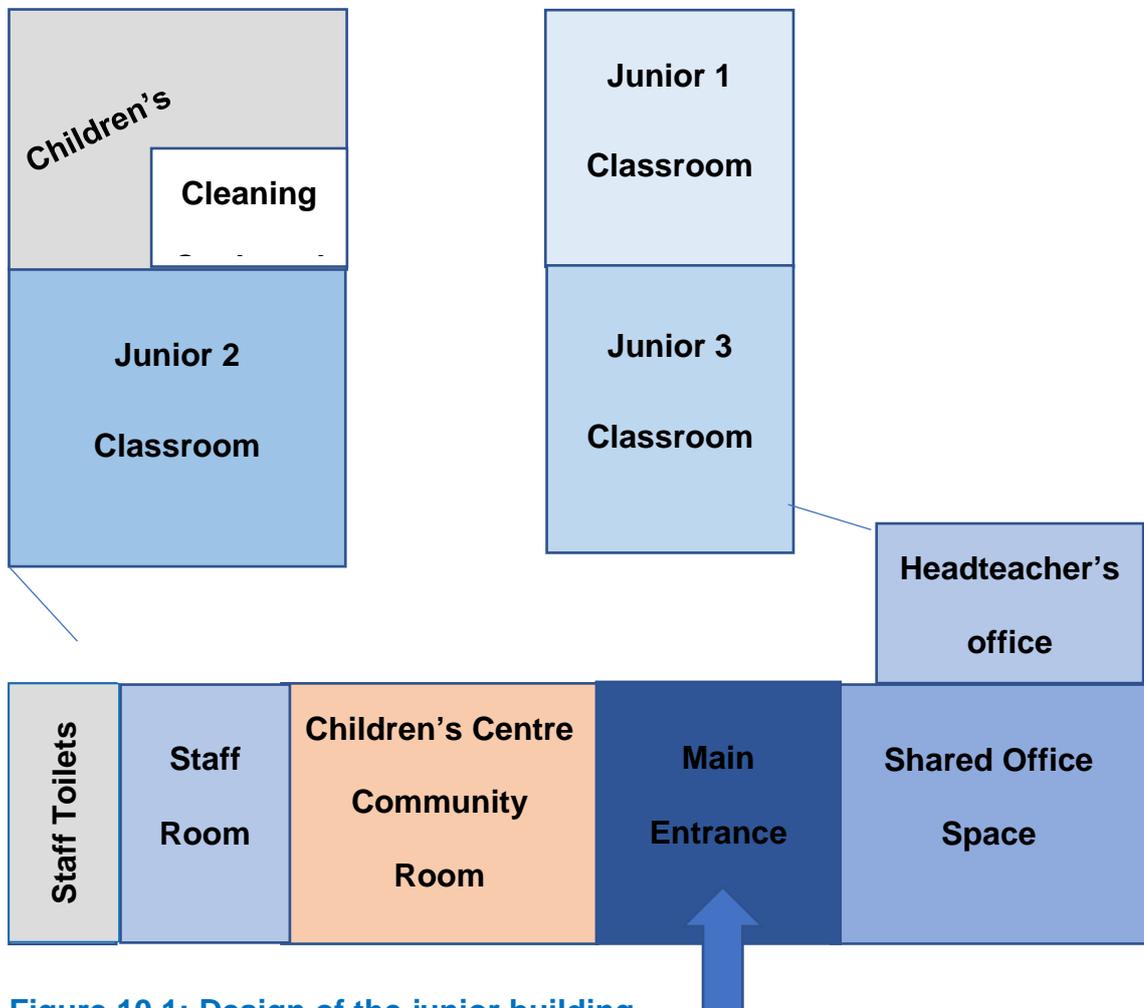


Figure 10.1: Design of the junior building

The next building that is entered into is the school's main hall, which was added in the 1960's in an attempt to expand the school's capacity. It was built to interlock with the original building metaphorically allowing the children to move freely around the school without having to go outside. This area (referred to as the school hall) is made up of a large open space that has floor to ceiling windows down one side meaning it feels bright and airy; and, it contains the school's

kitchen where the catering staff prepare and cook the required daily school dinners (see figure 10.2 below). The hall is used for multiple activities (e.g. assemblies, physical education lessons, whole school meetings, school discos, and it houses the lunch time routine of sitting down to eat cooked meals or packed lunches brought from home). This means the hall itself needs to contain many items whilst also remaining clutter free, so a full wall of cupboards has been built into one side of the hall that contains any items that may be needed for each different activity. Therefore, if the hall is not being used, it can seem like a vast empty space when walking through it to reach the infant's side of the school.

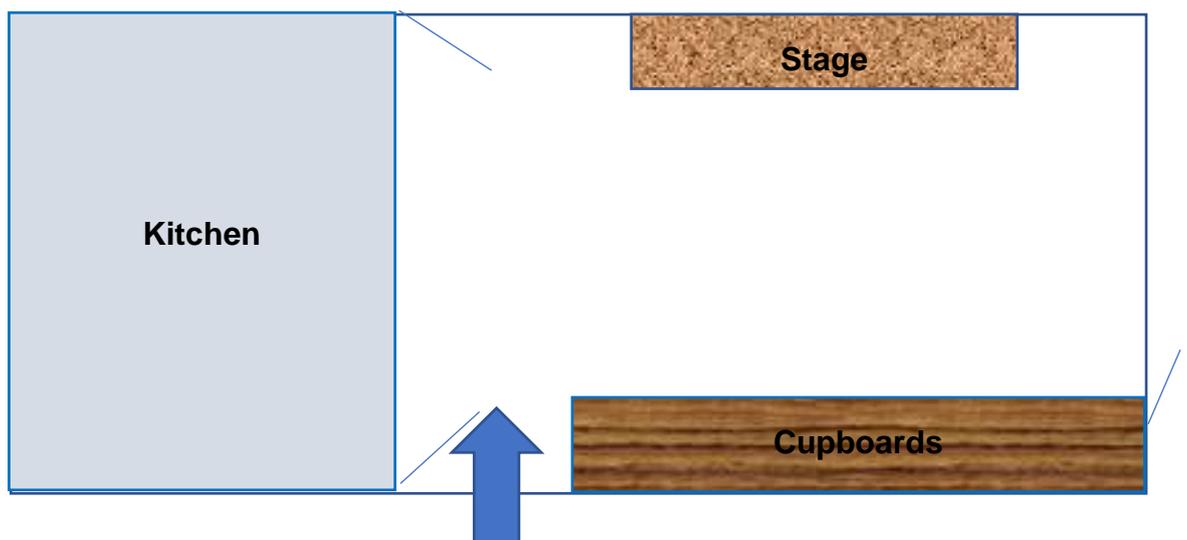


Figure 10.2: The school hall

The infant / nursery building was the last building to be added to the grounds and contained the Early Years Foundation Stage classrooms and the two infant classrooms. Entering from the hall (see figure 10.3 below), provides another corridor that leads around to a separate infant entrance door used by the children, before and after school. On either side of this corridor are the two infant

classrooms. After turning the corner of the corridor, the entrance to the nursery room and to the reception classroom can be seen. Again, there are colourful displays positioned all around the corridor which showcases the work the children have been doing within the separate classrooms.

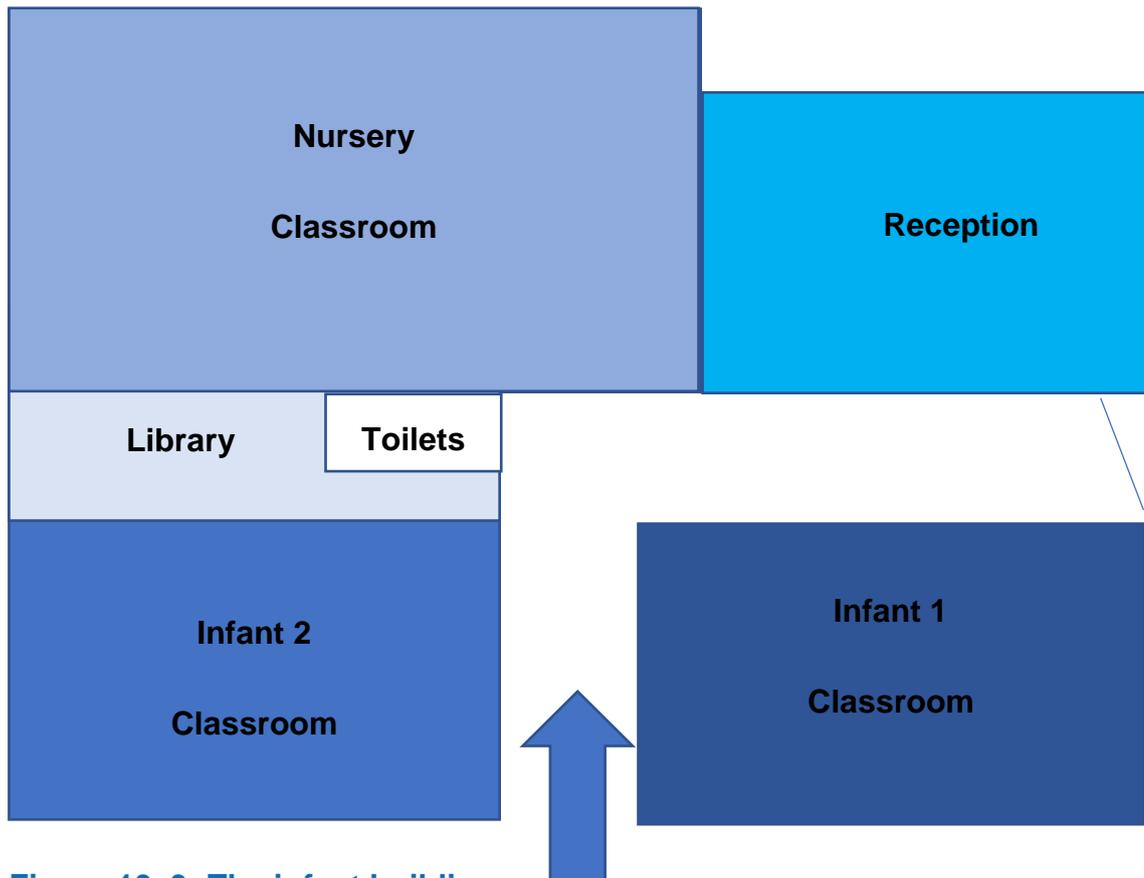


Figure 10. 3: The infant building

Finally, the playground area surrounds one side of the school and is divided up into certain areas for certain classes (see figure 10.4 below). For example, the junior classes have a large play area that expands out onto the grassy area surrounding the school. However, the infant children have been given a smaller and more contained area to play in at break time. Finally, the reception class and

nursery children share the same space which is often utilised by both classes as an outdoor space during class time.

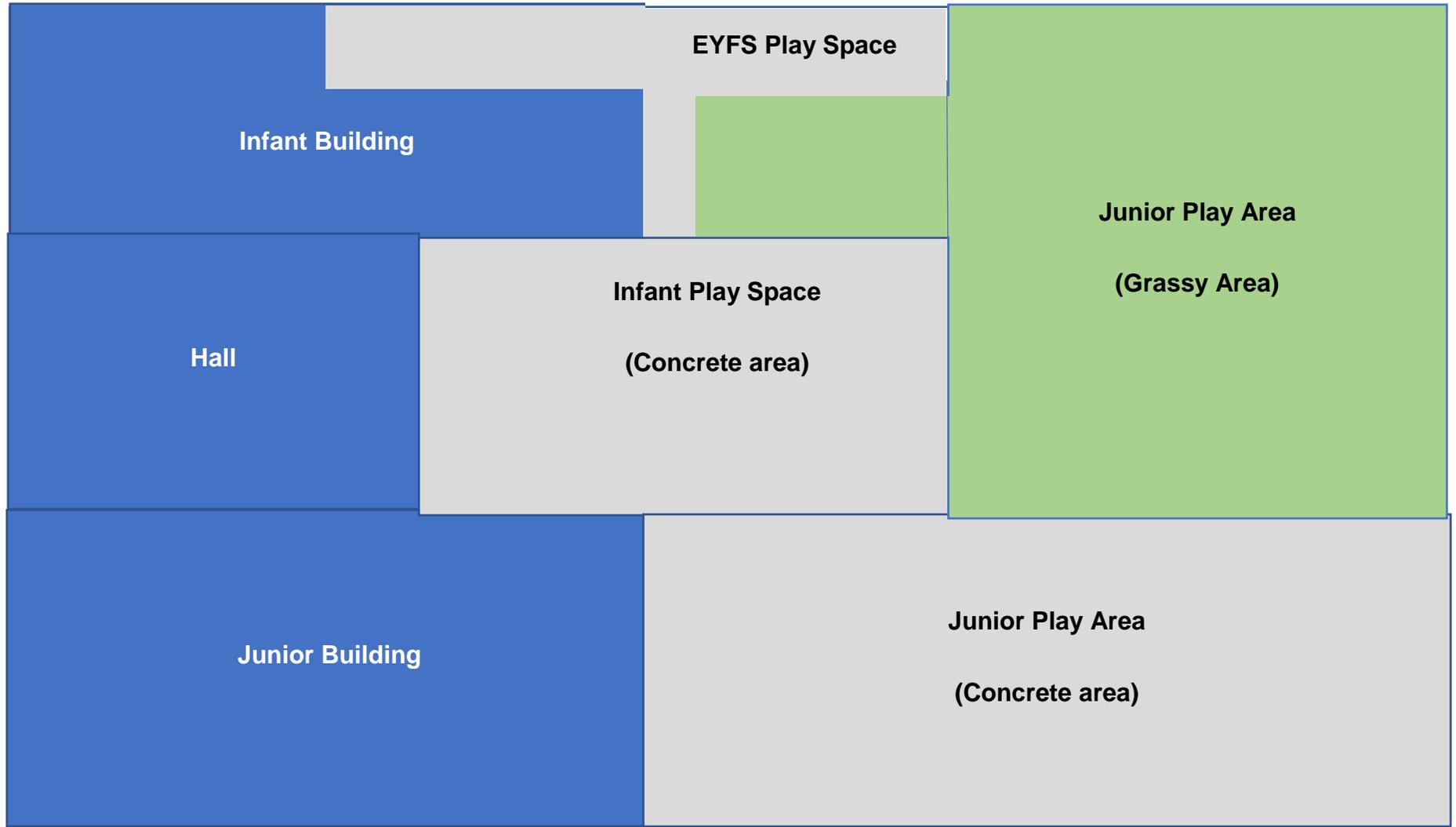


Figure 10.4: The outdoor space allocation

Reception Classroom:

On a daily basis, one member from the staff team (which usually consisted of one teacher and two teaching assistants) would be responsible for a particular area within the classroom. These areas would have adult-designed activities within them and would range from literacy tasks, mathematics tasks or creative tasks. Although, it was usual practice to only have two of these activities running at the same time. After the register had been completed in the morning and afternoon the children were informed they were allowed to play with whatever they wished to within the classroom (or outside, if picked by an adult) which Langston (2010) acknowledges as 'free play'. However, the adults would interrupt the children's play to request them to come to a specific area and complete a task. This often meant that a minimum of two children would be working with an adult (more if the activity was run as a small group activity) and the rest would be engaging in free play, supported by the third member of staff.

On our first day it was difficult to understand the layout of these activity 'areas' within the classroom as they were not clearly demarcated. Yet, the children learnt to associate certain types of tasks to certain places within the classroom. The classroom itself had a large open plan, but interestingly was organised into permanent activity areas, which were separated by storage units or outlined by a change in the flooring (see figure 10.5 for a visual representation of the classroom). For instance, the classroom contained a carpeted area which included a book corner, a writing area, a mathematics area, a creative area, a

home corner which incorporated a role-playing area, a computer area, a sand tray, a water tray, and a construction area.

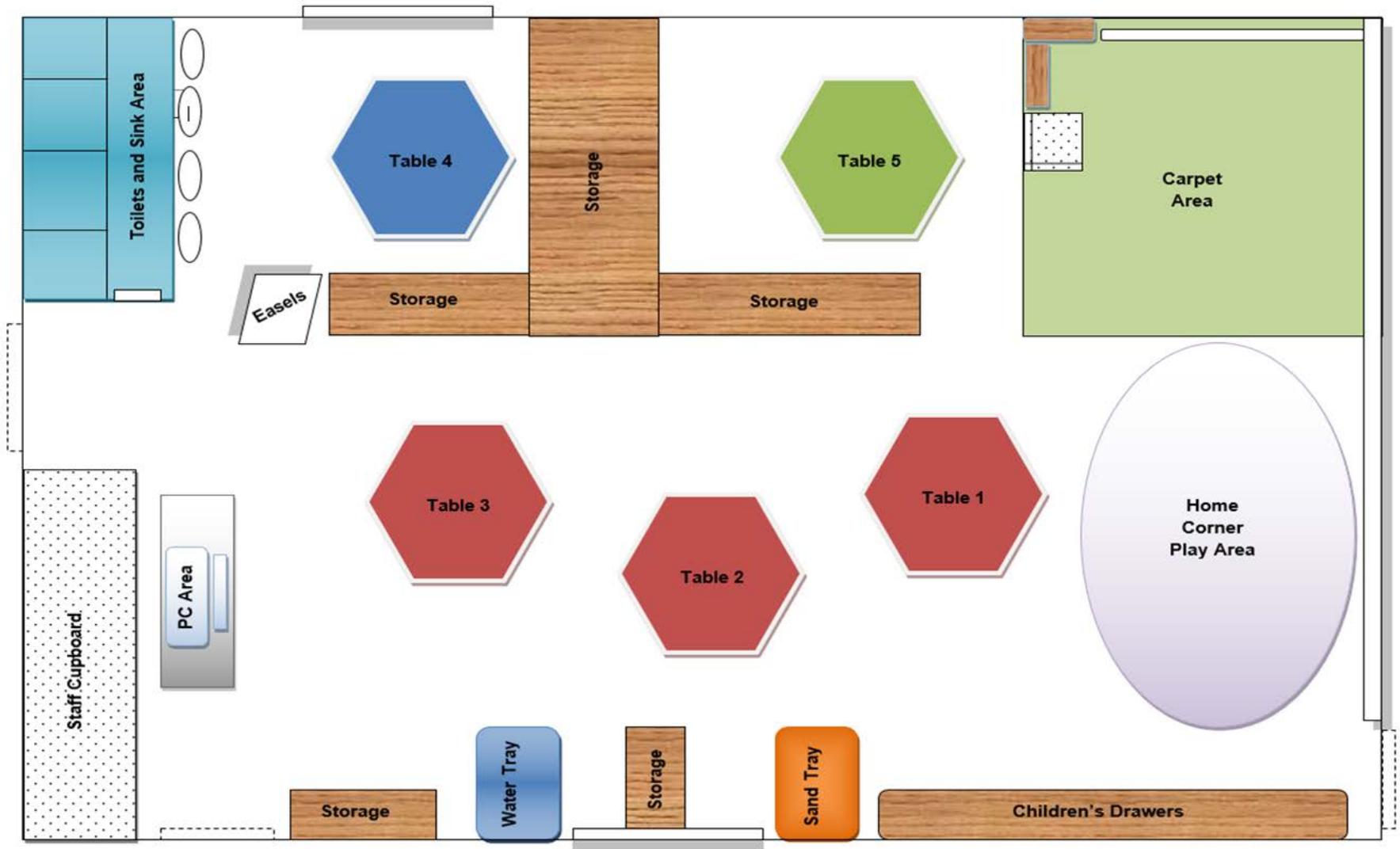


Figure 10.5: The reception classroom

The carpeted area was where the teacher would take the register in the morning and afternoon and where they would introduce the concepts that were being taught each day. Within this space was a large 'adult' chair that only the adults were allowed to sit on; the children were asked to sit on the carpet facing the adult. There was also a large projector unit on the wall which the adults often used to display their computer screens on. This was also used when television programmes were being shown to the children. In the corner of the carpet area was a book trolley which contained a wide array of children's books. Next to this, lined up against the back wall, were two small couches for the children to sit on whilst reading, during 'free play'.

The writing area was allocated to table 3 of the classroom (see figure 10.5). The table was set up daily by the adults to include different sizes of paper, pens and pencils and a range of stationary. The children were allowed to come and go as they pleased to the table during 'free play' (unless they had been requested by an adult to complete a specific task). Table 2 was often used by the adults as the writing task area. This is the place they would direct children to who needed to complete a specific piece of work that was writing related.

A creative area was positioned near to the back of the classroom, next to the children's sinks and toilets. This area had a blue vinyl safety floor covering, which was different to the rest of the classroom vinyl flooring which was a beige colour (except the carpeted area which was green). Within the creative space, were 3 easels for the children to use and a large metal rack that was used to dry the

children's painted work. Surrounding the area were a number of storage units which contained coloured pencils, felt tips pens, scissors, glue sticks, scrap pieces of material, coloured paper, paper of different sizes and texture, cardboard tubes, paper plates and cups, different coloured cotton wool balls, lollipop-sticks, glue pots, paint pots and brushes. Table 4 was also allocated to this area and would be covered if various creative materials for the children to use during free play. For example, glue pots and different coloured paint pots would be on the table. Along with a variety of different sensory materials like string, cardboard tubes, cotton wool balls etc. However, if an adult was carrying out a creative task with the children they would use table 4 for this.

A mathematics area was positioned to the right-hand side of the classroom, at the back. It was located next to the carpeted area. It contained a number of storage units that housed plastics numbers and magnetic boards, a wide range of jigsaws, wooden numbers, wooden blocks and beads, wooden clocks, plastic timers, threading blocks, cotton reels, and a range of different number cards. Table 5, often had a range of jigsaws on it or plastic numbers and magnetic boards; unless it was being used by an adult running a mathematics-based task.

Positioned in front of the carpeted area, was the home corner play area. This held a large wooden frame that represented a house. Within the frame, attached together, was a cooker, washing machine, a sink and tap, and an ironing board and iron. There was also a range of items that were placed on a wooden shelf which were a kettle, breadbin, cups, plates, bowls, dustpan and brush, a toaster

and a range of plastic or cardboard pretend food. Additionally, there was also an area next to this that contained a wooden crib, wooden changing unit, a pram and a small table and 2 chairs. Finally, within this area was a large chest storage unit that held a wide array of dressing up clothes.

Table 3 was the specific place that the children found construction related activities. This table would have a small selection of construction toys set up in the morning, but the children were allowed to change this as and when they wanted to. The storage unit near to the mathematics area held the construction toys and this included a very large selection of cars of different sizes and types, a wooden garage set that the children could build, wooden and plastic tools with screws, wooden and plastic building bricks, stickle bricks, plastic people, a range of animals and a wooden farm that the children could build together.

Also, in the room was a plastic sand tray and a plastic water tray. Positioned next to each of these was a storage unit that held a range of digging, moulding, measuring and pouring equipment. i.e. buckets and spades, measuring jugs in different sizes and shapes and a range of watering cans. There was also three plastic aprons hung up on the side of each storage unit. There was a strict rule in this area that only three children could play in the sand or water tray at any one time. The children must also be wearing an apron before they could commence play in either tray.

Finally, there was a dedicated computer space for the children which was positioned in front of the staff cupboard, near to the main entrance to the classroom. It was a small area in comparison to the other activity areas. A personal computer was set up on a table and two chairs were positioned in front of the table. Only two children could use the computer at any one time.

Outdoor Play Area

A door on the righthand side of the classroom allowed the children to gain access to the EYFS outdoor play area. The children used this space freely during 'playtimes' which they had one timetabled for mid-morning and one for mid-afternoon for fifteen minutes. At lunch time they were allowed to play in the infants play area as the EYFS play area was out of bounds. Throughout the school day, the staff would open the door to allow the children to engage in free play outside. This would often be dependent on staff being available to monitor the children outside and this also meant that they had to restrict how many children could play outside at any one time. This meant they often used a rota-based approach with the children and allowed them to play out in small groups of six for a short period of time before asking the children to swap with another child inside.

After exiting the door, there is a large grassy area in front of the classroom which runs the width of the side of the classroom. On the grassy area are three large tyres for the children to climb in and over. Running along the side of the classroom is a tarmacked path which leads the children around the corner of the

classroom into a large tarmacked play area which is shared with the nursery children. On this tarmacked area is a large wooden climbing frame which is surrounded by padded safety flooring. To the side of the grassy area, in front of the climbing frame, the tarmac was painted with a roadway system; for instance, the system had a roundabout, three junctions and stop signs. A range of bikes, trikes and scooters were brought out daily for the children to use on this area. These were stored within the nursery area of the school.

Appendix 2 – Completed Ethical Considerations Form

Submitted for Ethical Approval

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD

School of Human and Health Sciences – School Research Ethics Panel

Name of applicant: Katherine Cartmell

Title of study: An ethnographic journey through the ‘starting school’ transition within the UK

Department:

Date sent:

Issue	Please provide sufficient detail for SREP to assess strategies used to address ethical issues in the research proposal
Researcher(s) details	Katherine Maria Cartmell - BSc (Hons) Psychology. This study fulfils part of the requirements for the award of PhD.
Supervisor details	Dr Jane Tobbell
Aim / objectives	<p>In the past, research investigating school transitions has generally been designed with the aim of uncovering why some children do well during the transition and why some do not (See Yeboah, 2002). This approach tends to be child or variable focussed. However, early school transitions are best understood not only by the prevailing child-centered perspective (which accounts for children’s competencies and features of family demography), but when the influence of multiple contexts on child competence is acknowledged. This view seems to have gathered strength in recent years and many educators, researchers, and policy makers acknowledge the direct influences of contexts such as family, peers, and school on child competence. However, a theoretical framework that can be implemented to help understand the overall processes involved in starting formal schooling is still unavailable.</p> <p>The overarching aim of this project therefore is to draw upon community psychology’s understanding of the person-in-context, so that this research may endeavour to consider contextual influences that may affect a child’s experience of starting formal schooling. This includes taking into consideration the wider social structures and systems which influence the manner in which a child may engage and participate in their new environment and the resulting impact this may have on their overall experience.</p>

	<p>Therefore, the objectives of this research project are:-</p> <p>To accompany the children in their transition into formal schooling and document the explicit and uncover the implicit practices which dictate participation in the new environment of primary school and the implications this can have on the children’s growing identities;</p> <p>To explore every day school activities in which reception year children and teachers engage;</p> <p>To understand the practices which denote full participation in the multiple communities of practice which co-exist within primary schools;</p> <p>To explore the wider social and political imperatives which shape the valued and condemned practices within primary schools;</p> <p>To construct a theoretical framework for understanding the transition to formal schooling within the UK;</p> <p>To offer ideas for schools to address the identified issues with accompany early years transitions and so provide meaningful support for children.</p>
<p>Brief overview of research methodology</p>	<p>Ethnography – including observation, interviews and document analysis</p> <p>This research will focus upon Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) original Ecological theory and his later work (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) which proposes that agents other than the developing individual should be recognized as crucial co-participants in determining the paths human development can take. Therefore, this project will expand upon previous work and examine a range of school, home, neighborhood, and community interactions to observe how these variables can influence children and their growing relationships and expanding identities once they have entered formal schooling.</p> <p>Furthermore, Lave & Wegner’s (1991) Community of Practice (CoP) literature is highly insightful when attempting to understand educational transitions. They argue that to achieve full membership into new communities (in this context the reception year class and wider primary school) a child needs to participate in the new environment. At the beginning they can only do this in a peripheral way as they do not understand the rules for that particular community. As they progress and learn (situated learning) they are more able to understand the given context and can then legitimately participate in the new environment. However, it is argued that some children choose not to participate or are excluded from participating in certain processes therefore never achieving full membership. This could be due to a number of reasons, for example, influences from the home, peers or wider social contexts (Wegner, 2001).</p> <p>Therefore, this research project requires a methodology that will be able to explore how and why a variety of contexts contribute to a child’s transition experience. This includes understanding the process of the school transition from the perspectives of all involved including the children, parents, teachers, and the wider social</p>

	<p>community. To gain this type of valuable insight requires a multi-contextual ethnographic approach which utilizes observations and semi-structured interviews.</p> <p>Consequently, the researcher will be observing each of the authorised children within their reception classroom during their first term of formal schooling. The observations will be firmly focussed on the projects overall aims and will be following an ethnographic approach. To gain background knowledge of each child interviews will take place with the parents / carers during the summer holidays before the children official join the school. To ensure the same information is being collected from each family the interviews will be semi-structured. However, this approach incorporates an amount of flexibility that allows data to be gathered based on each individual family's background and unique circumstances.</p> <p>A narrative methodology will be used when analysing the collated data. This approach is said to enable the capture of social representation processes such as feelings, images, and time. It offers the potential to address ambiguity, complexity, and dynamism of individual, group, and organisational phenomena (Mitchell & Egudo, 2003). Through stories, a narrative methodology becomes an instrument to construct and communicate meaning and impart knowledge. Stories can be set within their cultural contexts which can help to indicate how certain values and beliefs can contribute to the construction of an individual identity or to an overall concept of community.</p>
Permissions for study	The researcher has made initial contact with a school in the North West of England and has been granted official permission to undertake the research project within their school (see attached letter from school).
Access to participants	Once the project has gained SERP approvable the researcher will undergo a Criminal Records check that we allow them full access to the school and pupils. Participants have been identified to be children aged between 4-5 years of age, who are starting formal schooling within the UK, and their corresponding parents or caregivers. They will be approached via a letter written by the researcher, forwarded by the primary school to all children due to enrol in their reception year class starting September 2009. The letter will detail the project (including brief outline of the study and what their child's involvement would entail). The letter will include an initial consent form for parents to sign if they wish their child to be a part of the project, which can be returned directly to the researcher rather than to the school.
Confidentiality	Confidentiality will be maintained according to BPS requirements. All data collected will be accessible only by the primary researcher until it has been anonymised before being released to the research team. All written data will be stored securely within a lockable container, which will be placed in a locked room when not required by the researcher. Electronic data will be held on password protected storage devices that will also be stored within the lockable container, within the locked room. At the end of the research project and PhD process all data that has not been anonymised will be shredded and/or deleted.

Anonymity	The use of pseudonym in the research report and any resulting publications will protect all participants' identities
Psychological support for participants	In the event of participants becoming distressed or a disclosure is made or observed by the researcher of inappropriate practices then the researcher will contact the British Psychological Society for recommendations of psychological support and also follow the guidelines set down by the British Educational Research Association. If action is required all research / interviews will be stopped immediately and the researcher will make immediate contact with their supervisory team for advice and support for all involved. If the distress or disclosure relates to the school the researcher will confidentially inform the schools headmaster. Furthermore, all participants will be aware of their right to withdraw themselves and their data before, during and after the research project.
Researcher safety / support (attach complete University Risk Analysis and Management form)	A risk analysis and management form will be completed prior to the commencement of the study highlighting any potential hazards involved within the investigation. The supervision team will be made aware of all home visits (date, time and location). The researcher will also carry a mobile phone at all times.
Identify any potential conflicts of interest	N/A
Please supply copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy	
Information sheet	See attached
Consent form	See attached
Letters	See attached
Questionnaire	N/A
Interview schedule	See attached

Dissemination of results	In accordance with the recommendations made by the Research Governance Frameworks (DOH 2001,2003) all findings will be made available to all participants. A report will also be provided for the school as a token of appreciation for their support. In line with the University of Huddersfield's regulations a copy of the thesis will also be made available within the University library. Parts of the thesis, i.e. the results may also be presented at conferences or as part of a journal publication.
Other issues	N/A
Where application is to be made to NHS Research Ethics Committee	Specify NHS REC documents submitted
All documentation has been read by supervisor (where applicable)	Please confirm. This proposal will not be considered unless the supervisor has submitted a report confirming that (s)he has read all documents and supports their submission to SREP

Appendix 3 – Risk Analysis & Management

ACTIVITY: Interviews			Name: Katherine Cartmell	
LOCATION: Parental homes			Date: 20/03/2009	Review Date:
Hazard(s) Identified	Details of Risk(s)	People at Risk	Risk management measures	Other comments
Lone worker	<p>Risk of physical threat or abuse</p> <p>Risk of psychological trauma or consequences, as a result of actual or threatened violence</p> <p>Risk of being in a compromising situation, in which there might be accusations of improper behaviour</p> <p>Risk of psychological trauma as a result of what is disclosed during the interaction</p>	<p>Researcher/interviewer</p> <p>Researcher/interviewer</p> <p>Researcher/interviewer</p> <p>Interviewee</p>	<p>All members of research team will be fully informed of time and place of all interviews. The researcher will also carry a mobile telephone at all times</p> <p>Support from Supervision team who can direct to the most appropriate services</p> <p>Interviews and all conversations will be taped recorded, if participant withholds consent for this to occur they will be removed from the study and all data collected prior will be destroyed.</p> <p>Interviewee will be fully aware of their right to withdraw at any time. Contact addresses will be made available to the interviewee if they feel they have been affected by the interview in any way</p>	

Appendix 4 – Staff Information Sheet

Katherine Cartmell
Room HHR1/10
Human and Health Research Centre
University of Huddersfield
Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 3DH
K.M.Cartmell@hud.ac.uk

Staff Information Sheet

An ethnographic journey through the ‘starting school’ transition within the UK

The reception year is a child’s official first year of schooling which can raise a number of questions for both inexperienced and experienced parents of school-aged children and for the pupils themselves. Each child handles the transition differently and by working collaboratively with the whole school team, I am looking to investigate ways in which the school and its community can help ease the transition for all children involved.

After a brief initial interview during the summer holidays with all the participants parents / care givers, I will be joining the children in the Reception year classroom and observing them as they go about their daily school lives. This will allow me to observe how children interact with their environments, while they learn the new rules and start implementing friendships with all the new people involved during the transition. I will be making notes about what behaviours I observe from the children and any interactions that they may have with members of staff and these will help to form my research data. This research data will eventually form part of my thesis which is a very large research report. However, **all** information that may possibly identify a member of staff will be removed before it is discussed with my supervisor or used as research data.

Once you have given your written permission to take part in the project, you will always have the option of being able to remove your related data from the research at any point. At the end of the observations I will produce a shortened version of the research results. These will be available to all the members of staff. The report will detail what the project has learned about how children interact in the reception class environment and will point out ways that the school and education officials can help to ease the transition for all pupils starting formal schooling.

If you have any questions regarding the project in general or about your involvement than please do not hesitate to get in touch with either myself on 07926 610916 or my supervisor (Dr Jane Tobbell) on 01484 472588

Appendix 5 – Anonymised copy of the School’s permission letter

To whom it may concern,

As Head Teacher of Holme Court Primary School, I hereby give full permission (on behalf of all staff) for Katherine Cartmell to carry out her research within our school.

Her project, entitled, an ethnographic journey through the ‘starting school’ transition within the UK will provide us with some valuable insights into how we can continue to improve upon our transitional practices within the school.

Yours Faithfully

Appendix 6 – Staff Consent Form

An ethnographic journey through the ‘starting school’ transition within the UK

Katherine Cartmell

Staff Consent form

I have been fully informed of the nature of this research and I consent to taking part in it.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without giving any reason, and a right to withdraw the data if I wish.

I understand that the data will be kept in secure conditions at the University of Huddersfield.

I understand that no person other than the research team will have access to the data.

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of a pseudonym in the research report and that no information that could lead to me being identified will be included in any report or publication resulting from this research.

Name of Participant:

Signature:

Date:
.....

Name of Researcher:

Signature:

Two copies of this consent form should be completed: One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher

Appendix 7 – Anonymised Parental Letter

Katherine Cartmell
Room HHR1/10
Human and Health Research Centre
University of Huddersfield
Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 3DH
K.M.Cartmell@hud.ac.uk

Dear Parents / Carers,

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your child gaining a place at Holme Court Primary School. The reception year is your child's official first year of schooling which can raise a number of questions for both inexperienced and experienced parents of school-aged children and for the pupils themselves. Each child handles the transition differently and by working collaboratively with Mr Atkinson (Headteacher), I am looking to investigate ways in which the school can help ease the transition for all children involved. This brings me to my second reason for writing.

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Huddersfield, studying for a doctorate in Psychology (under the supervision and guidance of Dr Jane Tobell). I have been given permission to implement a research project at Holme Court Primary School starting in September 2009. I am hoping to join your children in the Reception year classroom and observe them as they go about their daily school lives. This will allow me to observe how children interact with their environments, while they learn the new rules and start implementing friendships with all the new people involved during the transition.

As the children will only be between 4 and 5 years of age I am asking parents / carers for permission for their children to take part in the project. If permission is received I will be making summer time (August) home visits simply to talk to the parents of the child involved. This will be to explain more fully what the research is all about and to collect some background information about your child (for example, whether they have been to preschool / nursery before or whether they have any older siblings at Holme Court School etc). It also allows your child to meet me before the start of term to allow them to recognise me when they do start school in September.

The children themselves will not be expected to do anything extra for the project when they start school in September as I only wish to observe them living their life in the reception classroom. I will be making notes about what behaviours I observe, and these will help to form my research data. This research data will eventually form part of my thesis which is a very large research report. However, **all** information that may possibly identify a child will be removed before it is discussed with my supervisor or used as research data. I will be the only person who knows the identity of the children who will be involved within the project as I would not wish for any child to be treated differently due to their participation within the project.

Appendix 7 – Anonymised Parental Letter cont.

Once you have given your written permission for your child to take part in the project, you will always have the option of being able to remove their related data from the research at any point. At the end of the observations I will produce a shortened version of the research results. These will be available to all the parents whose children were involved and of course it will also be available to the school themselves. The report will detail what the project has learned about how children interact in the reception class environment and will point out ways that the school and education officials can help to ease the transition for all pupils starting formal schooling.

If you have any questions regarding the project in general or your child's involvement than please do not hesitate to get in touch with either myself on 07926 610916 or my supervisor on 01484 472588. If however, you are happy for your child to be included in the observational part of the research then please complete the consent slip enclosed and post it back to me using the stamped addressed envelope provided.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your child many happy years at Holme Court Primary, who are working hard to make school a friendly, safe and enjoyable experience for all.

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs Katherine Cartmell

Appendix 8 – Parental Consent Sheet

An ethnographic journey through the ‘starting school’ transition within the UK

Katherine Cartmell

Parental Consent form

I have been fully informed of the nature of this research and I consent to my child taking part in it.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my child from the project at any time without giving any reason, and a right to withdraw the data if I wish.

I understand that the data will be kept in secure conditions at the University of Huddersfield.

I understand that no person other than the research team will have access to the data.

I understand that my child’s identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the research report and that no information that could lead to my child being identified will be included in any report or publication resulting from this research.

Name of Child:

Name of Parent / Carer:

Address:

.....

Telephone Number:

Signature:

Date:

Name of Researcher:

Signature:

Two copies of this consent form should be completed: One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher

Appendix 9 – Anonymised Parental Information Sheet

Katherine Cartmell
Room HHR1/10
Human and Health Research Centre
University of Huddersfield
Queensgate
Huddersfield
HD1 3DH
K.M.Cartmell@hud.ac.uk

Parental Information Sheet

An ethnographic journey through the ‘starting school’ transition within the UK

The reception year is your child’s official first year of schooling which can raise a number of questions for both inexperienced and experienced parents of school-aged children and for the pupils themselves. Each child handles the transition differently and by working collaboratively with Mr Atkinson (Headteacher), I am looking to investigate ways in which the school and its community can help ease the transition for all children involved.

After a brief initial interview during the summer holidays with all the participants parents / care givers, I will be joining your child in the Reception year classroom and observe them as they go about their daily school lives. This will allow me to observe how children interact with their environments, while they learn the new rules and start implementing friendships with all the new people involved during the transition. I will be making notes about what behaviours I observe and these will help to form my research data. This research data will eventually form part of my thesis which is a very large research report. However, **all** information that may possibly identify a child will be removed before it is discussed with my supervisor or used as research data. I will be the only person who knows the identity of the children who will be involved within the project as I would not wish for any child to be treated differently due to their participation within the project.

Once you have given your written permission for your child to take part in the project, you will always have the option of being able to remove their related data from the research at any point. At the end of the observations I will produce a shortened version of the research results. These will be available to all the parents whose children were involved and of course it will also be available to the school themselves. The report will detail what the project has learned about how children interact in the reception class environment and will point out ways that the school and education officials can help to ease the transition for all pupils starting formal schooling.

If you have any questions regarding the project in general or your child’s involvement than please do not hesitate to get in touch with either myself on 07926 610916 or my supervisor (Dr Jane Tobbell) on 01484 472588

Appendix 10 - Debriefing report

Katherine Cartmell

Liverpool John Moores University

IM Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road

Liverpool

L17 6BD

Dear Children, Parents and School Staff,

Thank you for letting me share the starting school transition with you all. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and I have finally finished the study. Therefore, I am writing to you to let you know what I found, as promised.

The first finding that I uncovered was that we all tend to construct the transition from our own personal experiences. When I interviewed the parents and children, you all talked about the transition experience by drawing on your own personal experiences of it so you all tended to talk about it in a different way. However, you all agreed that you believed the transition was a practice based experience. This means you all said, in some way, that you believed it was about learning to become a learner and about learning to become a school child. Learning the rules and 'ways of doing' school were an important part of this learning for most of you. This is an interesting finding as definitions of the transition don't usually make a connection to the learning of becoming a school child.

Another interesting finding to emerge from the interviews was that the parents felt that they were positioned in a peripheral manner (i.e. less important than teachers). You discussed a number of examples where you felt like you had to act like a 'good' parent and support your child's transition. Yet, when you asked for help you often worried you may be seen as a 'pushy' parent. It was interesting to see in policies that parents should be seen as equal partners but you reported that your experience of the transition didn't feel like this. Examples of this were

given to me about trying to help your child to learn to read the 'school way'. You felt you needed more support in this manner. Additionally, some of you felt pushed out from attending meetings because the school could not accommodate your need for flexible meetings. This is something that Holme Court School could work on changing. I have suggested that they try to develop more meaningful and worthwhile relationships between staff and parents. Although, I would like to point out that all parents informed me that you felt your child was in 'good' hands at the school!

I observed this in the classroom when I saw some wonderful relationships blossom between the children and staff. The teaching staff developed a supportive relationship with all the children which supported their overall transition. I did find that during the transition year, the children learnt to understand what being a school child is all about from 3 practices which I have called the 3 R's. These were, in essence, the *routines* of the school, the *rules* of the school and the reduction in their *rights* taught them what it means to be a 'good' or 'naughty' school child. This is an important finding as it means as practitioners we need to be aware of how we teach these aspects to children to ensure we are always supporting them to become a 'good' school child. For instance, I found the approach taken in this study meant that the children were often instructed to follow the rules and routines but were not provided with explanations as to why they had to do this. This appeared to make it difficult for the children to fully understand them and learn them as well as they could.

Lastly, I observed different positioning's (e.g. like roles of good school child, naughty school child, well developed child etc.) being used with the children to help them understand who they are and this enabled them to work on their developing identities. Therefore, the transition year is a good opportunity for the children to try out different positions and see which ones they like or don't like. They had the freedom in the classroom to change the position if they did not like it. For instance, if they had broken a rule and was positioned as being naughty, the teachers usually praised the children when they were being good so that they

could understand the differences between the two positions of being 'good' and 'naughty'. This is important to children's developing identities and we need to remember that the transition year therefore can have positive influences on children's identities.

I have made a number of recommendations from the research findings and these are:

- Organise a number of pre-entry visits for children and their parents to help them familiarise themselves with the setting and its everyday practices. Topics covered should focus on what it means to be a school child (e.g. learning to learn) and it should cover aspects like behaviour and expectations but also rules and routines for both children and parents.
- High quality communication needs to develop between the children, families, pre-school settings and school. This should provide information to all involved to enable an open and honest relationships to develop from the very start of schooling.
- Flexible admission processes that allow each child and their parent/s to enjoy a positive first day which can be vital in supporting positive relationships to develop between staff and parents.
- Schools need to interrogate their cultures and whole school approaches to understand why they carry out practices in the manner that they do.
- Special training for all staff working with children in schools to ensure they are all aware on how to support this transitional experience. This could include training on positioning theory and how it is used within our everyday talk. This would help adults become more aware of how they position and reposition children.

- Evaluate the transitional practices used each year to ensure they are in line with the cohort of children and families joining the school's community.

To conclude, I wanted to thank you once again for your time and commitment to the research study. If you would like to discuss any of the findings in further detail I can be contacted via email at K.M.Cartmell@ljmu.ac.uk or by telephone on 0151 231 5376.

Appendix 11 - Interview Schedule and Topics

Interview 1 - Took place in August 2009

Topics:

1) Understanding the transition:

- What do you believe this transition is all about?
- How would you describe this transition?
- How do you plan on supporting your child with this transition?

2) Child and Family information:

- What position is this child? First born, second born etc.
- Are there any other siblings at the same school?
- Will they be starting Holme Court with friends?
- Does the child have any special educational needs that have been identified?
- How would you describe your child's personality?

3) Socio-economic background

- How would you describe your family's working life? For example, do any of the adults in the family currently work?
- Will your child be entitled to free school meals when they start at school?

4) Parental School experience:

- Did you enjoy school?
- If so, what was your favourite aspect?
- If not, what was your least favourite part?

5) Parental beliefs about education:

- Why do you think we educate children?

- Is there a level of education you want your child to reach? (high school, college or university etc.)
- Do you have set aims for your child in relation to their education?
- Have you envisaged a certain career for them or do you believe they should have free choice?

Interview 2 - Took place in June 2010

Topics:

1) Understanding the transitional experience:

- What do you believe this transition is all about?
- If I was to ask you to define the transition, how would you describe it?
- In the first interview, you described it as.....would you say the same now?

2) Reviewing the transition:

- Could you review the last year for me and tell me about how you think the year has gone?
- Was there anything that seemed to help with the transition?
- Was there anything that seemed to make it a little more difficult to manage?
- Could you give me some advice for future parents about what might help them prepare for the transition?
- How do you feel your child has managed the transition?
- How do you feel you managed the transitional practice as a family?

Appendix 12 – Example Interview Script

Key:

I: Interviewer

P: Pam

C: *Child A*

I OK, thank you for letting me come into your home today to interview you both. This is for you Pam, it's a copy of the consent form that I've signed as well. There is another copy of the letter and the information sheet but my printers run out, so I'm sorry if you can't read it very well but I have circled my contact details so if you need to get in touch with me, they're in there.

P Okay.

I So are you okay with the study in general? Do you understand what it's about?

P No.

I It's okay, don't worry...I can...

P I wasn't right bothered...I'm doing a Degree myself so...you know...I understand...

I Oh are you, what are you doing your degree in?

P I'm doing, it's actually, through the Open University so it's going to be in...Humanities, its mainly religious education because I want to be a teacher. I want to become a secondary level teacher.

I Lovely. Right, so basically, I'm going to ask you some questions about Child A, and Child A I might ask you some questions too if that is OK? ... (I saw a family portrait and pointed to Child A) ... is that you child A, am I on the right lines? You have certainly grown since then, haven't you!

C *Yeah, I am a lot bigger now, that's why I am going to go to school and not nursery.*

P **Yeah you have grown ...Oh just to warn you there's two ***'s (states Child A's name) in that class so...**

I Oh is there; right I don't want to get confused then...

P **There's *** **** and *** ***.**

I Okay doke. The first thing I want to ask you about is what you think the transition is all. So, what do you believe this transition is about?

P **Oh, that's a hard question, I hadn't really thought about it like that. Do you mean like what they have to do and stuff? Well I suppose, it's to learn what it means to be a school child. You know what I mean?**

I I think so, could you just give me an example of what you mean by school child?

P **Yeah... he will have to learn the rules and listen to the teachers and headteacher instead of me! That is what I mean by being a school child, because that's different to being a nursery child as there wasn't so many rules for them to get used to. It was more just playing and stuff etc. Now it's about learning and developing and doing school.**

I Thank you, you did really well with your explanation there! Well done. Child A, can I ask you a question now?

C *Yes... (plays with his cars) ...Ok then.*

I What do you think being a school child means?

C *Erm, (plays with his cars some more) ...beep beep! They are going to crash!*

P **Child A, what kind of things do you think you will be doing when you go to school?**

C *Lots of things, some fun but some not... like I know we get to play with the toys, but we also have to sit down and listen and do real work! And*

we can't go to the toilet when we want to! But I get to eat my dinner at school soon...I can't wait for that bit (smiles).

I Thank you Child A, that was really useful, and thank you Pam for the help.

P No problem (smiles)

I OK, I want to ask questions about child A's life up till now before he starts school because basically in psychology they say that every background can have an influence on a child as they're going to school.

P Yeah, OK.

I So it can depend on a variety of things...like how the family handle the transition or how the child interprets the journey ...which in the long term can affect how they're going to be educationally.

P Yep.

I So that's what we're doing, we're collecting lots of information of lots of different children and then we're going to just watch them and observe and see how they manage the transition.

P Okay, can I ask why?

I Purely because like I said researchers have informed us that different backgrounds can have an effect and if we can collate that kind of information and watch the children... then hopefully we will be able to see if there is anywhere where we can help children in managing this transition better...

P ...what kind of background information do you mean?

I It's alright... I understand that parents just don't want to give out some information, I would never hold that against you, I only want you to discuss items that you are comfortable talking about... do you know what I mean. My main aim is to collect a variety of backgrounds... like single parents, children from ethnic minorities... you know? Then I can see if different families handle the transition differently and if they do, does this help or hinder the child in any way? They say that starting school can be a make or break kind of year for some children. So, if they don't settle

well they may not take to education at all. Now if that is the case... if we can get them to settle in that first year, hopefully when they're 16 they'll go through high school they'll do their GCSE's...

P And, mainly stay on...

I Yeah, hopefully.

P ...and do degrees and things like that.

I Hopefully, hopefully. So how many members of the family live at home with Child A?

P Including his parents?

I Yeah, so his Mum and Dad.

P So including Child A... there will be 5.

I So that's one brother and one sister (pointed at the picture).

P Yeah.

I So am I right in thinking that Child A is the second born?

P Yeah, he is... * (Older sister) first, then Child A, then *** (younger brother)**

I Does *** (older sister) go to **** as well? (Referring to school)

P She does, she goes into Year 6 in September. I think it's her last year.

I Aw bless, does she like it?

P She does, she used to go to ** *** you see but I moved her because I had problems with **** ****.**

I Was that a recent thing?

P A couple of years back. She went to ** **** straight into reception...**

I Yeah.

P ...and I brought her out, I think it was 2 years ago... ish.

I So is that why Child A is going to Holme Court School now?

R Yes.

I Purely because...

R Well no, we wanted Child A to go there anyway because we'd had problems with **** ** so, I didn't want to have to trail to two different primary schools and she wasn't happy. She was getting bullied all the time and I always thought **** ** had a good... I was to believe... reputation but it's wrong. So, I moved her because I knew Mr Atkinson... because I went there.

I Yeah. He appears to be a very caring person... was that a major part of your decision to send A there then?

P Yeah... it was really. I think it is so important if you believe in the staff at the schools... and you know he's 5 in December... so he will only be 4 when he starts...

I How do you feel about that... his age I mean?

P For the most part, I feel alright about it... cos I've been there done that... kind of thing. But then I worry about him... cos he is the quietist one out of all of them... you know?

I I think so... you mean you feel uneasy about his age?

P Yeah... but there's nothing I can do... is there? He has to go now cos I need to work and that.

I I know... in a sense our working lives dictate our children's lives too, don't they?

P Yeah exactly!

I Okay... going back to your three little ones... do they get on okay with each other?

P Typical brother and sister kind of thing... Oh yeah, there might be a little bit more violent than most kids because they're very stubborn.

I Are they?

P The two boys especially, neither one of them will back down until somebody wades in the middle (laughs).

I So I take it you're the wader?

P Me or their Dad yeah.

I Aw, bless them (laughs). Is there any extended family that they may be close to? I mean... is there any Grandma's or Granddad's around or have they passed on?

P No, he sees his Nanny on my side, my Mum. He doesn't see his Nanny on his Dads side very often. She might show up occasionally. He goes up every Saturday to my Mums though...

I Any Aunties or Uncles?

P He sees my Sister because she lives in the same house as my Mum.

I Okay Doke.

P They share the time because * and *** (referring to brother and sister) and A go up on Saturdays. So... and there's Auntie ****...**

My husband's sister she comes over occasionally. She babysits and things like that but she's busy though because she's doing her degree to be a teacher.

I Crikey, we're going to have lots of teachers soon! We need them though so that's great (laughs).

P I think Child A... I would say he was more attached to me.

I Okay Doke.

P I may be wrong...

I It's okay (laughs)

P No, I think it's more Child A is attached to me and the youngest is attached to his Dad.

I Yeah.... Does he have any other strong bonds apart from you then?

P Oh yeah! They do get quite attached to their Nanna...

I Okay Dokey.

P It tends to be a bug bear with me sometimes actually... but there you go.

I The rest of the questions are more on your point of views really and how you've brought Child A up, is that alright? If any are too close for comfort, you don't have to answer them... Its more about how you perceive your home life. Do you think you are quite strict parents, or are you very laid-back parents or are you in the middle parents?

P Hmm... We're a mixture, I can be, I can be too laid back and he can be too strict.

I That's exactly the same as my household.

P (laughs) Trying to work it all out... trying to find that happy middle... yeah is the awkward bit... but we manage for the most part.

I So do you have any rules, any set rules that you have for Child A that he has to follow or is it just live your life as you're going and you deal with everything as it comes?

P For the most part its simple things like, eat your tea. His Dad tends to insist that he stays at the table until everybody else is finished.

I Yep.

We say you're not supposed to hurt each other but it doesn't always work actually. They go to bed at a set time which some other parents think we're too strict with that but we're of the opinion that they go upstairs early, because they're all upstairs by about 7 unless ** (older sister) is playing out and then she can stay out quite late. She's the older one but just because they're upstairs doesn't necessarily mean that they're asleep.**

I Yeah...

P But it gives me and ** time (Referring to her partner).**

I Arr yeah...

P Because we don't go out very often... it is sometimes really nice to just be able to sit down stairs in your own home and chill...

sometimes together but sometimes alone... Then again that doesn't always happen cos they come down wanting this and that...

I True... That kind of leads onto my next question, what if they need to be punished, again if you don't want to say that's perfectly fine, but if you did feel the need to correct some form of behaviour... how would you do that? Would you use the naughty step or would you send them to bed etc.?...

P Err, main thing... it varies from what works to be honest. With Child A what works the most at the moment is being sent to his room. Even though he's got all his toys there it's because he's separated from everybody else.

I Yeah and he can't...

P And he's so curious and he can't and if something's going on and he's not part of it then...

I Yeah, it works with my eldest does that because he's such a nosy little sausage he wants to know everything that's going on and when he's taken away from it he's desperate to get back down so that he can see what's going on but my other little boy he's like, 'right fine I'll go play then' so it doesn't work with him (laughs)

P Exactly, for Child A it does work. We did try and do the whole 'naughty chair' but that didn't work because he just screamed and screamed and then soon as your back was turned he jumped off and went over and punched his sister or something (laughs) so it was... right that's not working.

I Err, let me see what's next. So, you said that you work but could I ask if Child A will be entitled to free school meals?

P Yes, he will be I believe. I work but Dad doesn't ...Not at the moment, anyway.

I Can I ask... Is that a normal thing or does Dad normally work?

P No it used to be me that didn't work until about a year ago and then a situation happened and it ended up that I went back to work so he stayed at home.

- I Okay doke. So, does Child A enjoy having Dad at home?
- P It is unusual... I think he does yeah because although I say he is the stricter one of us there are some things that he does that I would never think to do. So....**
- I That's really good.
- P I'm not very happy with it but I've got used to working now so I don't think I'd like to be at home full time doing nothing... but doing just the Mum thing. I think to be honest I'd like a happy medium, work part time, do my studies and look after the kids because I can do my studies at home anyway with the Open University so I'm still here with them but I prefer to work part time.**
- I Let's have a look. This bit is about what you are expecting in his life ... what you want him to achieve and things like that. Educationally do you expect him to go to college, university or have you got no expectations, no plans for him?
- P I don't think there's a plan, he's very... he's always been very interested in farm vehicles and tractors and things like that and if I'm honest I would be quite happy for him to go off and be a farmer. I do know that there is a strong history of dyslexia in his dad's side, so if he does go to college I'd be a super proud mum but if he doesn't I'm not right bothered, as long he's not a dole dosser!**
- I Yeah, so when you talk to him you don't say to him, 'you've got to go to university; you've got to go to...'
- P Oh no he's too young to say things like that.**
- I I only ask as some parents have very strict views about where they want their child to go.
- P As far as I'm concerned, it's up to the kid. You know... yeah, I want him to stay. I'd like them to stay in school or college until they're at least 18 and then if they want to go to University then fine, if they don't, fair enough.**

I In regard to the transition... has, does he go to pre-school or anything like that? Has he been to one?

P He went to Holme Court Nursery but other than that he didn't go anywhere

I Before 3 he hadn't gone to any kind of?

P He was 4 actually when he went, he was a year older...

I So will he be 5 when he goes into reception?

P Yeah, well he will be in December... he only spent a bit of time in nursery because he had a bowel complaint when he was younger and for a long time they thought he was allergic, they thought he was allergic to dairy, thought he was allergic to soya, it was all sorts back and forth to the hospital and in the end they came up with its toddler diarrhoea and he'll grow out of it but it made it difficult to potty train him and of course he couldn't go to nursery unless he was trained.

I Yeah, their quite strict on that rule, aren't they?

P But when he went, he loved it.

I So there were no issues at all as he went to nursery he wasn't bothered?

P No, he ran off, 'bye mum see you later' that were it.

I Aw bless him. Did he know any friends there at all, or did he have to make them?

P No he didn't know anybody. He knew ** (Referring to his older sister) was in the big school but that's it.**

I Consequently, how has that impacted how you feel about him starting big school? Have you got any or no concerns about him going into reception class?

P No he's one of those, he'll talk to anybody... so he used to come home and go, 'all those girls... there are all these girls, ** and **** and all the rest of it, and I'm like, 'is there no boys in your class?' (laughs)**

- I He's going to be a lady's man then? (laughs)
- P Oh definitely, definitely and then it's the girl's parent's mums used to come up to me and they'd say, 'my **** likes your A, all she talks about is your A'. I'm like crikey he's only 4.**
- I So when he talks about school is it always positive? Is he looking forward to starting?
- P For the most part, yeah... He asked me the other day, is he going back to nursery, or is he going to reception and I said you're going to reception and he jumped up and down with excitement. A lot of his class are going in.... I think the only thing that he's a bit bothered about is the fact that **** isn't, because **** is a year younger so she stays in nursery.**
- I Right.
- P And he really likes ****.**
- I So is he looking forward to having his dinners there, does he understand that he'll be staying all day?
- R I don't know whether he's grasped that bit really. He knows that he's taking his dinner because he has a Ben Ten lunch bag. I promised him a Ben Ten lunch bag, so that's all he's bothered about is his Ben Ten lunch bag (laughs).**
- I Aww, as long as he's got that, he's fine then?
- P Yeah.**
- I So he will be one of the very oldest children. This is a very open question, so make of it what you want but if you were to describe Child A's personality to a complete stranger how would you describe him on a normal average day? It's quite hard actually to sit down and think about it in this way....
- P It is... if you don't think of it normally. Erm, he's very friendly, very energetic, he has got a temper so if he doesn't get his own way he can be quite stroppy but he can be a real sweetheart as well.**

- I Sounds like a normal 4 or 5-year-old. If he ever gets nervous, what kind of signs do you pick up on where you think he looks a bit nervous there... because some kids do like different things don't they?
- P He tends... he doesn't like crowds, does Child A. I once took him to **** animal sanctuary on an open day. It was absolutely heaving and he tends to cling a bit and stands behind you a lot and can be a bit quiet and he'll just say mum, 'I don't like it... I don't like all those people'. So, I just said right, 'come on'**
- I You just want to give them a big cuddle, then don't you? So that's the kind of behaviour he would start showing... he would be very quiet, withdrawn from everybody.
- P He has started to bite his nails but I think he's learned that from watching his Sister and me. I hate to admit it; I try not to but...**
- I Okay doke. The other one is, do you think he has any special educational needs whether they have been diagnosed or not?
- P No, not unless, I wouldn't be surprised if he has dyslexia although talking to Mrs Brown she's not seen any sign of it and in fact he's been ahead of the other kids in nursery...**
- I Aww, that's good.
- P ...so, hopefully he's got the English side from me because I was always good at English, but unfortunately, I was bad at Maths so...**
- I How is Dad at Maths? (laughs)
- P Dad is better than me, he knows his times tables at least, which I don't! (laughs)**
- I **(laughs)** So he might have got a bit of both from both of you...
- P We're both sort of hoping that he's got the best bits from both of us.**
- I Yeah, that sounds good though... that kind of brings me to the last bit of this then. It is looking at how you felt about school, whether you liked it or not etc. Did you enjoy school?

P Erm, no.... I would say no to that... I was bullied a lot as a child at school so it made the whole process horrible for me. That's why I left as soon as I could, you know?

I Yes, I know what you mean, do you think this has had any impact on how you deal with Child A's schooling experiences?

P If we were talking about my daughter I'd say yes like I said she was bullied at her old school so I didn't mess about and just moved her to another school straight away. But Child A's school life has been pretty stable so far. Then again, I think because it wasn't stable for my daughter I went out of my way to make it stable for the other... the other two. I am always asking the teachers how he gets on, whether he has friends, whether he is learning what he is supposed to be learning cos when I was bullied I just stopped learning, I didn't do the whole 'school' thing. I was one of them kids that got lost in the system, that's why I had to go back as an adult. I don't want that for my kids. I want them to enjoy school and be able to do school.

I Great and that's everything. Yeah... I can't think of anything else to ask. If anything does happen in the next couple of months that you think ooh, that might affect A at school if you want to let me know that would be absolutely great and then I can sort of like... think well that may be affecting him. Again, my contact numbers are on there, if you don't want to its fine as well don't worry.

P Okay.

I If you want to ask me any questions you can contact me and I'll give you a copy of the report once it's done or you can have a copy of the whole thesis if you would prefer. But I'm only just starting to do the data collection now so it's probably going to be a few years before I get to writing it all up ready for parents.

The interview came to a natural close

Appendix 13 - Example Fieldnotes

1st Morning Session for half the children

9:00 Everyone enters with parents or carers and hang their coats up on their named hooks (all have a printed name badge stuck above their coat hangers outside the classroom, spread out along the corridor) because Mrs Cornell informs everyone who enters, “ok, the first rule of the day: we need to go over there and hang our coats up where your name is”. Many bring their parents into the classroom although some just enter and their parents leave. They are not instructed as to what they can or cannot do but all immediately start to play or wander around investigating what is in the room.

Child A chose to play in the sand pit and appeared very quiet and secluded. Child B was very quiet and reluctant to join in with any activities; he wandered around the room for ten minutes and then decided to play cars by himself. Child C wandered around for a minute then was happy to play by herself with the barbie dolls. Child D sat down next to Mrs Hoops and just watched what was going on in the room for a while, without speaking.

9:08 Mrs Oldenage put the dolls away as they were naked due to their clothes still being washed. Child A didn't appear to like this action but didn't speak up. She just gave the Mrs Oldenage an angry look and pushed a chair hard when walking past. Mrs Oldenage either didn't notice A's behaviour or emotions or chose not to respond to them.

9:10 Child D, who was still sat next to Mrs Hoops, started to work on a puzzle. Child E tried to join with Mrs Hoops and Child D. However, D didn't like this and reacted aggressively by snatching back the puzzle piece and grabbing Mrs Hoop's arm. Mrs Hoops chose to ignore the grabbing of her arm and started to speak to Child E instead. Again, this angered Child D and he quickly and secretly

kicked the other child at the bottom of their leg where Mrs Hoops would have been unable to view his actions. D then quickly walked away from the table.

9:13 Mrs Hoops interrupted Child A's sand play by pointing out and remarking that they were getting sand "All over the place". Child A immediately looked upset so Mrs Hoop's gently said "It's ok, it was an accident. You do need to be more careful though, don't we?" Child A never answered and instead lowered his head and walked away. He stood leaning against the home corner unit until Mrs Hoop's had finished clearing up the spilt sand. Once she had moved away from the sand pit, child A returned to play in the sand.

9:15 Child C happily paints by herself.

9:16 Child D is asked what activity he would like to do by Mrs Hoop's. He chose to play in the water tray. Mrs Hoop's left him to play alone. Child D played for a minute before he became bored. He left the water tray to find Mrs Hoop's and gain her attention. She told him to "Go play" but D wanted some one-to-one attention (like he first had upon entering the classroom). Mrs Hoop's was talking with Mrs Oldenage (this was a discussion of each other's families as Mrs Hoop's was new to the school) so D tried very hard to gain her attention. He would bring and show her broken toys and repeatedly asked where he could put his jumper. Mrs Hoop's replied that he could put it in his tray when it had been allocated to him. She then went back to her conversation with the other adult. D asked for his tray and was told to wait 5 times by Mrs Hoop's. D finally started to get annoyed by this and walked across the room to shout, "New lady, new lady". Mrs Hoop's laughed and pointed out to Mrs Oldenage what D was doing, then turned to help another pupil. D walked up to the Mrs Hoop's and demanded that he be able to put his jumper in his tray. In a firm voice, he said "New lady..... I need to put my jumper in the tray!" He then stood next to the drawers to wait for his name to be put on them. Mrs Oldenage had moved away when Mrs Hoop's turned and helped the other pupil; after which, she returned with a name tag and asked D to choose a drawer for his name tag to go on. Child D chose and as Mrs Hoop's

placed his name tag on he displayed a big smile and appeared giddy (his movements became very rapid and silly like). A number of other children had watched Mrs Hoop's perform this and asked which would be their drawer. They were informed that name tags hadn't been done yet and would be done later for them. Child D proceeded to shout out that his jumper was in his tray and that he now had a name (referring to his name tag).

9:30 Child C was wondering around the room looking at what the other children were doing. She stopped at the sand pit (where two other children were happily playing. Child E and F) and informed Mrs Oldenage (who was stood near to the sand pit) that there were too many toys in the pit and that she didn't have room to play. Mrs Oldenage immediately removed a couple of toys (that the other children were playing with) and Child C started to play with the sand. Child E and F watched as Mrs Oldenage removed the toys they were playing with but never said anything about it to her.

9:32 Child A was happily playing cars by himself. He occasionally interacted with another child but only when he was directly spoken to.

9:33 Mrs Cornell called out to the class and told the children to all go and sit down on the carpet area. She also informed them that all the toys must be put away first.

Child D asks if it is "Tidy up time". Mrs Hoop's replies "Just for now, as we are all going to sit on the carpet". With this said Child D begins to help tidy up. Once he had put away two toys he asks, "Where should I sit now?" Mrs Hoop's points to the carpet area and says, "Where ever you want on there".

Child C asked Mrs Cornell if it was "Register time". She was informed no as there wasn't a register yet (Mrs Cornell had already marked the children's name off a makeshift list earlier as they had entered the classroom). Mrs Cornell then said

“Let’s see who can sit properly on the carpet, as sitting on the carpet means listening time. We put our hands up if we want to speak, don’t we?” A number of children then raised their hands to speak. Mrs C listened to a number of them (but not all) including Child C (who was trying to tell her that she used to put her hand up in nursery too).

Child D shouted out but wasn’t told to put his hand up although Child E tried to shout out and they were told off for not putting their hands up.

Mrs C then asked all the children to sit in a circle so that they could all get to know each other. She then introduced all the adults in the room to the children (including me) but never introduced the children to each other.

All the children then started to ask about what happens when you are naughty. “Miss, when you’re naughty you have to leave the classroom, don’t you?” Child E asked, “Do the police take you to a jail if you’re naughty?” Mrs Cornell decided to tell the children the ‘Rules’ about the thinking spot “Since you’re all so keen to know what happens when you’re naughty”. The rules were explained as - each child has the chance to stop any naughty behaviour as an adult will always give them a warning. If the behaviour continues they will be placed on the thinking spot where they will have time to think about their behaviour and why it was not ‘Acceptable’. If, however, a child moves off the thinking spot before they are allowed to do so they will end up losing their ‘Playtime’. Mrs Cornell then described the playground and got the children very excited by telling them about the new toys that had been installed over the summer.

9:41 Child D stood up and moved to sit next to Mrs Hoop’s. Mrs Cornell asked if all the children knew where the toilets were. A few of the children shouted out yes but not all so she walked towards the side room where the toilets are located and pointed to them. She then went on to explain the ‘Rules’ for toileting. They

must flush the toilet every time they use it, and also 'Must' wash their hands after every visit "Otherwise you will get ill if you don't wash them every time" she stated.

9:45 Mrs Cornell returned to the carpet area with a tray in her hand. She pulled out separate pieces of coloured card and showed them to the children. She asked if anyone knew what the shapes were of each card. A number of children shouted out so that Mrs Cornell informed them that they needed to "Remember to put your hands up if you want to speak". Two children then did including Child C so Mrs Cornell proceeded to ask her what shape it was and Child C answered correctly. Mrs Cornell went on to explain that they were for making puppets with. She pulled out one she had made earlier and showed the children that one. She asked what they would need to put on the face of the puppet so that it looked like a "Real face". The children shouted out different items like "Eyes" and "Ears" etc. Mrs Cornell put her finger to her mouth and "Hushed" the children. They all went quiet and Child E put his finger to his mouth and raised his other hand. Mrs Cornell noticed this action and asked Child E to answer, which he did. Some of the other children followed suit and raised their hand but some also put their finger to their mouth as they had observed Child E doing this action too.

9:48 Child D was now sat in a corner next to Mrs Hoop looking very bored. He was fidgety and not really interested in listening. He was more concerned that it was raining outside and that "He wouldn't be able to play outside now". He said this out loud a number of times to Mrs Hoop. However, although she looked directly at him when he spoke, she didn't respond to him. She also didn't reprimand him for talking while Mrs Cornell was, neither for not putting his hand up. Child D finally turned and sat staring out of the window with his back to Mrs Cornell while she finished talking to the other pupils.

Mrs Cornell explained that she would call over a number of children to do their puppets on the craft table and once they had finished she would call over some more. She didn't tell the children that if they were not chosen they could play until they were, but they seemed to understand that was what would happen. Those

who weren't picked in the first lot jumped up and went to play again without questioning the process.

Mrs Cornell asked 3 children to go to the table with coloured pencils on it. This included Child B, C and F who all happily started to glue straight away.

9:50 Child D was asked by Mrs Hoop whether he would like to help to get the home corner toys out. He replied with a firm no and stood to watch her carry it out. Other children came to the corner to help Mrs Hoop and Child D appeared to be angry and jealous about Mrs Hoop interacting with the other children. He picked up a toy plate quickly and shouted out quite loudly "Where does this go then, new lady?" Mrs Hoop immediately turned to Child D and answered him by asking him where he thinks a plate would go in a kitchen. Child D moved in closer to her to answer and he appeared relieved that he had her full attention again (his shoulders dropped and his posture softened).

9:51 Mr Atkinson came into the reception classroom for a visit. He came over to me first and spoke with me asking how I was doing and enquiring if I needed anything. He then spoke to Mrs Cornell after which he immediately went to Mrs Hoop and asked which child was Child D. She pointed to Child D who was stood next to her and Mr Atkinson asked how he was and whether he was enjoying school. Mr Atkinson didn't speak to any of the other pupils.

10:00 Child E was called to complete his puppet. He looked directly at Mrs Cornell when she called his name. As soon as she saw he had heard her she looked away from him. Child E then chose to ignore her request and he carried on playing cars. Mrs Cornell never chased him up about this until towards the end of the lesson once she had realised he hadn't completed a puppet.

10:04 Child A sat down at the craft table, without being asked to do so. He didn't speak to anyone and started to make his own puppet. He drew a face on his

puppet which appeared to be a sad or angry face. Mrs Cornell saw this and asked him whether it was sad. Child A shook his head. Mrs Cornell asked if the face was an angry face but didn't wait for Child A to answer. Instead she proceeded to say out loud "I think it is angry and you know why I think it's angry? I think it's angry because it had to get up early this morning. Am I right A?" Child A just looked down at the table and didn't respond to her.

Assembly time

10:15 Mrs Cornell explains how to line up properly. She shows them that the start of the line **must** start from the edge of the drawers nearest to the door. She explains the reason for not lining up directly at the door; it's because it causes problems for people getting in and out of the classroom. She tells them to stand still in the line and act like "Soldiers, who keep their arms down by their sides" she instructs whilst demonstrating for them too. She explains the 'Rules' for assembly; "We walk quietly in a line, we sit down where we are told to and we never ever talk whilst in the assembly". With this she leads them out of the classroom and to the school hall.

Once at the doors for the hall, Mrs Cornell reminds the children that "We must be on our best behaviour, sit down properly and be very quiet". As the children are led into the hall they are greeted by a hundred little faces staring back at them. The reception children quickly follow Mrs Cornell and are eager to sit down. Mr Atkinson is stood at the front of the hall and waits for them to be seated before he begins to speak. Mr Atkinson opens by greeting all the children and saying he is looking forward to a nice new year. He announces that there are a number of new children today. The reception children smile at him and wait for him to speak to them but Mr Atkinson looks to the back of the hall and calls out a few individual children's names (older pupils). He asks if there are any other new pupils. Child E raises his hand and keeps his hand raised for a while then lowers it after Mr Atkinson changes the topic and announces what the first song is called.

Two pupils are picked from the juniors to stand at the front so that the “Younger” pupils can watch and learn the actions to the song. All the children are asked to stand and the music starts for the song. The reception children all look a little lost. They don’t know the song (Magic Penny) and can’t read the words (which have been projected in front of them onto a large whiteboard. They start to fidget and many turn around to stare at the older children. After the song had finished the children were seated and Mr Atkinson asked for pupils to tell him what they had done over the summer holidays. A number of pupils from the older years raised their hands and so did a couple of pupils from reception. Mr Atkinson asked all the older children (who had raised their hand) and they explained but he never asked anyone from reception. Mr Atkinson then began to read a story about returning to school after a summer holiday. Child A, C and E were happy to sit and listen to the story. Child D however sat looking towards the back of the room. He was looking for his next-door neighbour (an older pupil). “I can’t see ***.....where is she?” he calls out. “She’s not there.....***.... *** where are you?” He had chosen to ignore all the ‘Rules’ and kept calling out without any regard for Mr Atkinson and his story. Eventually Mrs Cornell hushed him and he went quiet.

Mr Atkinson began to explain about the certificate process (certificates are given out each week in assembly to children that have been picked by their teachers for doing well in a particular area that week). All the reception class children were by this time bored and unsettled. They were fidgety and many moved out of the line. Mrs Cornell and Mrs Oldenage moved them back into line once they had seen them. Child D however was never moved back into line. A final song was sung which again the reception children didn’t know. Two other pupils were chosen again to stand at the front to perform the actions. Children A, C and E all followed the actions and appeared to enjoy the practical side to the song. Child E was keen to turn around on occasions to check that the older children were doing the same actions.

Back to the classroom

10:35 Child A went straight back to making his puppet. While he was doing this, he took great delight in showing Mrs Cornell all his bruises (which he explained had come from “playing lots!”).

Child C chose to play in the home corner alongside two other female pupils.

Child E went straight back to playing cars. Child F came along and started to play so Child E got up and moved his cars away from Child F and played alone. Child F moved closer to him not realising he wanted his own space. Child E appeared annoyed by this action so he left the cars, looked around the room and noticed the sand pit was empty. He walked over to the sand pit and played alone.

Child D tried to take a puppet that had already been made and keep it as his work. “That’s mine, that is” he said to Mrs Cornell. “No, it’s not D but you can make one if you want, do you want to do one now?” Child D agreed and sat down without a problem and made his puppet with the help of Mrs Hoop.

Milk Time

10:42 Mrs Hoop and Mrs Oldenage worked together to get the tables ready for ‘Milk time’. Mrs Cornell asked all the children to tidy up all the toys and then sit down at a table. Children A, B, C E and F tidied up and sat down correctly. Child D is asked three times to help tidy up and then is asked twice to sit down ready. He sits down but then shouts out that he wants to sit next to Child C. Mrs Cornell tells him he is sat lovely where he is and gives him his milk. Child D asks where his fruit is and Mrs Cornell explains that it is not coming today.

Mrs Hoop sits down on table 1 and begins to talk to Child F. Child C tries to join the conversation but isn’t answered or spoken to. Child C appears to think for a minute and then tells Mrs Hoop that she has had enough milk now. Mrs Hoop

feels the weight of the milk carton and tells Child C to drink some more. Child C does and then tells Mrs Hoop she has had enough again. Mrs Hoop, again, feels the weight and tells Child C to drink a little more before she throws it away. Mrs Hoop had now stopped talking to child F as C had interrupted the conversation enough for it not to naturally progress on and C then went on to drink all the milk without a problem.

10:53 Child D goes to play in the sand pit with Child C and F. Child F poured some sand onto one of the toys that he was using. Child D shouted out at him “Oi.....idiot!” Child F appeared shocked and looked angry at what he had said to him and replied with “No-one play with D he is horrib...b..ble”.

Literally straight after Child C screams at child F as he had taken a toy she was playing with. Child F replies to C’s screams with “You don’t like me, do you?” Child C answers “Yes but that mine” pointing to the toy. Child D picks up a spade that Child C had briefly touched (not used) and Child C screams at him and aggressively snatches it back from him. Mrs Hoop moves towards the sand pit to see what was happening. Child F leaves the sand pit and Child D and C are left to play alongside each other. However, Mrs Hoop goes to the reading corner and settles down to read a book to a couple of pupils. Child D had been watching her movements and he left the sand pit and pushed his way through the other children so that he could sit right next to Mrs Hoop while she read the story (which he helped to turn the pages of).

10:57 Child E was playing cars again alone. Child F starts to play alongside him. E starts to play with Child F by driving his cars next to his. E stands up and sees a pretend phone. He picks up the phone and has a conversation with his dad. “Hi daddy..... what..... what..... not again!” He puts the phone down and tells Child F his dad is watching football again. Both the boys laugh out loud. “Let’s do it again” E said picking up the phone again. “Hi mum and dad....no I won’t do that.....I won’t do that.....I won’t do that....I won’t do that....right I am off to bed then!” Both boys take turns to phone home.

11:03 Child A is painting by himself. He has put his waterproof apron on. He starts to have a conversation with himself. "I am *** (name)...no-one knows what my name is....I am ***, silly people....." Then sings a song supplementing the words with "La la la". Then Child A moves on to saying numbers out loud "8...0...8" I look at his picture to see if the numbers are related in some way but there was no evidence of this. Just then Mrs Cornell announces out loud that she is going to take pictures of everyone. "Oh god.... pictures!" exclaimed A.

11:05 Child E is asked to stand still and he does. Mrs Cornell asks him to smile nicely while his picture is taken. He is a little reluctant and she has to coax a smile out of him. Mrs Cornell tells each child it's a picture of their "First day of school". He goes straight back to playing cars alone.

Just following on from Child E, Mrs Cornell calls out the name of Child A. He runs over to her but she had actually meant another boy who shares the same name as A. As soon as A realises he sheepishly walks away.

11:08 Child D is called for his turn but he refuses to come by shaking his head at Mrs Cornell. Mrs Hoop tries to coax Child D by saying she will read him another story once he has had it done. Child D goes over to Mrs Cornell but before she takes his picture she asks him to put his jumper on. Child D goes to his drawer and tries to put it on. It is clear he is obvious struggling but Mrs Cornell doesn't offer to help. She appears to get a little annoyed and tells D to go and get Mrs Hoop to help him. Child D says "Well don't let anyone else have their turn then... I will be straight back". Child D goes over to Mrs Hoop and interrupts her story reading to demand that she puts his jumper on. He throws the jumper on her lap and over the book "Put that on" he says. Mrs Hoop stops what she is doing looks at Mrs Cornell, who is sat waiting for D and is watching him, and immediately starts to put D's jumper on him. Just then Mrs Cornell calls Child B over for their photograph to be taken. D keeps checking that Mrs Cornell is still waiting for him and as soon as he realises that she hasn't he shouts at Mrs Hoop "Oh SEE....now

she's missed me!" Mrs Cornell spins round and replies "No, I haven't Child D, I am just taking Child B's picture while I wait for you". He goes over and stands near to Child B. As soon as Mrs Cornell takes the picture Child D pushes Child B out of the spot so that he can have his go. He beams out a very large smile for his photograph and then asks, "Is this for my mum?" "Yes, Child D your mum will see it eventually but not just now" replies Mrs Cornell but D had moved onto another activity.

11:15 Mrs Cornell asks Child A to remove his 'Painting' (waterproof) apron so that he can have his photograph taken. He quite innocently replies "No thanks" and returns his attention back to painting. Mrs Cornell takes a picture of him but then tells him it would look much better if he stood and smiled for her like everyone else. She then told him to remove the apron rather than asking him to. Child A removed it straight away. His photograph is taken without any more issues and he immediately goes back to his painting. He decides he wants to do another instead and starts to prepare the easel by getting some fresh paper. Mrs Oldenage asks him what he is going to paint and he replies, holding his hands up near to his face whilst also tilting his head "The same as the last one if people don't keep stopping me".

11:20 Child C is playing on her own, filling up jars with little sparkly items (in the shape of stars). Child E is playing alongside Child B and F but not interacting with them, even if they speak to him. Child D walks across a pile of cars which are on the carpet area, standing on them as he goes. Mrs Hoop sees him and tells him "Come on then let's tidy up these cars as no-one is playing with them are they". Child D walks off and leaves her to it without being told not to stand all over them.

11:25 Child D tries to go into the nursery class. Mrs Hoop see him and Child D quickly responds by saying "Err I was just shutting the door". Mrs Hoop "Oh okay Child D, thank you" she replies.

I observed Child E playing nicely in the sand pit with two other children. Mrs C calls him over to complete his puppet. He starts it off on his own but begins to have trouble with the gluing part. He asks for help from Mrs C. She sits down next to him and helps him glue his paper together and then helps him to complete the whole puppet.

11:30 Child A asks if it is home time soon. Mrs Cornell simply replies “Yes”. Child A then shows a frown on his face and says “Aww...” Mrs Cornell asks him “Why do you not want to go home?” Child A replies “Yes. No....., I just want to play outside”. Mrs Cornell explains they will be able to play outside tomorrow when they have “got used to things”.

11:31 Mrs Cornell calls out “Tidy up time children”. All the children start to tidy up except child C. She continues to play in the sand while watching the others tidying. Mrs Cornell noticed Child C so explained the ‘rules’ of tidy up time. She explained. “Tidy up time means everybody has to tidy up the toys, that means everyone Child C! If we don’t, we would have a dirty classroom and I don’t want that, do you?” The children went about tidying up, but Child C stayed playing for a few minutes.

11:33 Child C had watched the others for around two minutes before she attempts to start to tidy up. She is quick to grab hold of a toy and ask Mrs Cornell where it goes.

11:35 Child D is trying to complete a puzzle so that he can tidy it away. He starts to struggle and mumbles “God....stupid thing, get in..... stupid.....in I said.... stupid”. Mrs Hoop sees him struggling and immediately says “Oh that’s a hard one Child D, here let me do it”. She completes the puzzle and puts it away, while D watches her.

Just then Mrs Cornell calls out “Right let’s see who can sit down nicely on the carpet”. All the boys seem to understand this really quickly and the girls are much slower to settle. Once everyone is sat down, Mrs Cornell says, “Let’s see who can remember about listening shall we?” Child E puts his hand to speak, “Yes Child E what would you like to say”. “My dad is picking me up today” he tells her. Mrs Cornell doesn’t respond to the comment and moves on to the ‘Home time’ rules instead. “Right when it’s home time, we have a routine which includes sitting down on the carpet for story time. Then we go outside and collect our coats” she says pointing to the classroom door. “After putting our coats on by ourselves we sit down on a chair and when I see your mum or dad outside then you will be asked to line up at the door. You won’t be allowed to go out until one of us sees your mum or dad as we wouldn’t want to lose anyone would we?” This leads to most of the children calling out and discussing what happens when children get lost or telling Mrs Cornell about when they got lost. None are told to put their hands up. After a few minutes, the noise grows to be quite loud as everyone is trying to over speak another so that they can be heard. Eventually, Mrs Cornell quietens them all down by hushing them.

11:37 Mrs Cornell reads a rhyming story out loud. All the children settle down and most listen very well and laugh throughout the story at the funny rhymes within it.

However, while the story is being read Child D seems to get distracted quite easily. Some parents walk past the large windows due to having just collected their nursery school children and Child D watches them rather than listening to the story. At the end of the story Mrs Cornell praises the children for sitting nice and quiet and instructs them to get their coats and then sit down quietly. Child D is told by Mrs Hoop to put his jumper on first but he replies, “No I’m getting my coat first”; Mrs Hoop mumbles “Speak to yourself” and then allows him to do it his way. All the other children have got their coats and are sat down at one of the three tables in the middle of the room.

11:40 Child E's dad is seen outside so E is told to line up first. He walks to the door and then attempts to walk through it but Mrs Oldenage pulls him back in and reminds him he can't go yet and he must line up at the end of the drawers. Just then Child D and Child C are told to line up too.

Child D's mum and dad come into the classroom to meet the adults as they couldn't meet them this morning. They have a good 5-minute conversation with them and then leave.

Appendix 14 – Copy of the School Aims

THE AIMS OF THE SCHOOL (INCLUDING ETHOS AND VALUES)

Each child is an individual who makes a unique contribution to the school community. By developing each child's particular talents each is able to feel that he/she has a valued role in school regardless of age or ability.

It is the aim of the school to ensure that every child is articulate, literate and numerate commensurate with his/her age, aptitude and ability and has sufficient confidence and self esteem to use their skills to advantage. Success is the key to learning and therefore a broadly based series of planned learning experiences is provided maximising the possibility of each child achieving success.

To appreciate and value the multi-cultural nature of society and to develop an understanding of the diversity within it.

To foster an understanding caring courteous atmosphere in which to the children feel secure and valued thus developing mutual respect between children and adults; children and children.

To develop strategies to familiarise parents with the ethos and educational philosophy behind the curriculum planning and organisation of the school. To develop parental awareness of the need to become partners in the education of their children and to feel at ease and welcome within the school at all times.

To provide an attractive and stimulating environment in which children can learn.

To develop the child's capacity to enter into society as an active and responsible contributor with a sense of self-respect and self-esteem, a capacity for communicating with others and an ability to think and act independently.

Appendix 15 (Cont.) – Home-School-Child Contract

I _____ will try to keep the school and class rules:

School Rules

- 1 Be kind to others in all you say and do
- 2 Always stay in school
- 3 Always walk in school
- 4 This is our school. Look after it
- 5 Always be honest and tell the truth

Class Rules

- 1 Listen carefully and do not interrupt
- 2 Speak politely
- 3 Work quietly at your table
- 4 Look after the things in your classroom
- 5 Line up quietly when asked

Child's signature

Together we will try to:

- a Tackle any special needs
- b Encourage the children to keep the school rules
- c Support the child's learning to help them achieve their best