



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

**Children's and teachers' perceptions and lived experiences of
carpet time in early years classrooms: An auto/biographical
ethnographic study**

Jo McEvoy

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

The University of Sheffield
Faculty of Social Sciences
School of Education

June 2020

Abstract

'Carpet time' is a colloquial term used in most English early years classrooms to describe the times when the whole class gathers together on the carpet with their teacher. Carpet times are used for organisational and teaching purposes and typically take place several times a day. Despite taking up a substantial proportion of the school day, little is known about the effects of carpet time practices on children's learning, development or well-being. The small amount of research in this area is mainly limited to studies of Circle Time, an educational programme for supporting children's social and emotional development, with very few of these studies incorporating children's perspectives. This auto/biographical ethnographic study explores children's and teachers' perceptions and lived experiences of carpet time. The study is situated within a children's rights and empowerment framework (Pascal and Bertram, 2009) and incorporates socio-cultural pedagogy as a theoretical approach. The methodological approach included children as research participants and key informants (Clark and Moss, 2011). A range of ethnographic methods; classroom observations, interviews, and 'child-chats' were used. Thematic analysis of the data suggested that the children's and teachers' lived experiences of carpet time were complex, nuanced and influenced by many different factors. I found that carpet time can be a contested area of practice in which children and teachers may experience emotional, physical and pedagogical challenges. However, carpet time can also provide rich opportunities for developing teacher-child relationships that support children's self-esteem and developing sense of identity. As a context for teaching, carpet time can support academic outcomes, but also, children's social and emotional development. An attuned teacher can capitalise on the many opportunities that carpet time offers to support children's holistic learning, well-being and development. Carpet time can be a valuable resource for children and teachers and maybe its potential has not yet been fully recognised. Closer attention needs to be given to seeking to understand this overlooked area of practice.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to the children, teachers and teaching assistants who participated in this study. You were all so welcoming and made me feel like I was part of your community. Thank- you for sharing so openly with me. It was a wonderful experience and a privilege, too.

Thank-you to my supervisors who guided me through different parts of the study, Rachael Levy, Pat Sikes and Fiona Scott. Pat, you have been my main supervisor for part two and you have been amazing. You helped me to find a niche in writing where I could express myself comfortably. You taught me so much in such a short time. Thank-you for sharing your wisdom and expertise.

Thank-you to my employer, the University of Huddersfield, for funding my studies and giving me the opportunity to study away from the workplace. To my managers and work colleagues, thank-you for supporting and encouraging me all through this journey.

Thank-you to my family who have all suffered my moaning and groaning when I found it hard going. You've all been a great support and encouraged me with your love and laughter (and five grandchildren along the way, too – thank-you!)

Thank-you to my parents for giving me a loving and secure foundation in life. I dedicate my hard work to the loving memory of my Dad.

Above all, my deepest thanks go to my wonderful husband, Phil, for your love, support and steadfast belief in me. You are my rock and my dearest friend. Thank-you.

**This thesis is dedicated to my grandchildren, be inspired to always believe
in yourself!**

CONTENTS

Section	Title	Page
	Abstract	2
	Acknowledgements	3
	Contents	4
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	
1.0	Carpet time	10
1.1	Rationale	10
1.2	Positionality statement	13
1.3	Research aims	15
1.4	Overview of chapters	15
1.5	Summary of chapter 1	16
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.0	Introduction	18
2.1	Part 1: Carpet time	22
2.1.1	Physical contexts for teaching	22
2.1.2	Historical context of carpet time	23
2.1.3	Classroom organisation	25
2.1.4	Organisational and pedagogical characteristics of carpet time	29
2.1.5	Empirical studies of carpet time	32
2.1.6	Circle time	36
2.1.7	Summary of part 1	40
2.2	Part 2: Early childhood pedagogy	41
2.2.1	Pedagogical context	41
2.2.2	Tensions	42
2.2.3	Pedagogical dilemmas for teachers	44

2.2.4	Teacher-child interactions and children's dispositions to learning	49
2.2.5	Quality of teacher-child interactions	53
2.2.6	Teacher-child relationships	56
2.2.7	Summary of part 2	57
2.3	Part 3: Children's rights and children's voices	58
2.3.1	Rationale for including children's voices	58
2.3.2	Participatory methods for researching with young children	61
2.3.3	Challenges in trying to represent children's voices in research	65
2.3.4	Summary of Part 3	68
CHAPTER 3	METHODOLOGY	
3.0	Introduction	70
3.1	Philosophical position	71
3.1.1	Fundamental assumptions and values	72
3.1.2	Children's rights and empowerment	73
3.1.3	Participatory research with young children	76
3.1.4	Eliciting children's voices in research	77
3.2	Research design	79
3.2.1	Ethnographic study	80
3.2.2	Ethnography	80
3.2.3	Ethnography as a method	80
3.2.4	Ethnography as a research practice	81
3.2.5	Auto/biography	83
3.3	Conduct of the study	84
3.3.1	The setting	8
3.3.2	The participants	85
3.3.3	The focus group	85

3.3.4	The fieldwork	87
3.3.5	Research methods	88
3.4	Data analysis	92
3.4.1	Interpretative phenomenological analysis	95
3.4.2	Analysis of the fieldnotes	97
3.4.3	Analysis of the teacher interviews and child-chats	99
3.4.4	Mapping the themes from all three data-sets	101
3.4.5	Verification of data and findings	107
3.5	Ethical considerations	108
3.5.1	Informed consent	108
3.5.2	Reflection: can young children <i>really</i> give informed consent?	110
3.5.3	Anonymity	111
3.5.4	Confidentiality and trust	112
3.5.5	Protecting participants from harm	113
3.6	Trustworthiness and limitations	114
3.6.1	Credibility	114
3.6.2	Transferability	116
3.6.3	Dependability	116
3.6.4	Confirmability	117
3.6.5	Sincerity	118
3.6.6	Limitations of the methodology	118
3.7	Summary of chapter 3	119
CHAPTER 4	FINDINGS	
4.0	Introduction	121
4.1	Carpet time can facilitate community building and a sense of belonging	121
4.1.1	Community and belonging: Classroom observations and child-chats	121

4.1.2	Community and belonging: Teacher interviews	127
4.2	Carpet time can be a place where identities are formed and constrained	128
4.2.1	Identity: Classroom observations	128
4.2.2	Identity: Child-chats	133
4.2.3	Identity: Teacher interviews	135
4.3	Carpet time can be a place of control	136
4.3.1	Control: Child-chats	136
4.3.2	Control: Classroom observations	138
4.3.3	Control: Teacher interviews	140
4.4	Carpet time can be a place where pedagogical issues are exposed	142
4.4.1	Pedagogy: Teacher interviews and classroom observations	142
4.4.1.1	Louise	142
4.4.1.2	Maria	145
4.4.1.3	Emily	148
4.4.1.4	Laura	150
4.4.2	Pedagogy – child chats	152
4.5	Summary of chapter 4	158
CHAPTER 5	DISCUSSION	
5.0	Introduction	159
5.1	Research question 1	159
5.1.1	The physical context of carpet time	160
5.1.1.1	Listening to children’s voices	161
5.1.2	The influence of policy on carpet time practices	162
5.1.3	Carpet time control and compliance	163
5.1.4	Impact of carpet time on children’s developing sense of self	165
5.1.4.1	Grouping by ability on the carpet	166

5.1.5	Summary of section 5.1	168
5.2	Research questions 2 and 3	168
5.2.1	Children's understandings and lived experiences of carpet time	169
5.2.1.1	Learning and funds of knowledge	169
5.2.1.2	The thunder cloud	170
5.2.1.3	Summary of section 5.2.1	172
5.2.2	Teachers' understandings and lived experiences of carpet time	173
5.2.2.1	Emotional struggles and pedagogical tensions	173
5.2.2.2	Teacher-child interactions	175
5.2.2.3	Impact of discourse of school readiness on teachers' pedagogical choices	176
5.2.2.4	Summary of section 5.2.2	177
5.3	Research question 4	178
5.3.1	A contested space for children's voices to be heard	178
5.3.2	A contested space for teachers to enact their pedagogical values	180
5.3.3	Summary of section 5.3	182
5.4	Conclusion to chapter 5	183
CHAPTER 6	CONCLUSION	
6.0	Introduction	185
6.1	Children's voices, rights and empowerment	185
6.1.1	Impact of EYFS policy on carpet time practices	186
6.1.2	Impact of pedagogical tensions on children's entitlement to a personalised curriculum	188
6.2	Summary of findings from research questions	189
6.3	Implications for policy and practice	190
6.4	Dissemination of the research	192

6.5	Limitations of the study	193
6.6	Reflection	193
	REFERENCES	196
	APPENDICES	215

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.0 Carpet time

Carpet time is a colloquial term used in most English primary schools and pre-school settings to describe the times when children gather together on the carpet with their teacher or appropriate adult, as a whole class or in small groups. In nursery and reception classes there are typically several carpet times a day. Carpet times are used for both organisational and teaching purposes. At the start of the day, carpet time is usually used for registration and may include shared worship, updating the calendar and explaining to the class what is going to happen that day. At other points in the day the carpet time supports transitions from one aspect of the timetable to another, for example, when organising the children to be ready for lunch or home time. When used for teaching purposes, the focus of carpet time may be academic curriculum content, such as literacy or mathematics, or may be social and emotional development. Carpet time can also be used to deliver circle time (Mosley, 2005), which is a teaching programme that involves children sitting in a circle and talking about their feelings, personal experiences and relationships. Regardless of the focus, carpet times are typically adult-led in teaching style. Children usually remain seated on the carpet throughout the session, often they are expected to sit still with their legs crossed and always to pay attention to the adult, who directs the proceedings, whilst they listen and respond when requested to do so. However, despite carpet time being an everyday aspect of the early years classroom, relatively little is known about the lived experience of carpet time for children or teachers. Carpet time has become a taken for granted practice in early childhood education and, because it sits within an ideology of child centred practice, it has rarely been critically examined. My study aims to provide insights into the pedagogical and relational dynamics of carpet time, and support a critical consideration of its value and purpose in early years classrooms.

1.1 Rationale

My motivation for conducting the study came from my interest in early childhood pedagogy. I wanted to focus upon carpet time because educational policy is moving towards a more formal approach to early years teaching, with a sharper focus on

the attainment of academic goals (Bradbury, 2019). I aimed to explore how early years teachers are using carpet time in light of the current debates on pedagogy and curriculum, and the policy drivers regarding school readiness.

My study was conducted against a background of tension between policy makers and early years practitioners concerning what is deemed to be effective pedagogy for early childhood education (ECE) (Neaum, 2016). Internationally, governments are stipulating preferred pedagogical approaches to ECE and applying pressure to meet academic goals (Wood and Hedges, 2016). In England there has been a shift in ECE policy that favours a more formal approach to teaching and learning in nursery and reception classes, in the quest to prepare children for more formal learning at school (Kay, 2018). This is resulting in early years teachers feeling pressurised to adopt didactic teaching methods, despite them favouring a more child-initiated, play-based approach, as advocated by academics and researchers (Roberts-Holmes, 2015). However, in a review of the literature on early childhood pedagogy, Pascal, Bertram and Cole-Albeck (2017) found that:

Emerging developmental evidence reveals that an 'earlier is better', more formal, didactic approach may be misguided and will not make a difference in the long term. In contrast to the focus on early, didactic instruction, current research into early emotional and cognitive development suggests that long-term well-being and success at school may be more dependent on children developing executive functioning and self-regulation abilities, and exercising autonomy in their learning. The evidence sharply indicates that play and participatory approaches should be seen as key vehicles for learning throughout the early years. (Pascal, Bertram and Cole-Albeck, 2017, p.18)

Clark (2017) suggests that this dissonance between research evidence and pedagogic practice is symptomatic of a 'deep conceptual divide' (p.10) that is emerging in ECE in England, between policy makers, academics and practitioners concerning the rhetoric of 'school readiness.' For policy makers there is an urgency to prepare children during the Early Years Foundation Stage for formal learning in key stage one of the primary school, in a belief that it will help to reduce the disparity in outcomes between children from disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged backgrounds (Allen, 2011; DfE, 2013; DfE/DH, 2011; Ofsted, 2014). This interpretation of formal learning signifies that the child must be made ready for the academic challenges of the curriculum weighted towards literacy and numeracy. The focus is on ensuring the 'delivery' of curriculum content so that children can

achieve the Early Learning Goals (ELGs). Yet, academics and teachers generally favour a more socio-constructivist interpretation of school readiness (Clark, 2017), in which the focus is on learning behaviours. There is broad agreement that it is necessary to develop children's capacity to learn through developing their self-regulation and executive functioning skills, so that they are equipped with strong dispositions to learning that form the foundations for lifelong learning (Kangas, Ojala and Venninen, 2015; McClelland and Wanless, 2015).

These tensions and ambiguities are reflected in the English statutory curriculum framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2017). Predominantly, the framework promotes a child-centred, play-based curriculum and presents a view of the child as being 'unique' (DfE, 2017, p.6). On the one hand, the statutory curriculum framework states that children learn and develop at 'different rates and in different ways' (ibid, p.6), but, to the contrary, the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) set out what most children are expected to achieve by the end of the reception year, despite their different starting points in relation to age and stage of development. This is because one of the key aims of the EYFS is to prepare children for the demands of 'more structured learning in school' (DfE, 2017, p.7).

From my own informal observations, I have seen that carpet time sessions in nursery and reception classes are occupying a significant amount of time in the school day. This may be indicative of how teachers are responding to recent English ECE policy directives, outlined in the previous paragraphs, which place emphasis on the teaching of academic content in preparation for the start of formal schooling at the end of the reception class year. Specifically, policies relating to assessment and use of data may be pertinent to this study in relation to teachers' pedagogical approaches, for example, the requirement for a baseline assessment (DfE, 2020) to be carried out on entry to the reception class, the EYFS profile assessment at the end of the reception year (DfE, 2017) and the phonics screening check in year one (DfE, 2012). Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, (2017) argue that such over emphasis on assessment in early childhood education and requirements to collect a large amount of data are influencing classroom practices. In their study of why and how teachers group children in the early years and key stage one of primary school, they found that teachers are more frequently engaging in whole

class directed teaching of phonics, literacy and mathematics, in preparation for key stage one, and are grouping children by ability in order to provide differentiated teaching of phonics, literacy and mathematics (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2107). Thus, it may be that children in nursery and reception classes will now gather on the carpet more frequently for teacher-directed activities than has previously been the case. Therefore, it is important to examine more closely what actually happens during carpet time sessions and the influence of teachers' pedagogical approaches upon the lived experiences of children and teachers.

1.2 Positionality statement

I have worked in education for approximately thirty years and mostly I have worked with children under the age of five. I have enjoyed many different roles since qualifying as a primary school teacher and I currently work at a university as a teacher educator in primary and early years education. I trained as a primary school teacher for key stage two (7-11 years), but gained my first teaching position in key stage one. I then moved into the early years as a reception class (4-5 years) teacher. I took nine years out of primary school teaching to bring up my family and it was during this period that I learnt about early childhood education (ECE) and enjoyed a new role as a pre-school supervisor and tutor. I trained in early years through the Pre-school Learning Alliance (now known as the Early Years Alliance) and it was during that time that I began to form my philosophical stance and pedagogical values for ECE.

I have three core values and a motto that sum up my philosophy for ECE. My values for children are, 'time', 'respect' and 'service' and my philosophy is based on the premise that, when working with young children, 'every second counts'. I believe that time is precious and cannot be taken for granted. Time is a valuable asset to give to a child (or any person) because it conveys a message that they are important to me. Treating the child with respect validates their worth as an individual. I feel privileged to have had the educational opportunities that have enabled me to progress in a career that I enjoy, and I endeavour to give something back through an attitude of service towards those I support.

Growing up in a large family and having children of my own, I have always had a young child close to me. This has helped me to develop my understanding of babies

and young children and it has made me aware of how observant and impressionable they can be. I believe that every second really does count when we are with children, because every interaction we have with young children and every observation they make of us, can be a learning moment for them. Over the years my professional values have acted like a guide or a compass to me when having to make decisions. In recent years, I have worked as a teacher educator and have shared my values and philosophy with trainee teachers and encouraged them to work on developing their own philosophy and pedagogical stance, which will come from their own lived experiences, cultural understandings and unique positions.

My pedagogical stance is child-centred and influenced by socio-constructivist and socio-cultural (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Rogoff, 2008) theories. When teaching young children, I intuitively drew on these theories, facilitating learning through exploration, experimentation and schematic play (Atherton and Nutbrown, 2016). My assessment practices were built on the principles of observational assessment, holistic development and the 'unique child' (DfE, 2017, p.5) and I drew on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (2009), which promotes the importance of partnership with parents, carers and other professionals.

My interest and curiosity about carpet time comes at a timely point in my life. I am in the later stage of my career and I have experienced many versions of carpet time through my different professional roles, as a teacher, a consultant and as teacher educator. I am also a mother and a grandmother. My eldest grandchild is about to start school and another will soon start nursery. I find myself reflecting on how they might experience carpet time and I also think back to my own experiences as an early years teacher. I have been fortunate to enjoy many carpet times where I have connected with the children in my class and I have observed similar carpet times when working as an early years consultant and as a teacher educator. However, I have also felt concerned that, on many occasions, I have experienced or witnessed carpet times in which children appear to be bored, or disengaged and do not appear to be benefiting from the experience. This variation in pedagogical practices became the starting point for my research.

1.3 Research aims

The aim of my study was twofold. Firstly, I sought to gain insights into children's and teachers' perceptions and lived experiences of carpet time sessions in the EYFS (a nursery and a reception class) in a school in Greater Manchester. Secondly, I aimed to identify what implications the findings have for understanding teachers' pedagogical approaches to carpet time. The findings from the study will subsequently support my work within teacher education.

I decided to focus on one school in Greater Manchester because this was to be an ethnographic study and I was conducting the research whilst also working full time. I would not have been able to spend so much time in the school if I had chosen to conduct the research across several schools. Greater Manchester was chosen because it was my place of residence and would allow me less travel time and the opportunity to conduct research away from my work environment in a neighbouring local authority where I frequently visit schools.

The following questions were posed:

1. What are the features of carpet time in the Early Years Foundation Stage in one primary school in Greater Manchester?
2. What are teachers' and children's understandings of the purpose and value of carpet time?
3. How does the action and social interaction during these times support and enhance extant ideas about the purpose and value of carpet time?
4. What implications do the findings of this study have for the understanding and development of pedagogical approaches to carpet time?

1.4 Overview of chapters

Chapter two: Literature review.

In chapter two, I review the literature relating to carpet time. As this is a relatively under-researched area of practice, I expanded the literature search to include literature about early years pedagogy and the notion of children's voices in

research. This was to help to inform the aims of the research study, pedagogical approaches to carpet time, and to support my understanding of how children may be included as active participants in the research.

Chapter three: Methodology.

In chapter three, I explain and discuss my methodology and provide a rationale for the decisions I made in relation to the design of my study, my choice of data collection methods and analysis. I expand on my discussion about the notion of children's voices in research, reflecting on how my understanding of children's voices and participation changed and developed as the study progressed

Chapter four: Findings.

In chapter four, I present the findings from my study. I collected three sets of data; classroom observations, teacher interviews and 'child-chats'. The data were analysed thematically and the themes that I generated are each discussed separately, drawing on the findings from each data-set within that theme.

Chapter five: Discussion.

In chapter five, I discuss the research questions that were posed at the start of my study. I draw on the findings from my study and the literature review to discuss the questions from my auto/biographical perspective.

Chapter six: Conclusion

In chapter six, I explain the research outcomes concerning children's voices in relation to the study's framework of children's rights and empowerment, and share my thoughts about implications for policy and practice, based on my findings from the four research questions. I share the limitations of the study, my plans for disseminating the research and conclude the thesis with a reflection on how the study has impacted my personal and professional development.

1.5 Summary of chapter one

In this chapter I have provided a definition of the colloquial term, 'carpet time' and explained the different ways carpet time may be used in nursery and reception classes in primary schools. I have described the context in which my study is

located, explaining that there are tensions between ECE policy and practice which may lead to early years teachers focussing more on the teaching of academic content during carpet times. I have shared the research aims and questions and my personal and professional interests in this topic. I have provided an insight into my position, in relation to the research topic, and the values that underpin my personal and professional life.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

'Carpet time' is the colloquial phrase used in English primary schools to describe the times during the school day when the teacher, or appropriate adult, and the children gather together on the carpet in the classroom, either as a whole class or in small groups. In the nursery and reception classes this happens frequently throughout the day and for a range of different purposes, which are generally, either organisational or pedagogical. My study of carpet time includes both organisational and pedagogical purposes. I am interested in finding out about the lived experiences of children and teachers who participate in carpet time sessions, regardless of the particular focus of the session.

I started my initial literature search before the fieldwork began, conducting an initial scoping review based on Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five stage methodological framework. Arksey and O'Malley recommend the researcher adopt a wide-ranging view to posing the question so that a broader range of literature may be generated. They suggest fine tuning and setting the parameters for the search terms can be undertaken once the volume of literature and breadth for content has been established. I worked on two aims that I felt would help to inform my overall research topic of exploring children's and teachers' lived experiences of carpet time. The two aims for the initial literature search were:

1. To establish what is known already in the literature about carpet time as a context for teaching and learning.
2. To identify the influences that may affect the experiences of children and teachers during carpet times in nursery and reception classes.

In order to secure a breadth of coverage, several definitions of key terms were devised to try to capture the range of terminology used in different countries. The term 'carpet time' is colloquial and not likely to be recognised in an electronic database. Similarly, the term 'group gathering sessions' is potentially ambiguous and if used on its own, it could potentially result in much time spent searching through an abundance of literature, only to have to refine the search in the end. A specific type of group gathering time that is commonly used in most schools is

called 'circle time' (Mosely, 1996). Its purpose is to promote personal, social and emotional skills. However, this term 'circle time' is now often used to describe all types of group gathering sessions on the carpet, much in the same way as the colloquialism 'carpet time' is used. Therefore, all three terms were included in the search strategy in the belief that fewer sources would be missed or overlooked. The key terms in various definitions were searched using a building blocks search strategy (Harter 1986) in which the search terms are made up of different combinations of the three blocks, for example: 'circle time' could be combined with 'pedagogy' and 'early years', or 'group time' could be combined with 'pedagogy' and 'pre-school'. The search terms used in this scoping review are shown in the three blocks in figure 1.

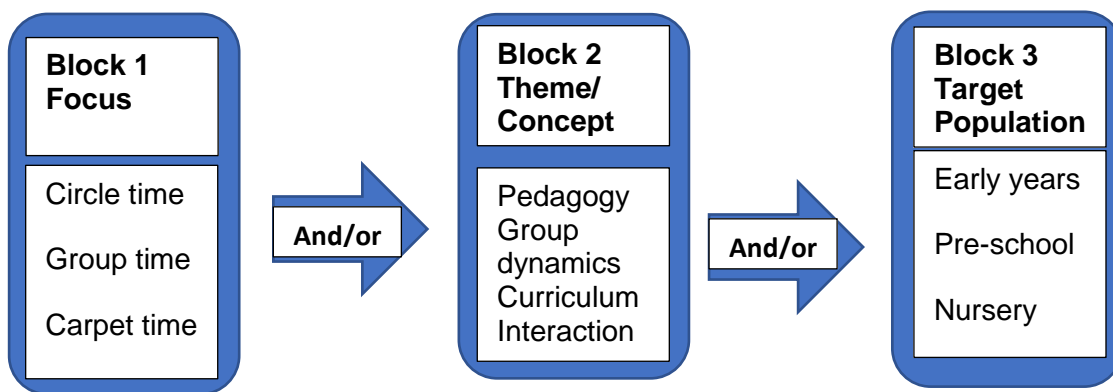


Figure 1. Building Blocks search strategy

To balance the need for locating an extensive range of literature against the constraints of time and resources available, initial search parameters were put into place. Following the publication of the Rumbold report (DES, 1990) on the quality of education experiences of 3 and 4 year olds, the decades from 1990 onwards were fundamental in igniting an interest in research into effective early years pedagogy (Moyle, Adams and Musgrove, 2002; Schweinhart, 2005; Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gilden and Bell, 2002; Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2004; Hall, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford, Taggart, 2009). Of particular significance, was the government-funded research, Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE), which began in 1997 and was commissioned by the government to identify effective pedagogical approaches. The findings from the EPPE study, as well as findings from international studies on effective pedagogy in early childhood education, were

influencing both policy and pedagogical practice in England (Siraj-Blatchford and Wong, 1999). Research studies prior to 1980 were likely to be sparse and unlikely to have influenced current policy and practice to the extent that the more recent decades have, since funded pre-school education for all three and four year olds was introduced in 1988. Therefore, the time period from 1980 onwards was chosen for inclusion and studies from international sources were also to be included, although not in other languages due to the monetary implications of translation. An overview of the inclusion and exclusion criteria is outlined in table 1.

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Date	1980 onwards	Pre 1880
Language	English	Other languages
Study type	Original research in a peer reviewed journal	Non peer reviewed or original research
Population focus	Pre-school children (0-5 years) Primary school children (6-11 years) only when the focus is their participation in circle time Early years and primary teachers and practitioners	Children over the age of 11 years Primary school children (6-11 years) when the focus is not participation in circle time Primary school teachers when the focus is not participation in circle time
Literature focus	Early Years pedagogy (0-5 years) Studies that focus on the pedagogy of circle time Teacher child interactions Group dynamics	Primary school pedagogy (Key stages 1 and 2) Studies where circle time is mentioned but is not the main focus Studies with a narrow focus on the effectiveness of circle time for promoting self-esteem and social skills within older primary aged children (7-11 Years)

Table 1 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

From a range of 702 studies, many of which were replicated in different sources, a total of 69 studies was selected based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria outlined in table 1.

From my initial scoping review there appeared to be a gap in the literature on this topic. I found that relatively little is known about the context of carpet time as a space for teaching and learning, apart from that which takes place through circle time. However, after I had completed my fieldwork, I located two empirical studies

of carpet time and one discussion paper that included carpet time within the wider topic of changing learning environments in primary schools. It was then that I returned to the literature review and followed the later stages of Arksy and O'Malley's (2005) framework in which the researcher actively responds to emerging findings in a development way, to draw out underlying concepts and make decisions about the direction to take, following a line of enquiry or examining aspects in more depth. My research questions (see chapter one) were specific to a particular group of participants in a specific school. There would be no literature to answer these questions directly. The questions to guide the literature review needed to be more generic in relation to pedagogical practices of carpet time. I had deduced from my fieldwork that carpet time practices presented children and teachers with benefits, challenges and opportunities to support children's learning, development and wellbeing. I posed two questions to support me to explore these in the literature:

1. What might be the benefits and constraints of carpet time experiences to children's learning, development and well-being?
2. What opportunities are there for promoting children's learning and development through the context of carpet time?

I hoped that these two questions would provide a knowledge base for my first three research questions, outlined in chapter one.

The third question I posed for the literature review was:

3. How compatible are the pedagogical practices of carpet time with variations in young children's development, in terms of their concentration, communication and physical capabilities?

This question was also a product of my fieldwork observations, in which I had noticed that many children appeared to struggle to engage in carpet times due their under-developed concentration, communication and physical capabilities. I was keen to find out if there was literature to help me make sense of my observations and thus, inform my fourth research question concerning future implications for pedagogical practices for carpet time.

By widening my search to explore emerging themes from my fieldwork and the initial scoping review of the literature, I aimed to support my secondary aim, to contribute

to the discourse of effective pedagogy for early childhood education. I drew on a wider breadth of literature to include early childhood pedagogy and curriculum, classroom learning environments and circle time.

The literature is reviewed in three parts. In part one, I examine three papers that address carpet time directly and explore literature on classroom organisation and circle time. The purpose of this is to explore the physical and historical context of carpet time and the different ways it is used in primary schools.

In part two, I examine the literature on early childhood pedagogy. The purpose of this is to gain understanding of the pedagogical context of carpet time and how different pedagogical approaches may potentially enhance or detract from young children's learning and development during carpet time sessions.

In part three, I explore the literature that focuses specifically on research with children and thinking around facilitating children's voices. This is so that I can include children as expert informants in my study of carpet time, as this has been identified in the literature as a need for future research.

2.1 Part One: Carpet time

In this section I draw on the three papers that examine carpet time as a physical context for teaching. I begin by considering the importance of physical contexts for teaching and explore the literature on classroom organisation. I trace the origins of carpet time and examine its characteristics as a context for teaching and learning in the early years classroom. I draw on two recent empirical studies of carpet time and some of the literature on circle time to consider the potential benefits and constraints of using carpet time for supporting the learning and development of young children.

2.1.1 Physical contexts for teaching

Physical contexts for teaching influence the quality of children's learning and need to be carefully designed so that they are fit for purpose (Kershner and Pointon, 2000). In a discussion paper about the impact of physical environments on the quality of children's learning in primary schools, which included references to carpet

time, Turner-Bissett (2003) underscored this point by stating that, 'Teaching contexts matter. They matter to teachers and they matter to pupils' (p.4). Turner-Bissett suggested that all too often the physical context for teaching has evolved in response to, 'the contemporary cultures of primary education', and argued that more attention needs to be given to the relationship between, 'the physical contexts of primary classrooms, the contemporary cultures of primary education, and the relationship between physical contexts and primary practice' (p.4).

The starting point for Turner-Bissett's discussion was that while classroom practices have changed over time in response to political directives and societal values, in many instances, the physical context for teaching has remained the same. She argued that it was necessary to take a retrospective look at the different trends and fashions of primary teaching practices and classroom organisation, in order to critically appraise the fitness for purpose of the physical teaching contexts in the classroom:

Knowledge of how things were, of change and continuity, cause and effect, and of themes and trends in primary education can both illuminate our present understanding, and provoke us to question assumptions behind the everyday accepted norms of primary teaching (Turner-Bissett, 2003, p.4).

Taking a look back at the historical origins of carpet time and current practices for classroom organisation illuminates some of its characteristics that are still pertinent to early childhood education today, and challenges some of the assumptions that lie behind accepted norms of practice.

2.1.2 Historical context of carpet time

Prior the late 1960s it is unlikely that carpet time took place in schools (Pichon, 2012). Children were taught at their desks, in rows, facing the teacher (Turner-Bissett, 2003, p.7). The publication of the Plowden report in 1967 (CACE, 1967), however, began a new era of primary education based on child-centred philosophy, and humanistic approaches, 'stressing particularly the uniqueness of each individual and the paramount need for individualisation of the teaching and learning process' (Galton, Simon and Croll, 1980, p.40). There was a move away from whole class teaching to more informal methods that focussed on teaching children

individually or in small groups. The schools built at that time were designed for flexibility of internal space. They were:

Schools in which children followed their own interests, moved freely around classrooms and work-bases, carried out projects and worked in fluid organisational arrangements, individually, in pairs, or small groups. For such forms of primary education, an open-plan design was beneficial (Turner-Bissett, 2003, p.7).

Not only were new schools open-plan, but they also tended to be carpeted in order to support the informal ethos of the building and also flexibility in how teachers used the space. Some project work could be undertaken with groups of children sitting on the carpet. Very often, reading corners were created on the carpet by partitioning the space with furniture and usually the carpet area also doubled up as a space where the class could congregate together at certain points during the day for whole class instruction (Turner-Bissett, 2003).

It was at this point in the history of primary education that nursery classes also started to be included as part of the primary school. Prior to the Plowden report (CACE, 1967) the 1944 Education Act had introduced a requirement that LEAs should have 'regard to' of provision of nursery schools or nursery classes in other schools for children under five years. Such provision tended to be for health and social purposes and was provided through nursery schools or private and voluntary providers. Places were limited to a needs basis and some parents paid for childcare in private nursery provision, in order to be able to work. The committee that wrote the Plowden report recognised a need for substantial expansion of nursery provision for children aged three to five years, for the purpose of paving the way for academic learning in schools. They recommended that nursery provision should be the responsibility of the education department, rather than health authorities and that the children should be taught under the supervision of a qualified teacher. Nursery provision, thus, began to be funded as non-profit making nursery classes in primary schools or separate nursery centres and were subject to similar inspection processes as other forms of educational provision (CACE, 1967).

As the nursery classes were incorporated into primary schools in the 1970s, it became an accepted norm that a whole class of children would sit together on the

carpet for organisational and teaching purposes. Turner-Bissett remarked that in a typical primary school:

The carpet area is where registration and other administrative tasks are often carried out, where story-reading and telling is done, and where whole class teaching is often done at the start of lessons and in plenaries. However there are tensions between the demands of the present-day curriculum, the recommended teaching approaches and the physical context and organisation of children. Some of these tensions can be traced to historical causes and trends and these are worth investigating (Turner-Bissett, 2003, p.5).

It seems that little has changed in relation to the physical context of carpet time over the past two decades. Turner-Bissett's description of the primary classroom learning environment aptly describes many of the contemporary nursery and reception classrooms I visit in my role as a teacher educator. Even in the childcare settings I visit, it is common for two year olds to be sitting on the carpet for group times, for singing, rhyme time, stories, and in some cases, for introducing phonics through songs and actions using commercially produced schemes. Carpet time appears to have been inherited from primary school practices that began in the post Plowden era. This suggests that the downward push from primary to early years pedagogical practices was already developing prior to the introduction of the EYFS in England and it cannot be taken for granted that this context for teaching is fit for purpose in nursery and reception classes of today. In the next section I will examine literature on contemporary classroom organisation in primary schools to understand what influences teachers' decisions about how and why they use carpet time in the EYFS.

2.1.3 Classroom organisation

Turner-Bissett (2003) emphasised that decisions concerning classroom organisation are influenced by contemporary educational policies and societal understandings of the purpose and value of education. Currently, the English education system is motivated by a culture of performativity, driven by an ideology of attainment, assessment and tracking children's progress (Roberts-Holmes, 2015), in the quest to ensure children are made ready for formal learning in school (Clark, 2017). There is concern that this is resulting in the need for early years classrooms to be organised in a way that facilitates regular whole class teaching of academic subjects such as literacy and mathematics (Clark, 2017), with ability grouping for phonics

and mathematics (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017). These forms of organisation persist, despite the claim that, 'it is well established that attainment-based grouping has little if any overall benefit in terms of student outcomes' (Taylor, Francis, Archer, Hodgen, Pepper, Tereshchenko and Travers, 2017, p. 2).

The topic of grouping children by attainment has been debated over many years in England (Hallam and Parsons, 2013; Marks, 2013) and internationally (Anthony, Hunter and Hunter, 2016; Schofield, 2010). Although most of the research to date had been focused on secondary schools (Ireson and Hallam, 2001; Schofield, 2010), there is growing interest in why this practice is becoming more common in early years classrooms and the impact it may have on children and teachers (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017; Bradbury, 2018; Mitchell, 2019). It has been found that ability grouping leads to slight gains in attainment of higher ability children, but has detrimental effects on lower ability groups in relation to both academic and social impacts (Campbell, 2013). A large scale intervention study conducted across 126 secondary schools in England indicated that children in higher attaining groups received better teaching and achieved more, whilst those in lower attaining groups were inevitably denied access to knowledge progression beyond a certain point and had sometimes been placed into the wrong groups, due to subjective means of assessment (Taylor et al. 2017). These findings are consistent with research on grouping at all ages which has reported that grouping by attainment negatively affects pupils' self-esteem, how they view themselves in terms of academic ability and how they respond to being in school (Ireson and Hallam, 2001; Marks, 2013, 2016).

Kutnick, Sebba, Blatchford, Galton, Thorp, MacIntyre and Berdondini (2002) highlight that grouping can widen the gap in attainment because the higher attaining groups are stretched and challenged, having no ceiling to their progression in knowledge, whilst the lower attainment groups are denied access to more challenging content. Gillborn and Youdell (2000) describe teaching in ability groups as leading to an educational triage system, in which more attention is given to children who are most likely to be successful in achieving national benchmark assessments, so that the school performs well in national league tables. Within the literature on classroom organisation, it is widely reported that children from areas of disadvantage are the ones who are most likely to be placed in the lower attaining

groups and these groups are usually taught by teaching assistants, not qualified teachers (Kutnick et al. 2002; Hallam and Ireson, 2007; Dunne, Humphreys, Dyson, Sebba, Gallannaugh and Muijs, 2011; Francis, Archer, Hodgen, Pepper, Taylor and Travers, 2017). Furthermore, there is compelling evidence from the Social Mobility Commission (2017) that children from poorer families make less progress when they are placed in lower attainment groups in the early years of primary school. This practice of grouping children by ability is described by Jackson and Povey (2016, p.1) as 'a social injustice', since it increases disadvantage and can have long-term negative consequences in terms of social mobility for lower attaining children from poorer families.

Another group found to be disproportionately affected by being grouped by attainment, are summer born children in Reception classes, who more likely to be placed into lower ability or intervention groups (Mitchell, 2019). In Campbell's (2013) preliminary findings from the Millenium Cohort Study, it was reported that summer born children are still likely to be in the lower attaining groups when they reach year two. The longer-term impact for this group can be quite devastating, as reported by Frazier Norbury et al. (2016), who cite research from the United Kingdom and United States of America that claims summer born children in lower attaining groups experience high stress levels, low self-esteem and often become labelled as having special educational needs.

Nevertheless, grouping by ability has become more prevalent in primary schools as a consequence of external pressures to meet attainment targets (Marks, 2013; Ireson and Hallam, 2001). Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2017) question whether this has led to ability grouping in the EYFS and key stage one becoming 'a necessary evil?' (p.1). Their research, investigating grouping by ability in early years and key stage one, was commissioned by the National Education Union (NEU) in response to concerns that the introduction of the Reception Baseline Assessment would 'inevitably lead to the ability labelling of young children' (Roberts-Homes, 2017, p.2). Although research in secondary schools has consistently found that ability grouping is poor practice, leading to inequity, there is little known about the prevalence of this form of classroom organisation in the early years and key stage one, or its impact on children and teachers. Bradbury and Roberts- Holmes (2017) carried out a nationwide survey of teachers (n= 1373), focus groups and in-depth

interviews. Their research findings confirmed that grouping children by attainment was common practice in the EYFS, including in the nursery classes, and it was used mainly for the teaching of phonics and maths.

Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2017) reported that teachers felt compelled to group children by attainment despite their concerns for the negative impact they knew it could have on children's emotional wellbeing and academic achievement. In the survey it was found that, '65% of teachers agreed with the statement that 'Children are aware which group they are in'; 45% of teachers agreed with the statement 'Ability grouping damages some children's self-esteem' (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017, p. 5). The teachers cited several reasons for acting in opposition to their beliefs about the grouping of children by attainment. They reported that there was a general expectation in their schools to work in this way in the EYFS, and that they felt pressured by senior leaders to group children by attainment in order to meet pupil progress targets and prepare for national statutory assessments such as the Phonics Screening Check in year one.

The government's Department for Education responded to the findings of the study in a blog, 'Education in the Media blog', stating that:

We trust teachers and early years staff to make the best decisions for the children they work with. Our Early Years Statutory Framework sets out that teachers must make sure pupils are kept healthy and safe and recognise that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates. There is no statutory requirement within the framework that children should be grouped by ability. (DfE, 2017 para 3).

However, Bradbury's (2018) subsequent study revealed that teachers were still feeling under pressure to teach in attainment groups, due to having to prepare the children for the Phonics Screening Check in year one. The government stipulates that all schools should teach systematic, synthetic phonics and has provided a guidance document, 'Letter and Sounds' (DfE, 2007), which is structured in a sequential way covering six phases of attainment. Bradbury (2018) found that children are grouped according to their phonics knowledge and skills and taught in these groups for phonics. Some schools group children across classes and others within classes. Children who fall behind or struggle are often given an intervention to support them to keep up with their group (idib, 2018). Bradbury (2018) posits that the use of commercially produced phonics teaching schemes is increasing pressure on teachers to group children by ability for teaching phonics. She argues that this is

one of the main drivers for grouping children in the early years and found in one school that children as young as two years of age were being segregated into a group of high attainers to be taught phonics, referred to as, the 'gifted and talented' group (p. 547).

In summarising the debate on grouping by attainment, Bradbury (2018, p.545) describes the impact of organising classrooms in this way, as a form of, 'distribution', 'classification' and 'exclusion'. She argues that:

These concepts help in the interrogation of seemingly benign and common-sense classroom practices, which are, in small ways, operations of power upon human bodies and minds (Bradbury, 2018, p.545).

My rationale for examining the literature on classroom organisation was to try to understand some of the policy drivers, at national and school levels, that influence how and why teachers use carpet time in their EYFS classrooms. Carpet time may be viewed as one of the, 'benign and common-sense classroom practices' alluded to by Bradbury. However, in light of the concerns raised in the research reviewed here, carpet time needs to be interrogated further in light of contemporary policy drivers and the pressures placed on teachers. I have seen carpet time used in EYFS classrooms for daily whole class teaching of literacy and maths, and for small group teaching, usually for phonics and this is usually in attainment groups. From the literature examined in this section, it is possible to deduce that children's experiences of carpet time can impact their sense of identity in terms of academic ability and feelings of inclusion or exclusion.

In the next section I will explore the characteristics of carpet time in more detail in order to explore its features as a teaching context for young children.

2.1.4 Organisational and pedagogical characteristics of carpet time

Throughout my career in primary schools, I have observed that there are some characteristics of the organisational and pedagogical context of carpet time that are constant, regardless of the focus of the session. For example, the teacher is usually in control of the session, determining what happens and leading the session. The children are usually required to sit still on the carpet with their legs crossed. They

are expected to pay attention to the teacher and only speak when requested to do so. I have noted that children are routinely expected to put up their hands before answering a question. For children aged three to five years these expectations may be inappropriate. They may not have the social, physical or emotional skills to enable them follow to the rules, routines or practices of carpet time, but despite this, they are required to conform.

Goddard-Blythe (2017) argues that more attention ought to be given to children's neuro-physiological development, based on the scientific evidence to suggest that physical skills support future academic success and in particular, children's emotional regulation and behaviour. She highlights that for children to sit still and pay attention they need to have developed the, 'correct posture, control, balance and orientation, in addition to cortical centres implicated in the maintenance of attention' (p.4). Additionally, she points out that, 'reflexes play a crucial part in supporting and facilitating stability and flexibility in [the] postural control' (p.4), which enables children to sit still for extended periods of time. It takes approximately three and a half years for a child's reflexes to mature (Goddard-Blythe, 2017) and for many children this may take longer, meaning it is more challenging for them to sit still on the carpet and listen to their teachers. Kirby (2019) also points to the difficulties that young children may have when sitting still on the carpet for lengthy periods of time, and commented that this demands an 'extreme body discipline' (p.3) that is difficult for them to maintain.

Children who cannot control their posture and maintain a still position when sitting on the carpet may end up being frequently reminded to do so by their teachers or chastised for not conforming to the expected code of behaviour. Being frequently chastised for not conforming may have a negative impact on their self-esteem and if their behaviour becomes a problem for their teachers, it may influence the way in which they are viewed by the teacher and their peers. MacLure, Jones, Holmes and MacRae, (2012) conducted a qualitative study of children in reception classes (4-5 years) in four infant/primary schools in Greater Manchester. The study explored why some children acquire a reputation in school of being a 'problem' child. The study highlighted the difficulties that some children encountered in understanding, or being able to conform to, the cultural norms of the classroom contexts and thus gain recognition for being a 'good' pupil. A key question was,

'What makes it difficult for some children to be, and to be *recognised* as, good students?' (p.448). The authors highlighted that in the classroom context, knowing how to conform was not straightforward for children. They explained that:

Being good involved mobilising complex and subtle interpretive and interactional resources, and adjusting these continuously to changing circumstances. Children needed to be able to identify the 'category bound activities' that characterise the good student—such as 'being kind', 'being helpful', 'joining in', keeping quiet, 'being sensible', 'sitting properly', 'good listening', 'sharing' and making the teacher 'happy'—and display them through their participation in classroom interaction (MacLure et al. 2012, p.452).

They also pointed out that the children needed to be able to, 'negotiate conflicting expectations - for instance between competition and sharing; taking part and keeping quiet; self-reliance and compliance to authority' (p.453). As carpet time is the place where all of the class can see what is happening, it is even more important for young children to be recognised as being 'good' in this space, as this diminishes the chances of them gaining the reputation of being a 'problem' to their teachers. As MacLure et al. (2012) point out, 'since discipline was pre-eminently a *public* matter, enacted in plain view of the class, there were potentially significant implications for the formation of status and reputation' (p.453).

Laws and Davies' (2000) study of how children become labelled as 'behaviourally disturbed' (p.205), emphasised the influence of school culture upon children's identities and the impact of this on their sense of self and self-esteem. They argued that the school culture reinforces to pupils what they need to do in order to be characterised as a 'good' pupil, but in doing so, it also reinforces to the pupils the notion of a 'bad' pupil, one who fails to conform and who the pupils should avoid contact with or reject.

MacLure et al.'s (2012) study exemplified this when the researchers observed that teachers discouraged children from associating themselves with children who were not conforming with the expectations for behaviour:

There were occasional instances where a child was explicitly 'made an example of': [Ms M has reprimanded Daniel. He is crying.] She tells him that he can't go outside to play and that he must sit on a spot that she indicates with her finger on the floor and read a book. [He sits facing three other children] Ms M says 'don't you go talking and joining in with those children Daniel, they're being good' (MacLure et al. 2012, p.456).

Similarly, in Pichon's (2012) study of carpet time, she found that the children themselves, knew who the 'good' children were and wanted to identify as belonging to that group. This was seen in their responses to the questions, 'Where do you learn best?' and 'Where do you feel most comfortable in your classroom?' In both questions a small group of children indicated the table where the higher achieving children sat, even though they were not part of that group and therefore, did not sit at that table. When questioned about their choices, the children explained that, 'The children who sit there get the most house points,' and, 'The nice girls sit there' (p.16). Although Pichon (2012) interpreted this as an indication that, 'the children correlated comfort and quality learning with achievement and niceness,' (p.16), I think it also demonstrates the children's awareness of which children gained public recognition for their success and indicated their longing to also be recognised as 'good' or 'nice'.

Laws and Davies (2000) stress that it is vitally important for pupils to gain recognition for being a 'good' pupil as soon as possible because their research found that it can take only three months for a pupil to become labelled as 'good' or 'bad' and they will then have gained the reputation as being 'problematic' and possibly will have difficulties in being accepted and gaining status within the class. Carpet time appears to be the place where young children will be noticed as conforming to the behavioural expectations, or not, and the consequences for their self-esteem appear to be significant.

In the next section, I will consider two empirical studies of carpet time, in order to gain more insight into children's lived experiences.

2.1.5 Empirical studies of carpet time

In my review of the literature, I located only two studies about carpet time. Both of the studies have been published in the past eight years.

Pichon (2012) conducted a small scale project to investigate children's perceptions of carpet time. She interviewed 30 children in year two and year three (6 – 8 years old) and used a selection of child-friendly methods based on the Mosaic approach (Clark and Moss, 2001). Pichon (2012) conducted individual interviews with each of the children, used maps of the classroom to find out where the children felt most

comfortable, cameras for the children to take photographs of where they learn best, and made a picture of the carpet area for children to write on it how they felt about carpet time. In the class she observed, the carpet time was used mainly for whole class teaching of phonics and for the start and end of each lesson. It was not used for administrative tasks, such as registration, or, for organisational purposes, such as managing transitions within the day, but it was sometimes used for circle time discussions.

Pichon (2012) found that the vast majority of the children disliked sitting on the carpet because they found it physically uncomfortable. The children's few positive comments about carpet time focussed on it being a place for learning things, but the children were unable to offer reasons why the teacher asked them to sit there, instead of at their tables. Most suggested it was so that they could all see the whiteboard. However, Pichon points out that the teacher also used the whiteboard for teaching when they were seated at their tables. Some thought it may be to aid their concentration and others suggested it was to support the teacher to control their behaviour, for example, not fiddling with things on their tables. Pichon (2012) noted that the children liked to have their own spaces in the classroom, which corresponded with the findings from Kershner and Pointon's (2000) study. When Pichon asked the children to photograph where they were most able to learn, the majority of the class photographed their own table places. Only 6.7% said they were more comfortable sitting on the carpet, seeing it as a place where they were best able to learn. Overall, Pichon's (2012) study suggested that children are not comfortable sitting on the carpet and that they did not see it as a place for learning.

Finding that children disliked carpet time and found it physically uncomfortable, concerned Pichon (2012), as there is evidence (Fraser, 1986; Dean, 2001) which suggests that, 'children learn better in an environment that reflects both comfort and aspiration' (Pichon, 2012, p.3). In conclusion, Pichon (2012) stated her concern that:

Too often, the children are expected to sit on the carpet arbitrarily when they could have equal or greater success seated elsewhere. What, for example, is gained by sitting the children on the carpet to take a register when they all have seats?' (p.21)

Although it did not consider the teachers' perceptions, Pichon's (2012) study provides some insight into children's lived experiences of carpet time. The study highlighted children's capacity to act as expert informants to adults about the quality of their classroom learning environments and emphasised the need for more inclusion of children in decision making about their classroom environments. My study will focus on younger children, aged 3-5 years who are not yet in key stage one, but there are similarities in the methods I intend to employ.

More recently, Kirby (2019) carried out a multimodal ethnography of two classes of year one children (aged 5- 6 years), in which she explored the experiences of children, as they were required to sit on the carpet for extended periods of time, listening to their teachers. Kirby carried out her fieldwork over the course of a year in a primary school that was rated 'good' by Ofsted. This was followed up by one week in an outstanding primary school to enable her to make comparisons between the two classes and note any difference in her findings. She found that there were many similarities between the two classes, suggesting the possibility that these may be typical of other classes too, whilst also acknowledging that they may not.

In Kirby's (2019) study carpet time was used for a range of purposes, both organisational and teaching. Much time was also taken up by administrative tasks, such as registration or transitions within the day, with time wasted as, 'children had to sit waiting to be selected to line up for lunch/play/home or assigned to table activities' (Kirby, 2019, p.6). The teaching was didactic in style, focussed on the transmission of knowledge through explication and instruction and assessing knowledge through questioning and testing. Children were expected to answer questions and demonstrate their knowledge. The children in the year one classes spent lengthy periods of time on the carpet:

Children typically spent half the morning class time sitting on the floor, primarily listening to staff talk. On a day when there was an awards assembly, they could spend as much as 70% of the time sitting on the carpet, between 70 and 90 min on other days. The children could spend similar proportions of the afternoon sitting (Kirby, 2019, p.6).

Kirby (2019) focussed on two aspects of carpet time, the physical context for teaching and the sonic environment. Writing from a perspective that is strongly influenced by the critical theories of Foucault (1977) and Ranciere (1991), which

emphasise the use of surveillance and control, Kirby portrayed the physical context of carpet time as a harsh learning environment, in which children are required to sit up straight, listen, not move and pay attention. Kirby argues that carpet time is infused by a culture of compliance in which the teachers control even the children's bodies, through their expectations of stillness, quiet and attentiveness:

The physical environment is predominantly hard, angular, and hermetically sealed from the outside world: softness is marginalised, like the cuddly toy at the edge of the carpet, which children highlighted that they liked (Kirby, 2019, p.12).

Kirby also argues that the sonic environment of carpet time is equally controlling and significant in its impact on children's emotions:

There is little emphasis on children sounding: fingers are on lips, celebrations muted, and adult-made sounds jar children out of their reverie (Kirby, 2019, p.8).

Kirby describes how teachers call the children to attention with noises or chants, for example, clapping their hands, or using a whistle, a bell, a tambourine, or chanting, '5,4,3,2,1, freeze' (Kirby, 2019, p.8). She reports how the children are quick to respond, but also the effect these routines have on children's emotional experiences:

Children felt these sounds in their bodies: 'like some jelly in my tummy', making Willa 'jump', jolted out of her absorption in learning. The sonic practices that enabled staff to manage the transition from one activity to another made it difficult for children to remain on-task, their reverie in learning being disrupted, leaving them feeling 'annoyed', 'bad', 'mad', 'angry', and 'stupid' (Kirby, 2019, p.6).

However, Kirby noted that children found their own ways of signalling dissent and 'critiquing' (p.3), the classroom culture of compliance. She describes the bodily movements of one child during carpet time who attempts to answer a question, is ignored by the teacher and then slowly slides his finger up his nose, which Kirby (2019) interprets as a sign of defiance:

Next she [the teacher] asked for double one. Clark said 'Peace' holding up and waving two fingers gesturing victory. Soon after, the children were asked to calculate double nine with their talk partners, then Ms. Peach called out '5, 4, 3, 2, 1' for the children to be silent. Clark quickly placed his finger on his lips, signally compliance, but Ms. Peach chose another child. Clark remained seated bolt upright, with his finger straight but now up his nose. He kept it there for more than 10 s, then ate his bogey (Kirby, 2019, p.11).

Kirby's (2019) interpretation suggests that there is a much deeper meaning to Clark's bodily movements:

His fingered gestures were a silent 'up yours' to sitting quietly, evoking the language of peace and quiet and his momentary victory. Clark's silent but visible gestures worked within the limitations of his context, using the language and concepts that already existed. Clark's humour highlighted the absurdity of the demands on his body and the constraints on his intellect in the on-task classroom; simply identifying correct answers was not enough for him in this moment (Kirby, 2019, p.11).

Kirby (2019) expressed concerns about the impact of an, 'on-task' primary classroom culture in which teachers exercise tight control and deliver a knowledge-based curriculum through didactic methods. Her observations and interpretations of the data suggest that carpet time can support a culture of compliance and passivity, in which children are left feeling physically uncomfortable and emotionally vulnerable. Kirby's study is framed within a critical discourse, which is more radical than my auto/biographical stance and my focus upon lived experiences. However, it provides an insight into the wider social forces that can possibly determine what takes place in the context of carpet time.

These two studies have provided a helpful overview of the organisation and practices of carpet time that may influence children's experiences. In the next section, I will examine the literature on circle time, as this is one of the carpet time practices that may take place in early years classrooms.

2.1.6 Circle time

Circle time is a patented educational programme for supporting children's social and emotional development (Mosley, 2005). An integral part of circle time is the sharing of thoughts and feelings through a series of class meetings in which children and adults sit in a circle, often on the carpet and take turns to speak, signalled by the passing of an object round the circle. Children are free to participate or not, by stating they wish to 'pass' when the speaking object is given to them. The main proponent of circle time in England is the author and consultant, Jenny Mosley (1993; 1996). Other influential advocates of circle time are White (1991) and Bliss, Robinson and Maines (1995). They each promote a model of circle time with similar characteristics and processes and loosely base their aims on humanistic theories (Lang, 1998).

In the broadest sense, the aims for circle time are to promote self-awareness, self-efficacy and social and interpersonal skills. The literature on circle time is generally positive about its potential to enhance children's self-esteem and social and emotional development (Kelly, 1999; Mary, 2014; Mosely, 1996). However, circle time also has its critics. Lang (1998) suggested that there is a lack of clarity on boundaries, theory and guidelines for circle time which makes it difficult to define effective practice and develop appropriate training. Lown (2002) argued that the research evidence is based on 'assumption, anecdote and circular argument' (p.95). More recently, Leach and Lewis (2013) emphasised that there is a need for an informed debate on the purpose and impact of circle time, describing the evidence base as 'flimsy' (p.44) and unreliable.

There are relatively few studies which explore circle time from the child's perspective and those that do, raise concerns regarding children's rights to privacy, power relationships between adults and children and teachers' professional competence to respond to sensitive issues raised during circle time. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) question the value of therapeutic practices such as circle time, suggesting that they undervalue children's capabilities and ability to manage their own emotions. They point out that teachers are not professionally trained to deal with the sensitive issues that may emerge during group discussions, in which children are encouraged to disclose personal issues and explore their emotions. These concerns about circle time are also relevant to carpet time, particularly in the early years classroom, as this is the place where children and teachers interact with each other and where children may share personal issues, for example, at registration times, when telling their news, or during shared worship.

The issue of children's right to privacy is raised by Hanafin, O'Donoghue, Flynn and Shevlin (2009) in their discussions on child-centred pedagogical practices in primary education in Ireland. They argued that classroom practices, such as carpet time and circle time, when children are gathered together as a group, may impinge their rights to privacy in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). They gave four broad examples of how this may happen:

1. If circle time is used to sort out a problem that has arisen among the children.
When the class is encouraged to talk about what happened and come up with

a solution, there is the potential to erode the self-esteem and confidence of children who are exposed as perpetrators in the incident.

2. When children are encouraged to tell their 'news' to the class. This usually occurs on the carpet at the beginning of the day. The authors view this as potentially harmful to some children claiming that it, 'actively inducts children into patterns of disclosure' (Hanafin et al. p.4)
3. In the teaching of language and communication skills in Irish classrooms where the curriculum content is focussed on being able to talk about oneself. Children are asked to talk about themselves, their families, their home life, their likes and dislikes. Hanafin et al. (2009) argue that there is potential through this practice for children to be bullied for being perceived as different to the majority, or excluded from friendship groups as a consequence of what they have disclosed during group discussion time.
4. Through the content of the Irish Social, Personal, Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. This focuses on emotional literacy, hence children are encouraged to talk about their emotions and how they cope with or react to emotional experiences. Hanafin et al. (2009) suggest that this can lead to 'undesired and even unintended disclosure' (p.6).

Although the points raised here are in relation to the Irish educational context, the examples of classroom practice are akin to what takes place in English schools during carpet time and the authors warn that, 'there is potential for children's self-esteem to be damaged through feeling exposed by teacher questioning' (Hanafin et al. 2009, p.7).

Similar concerns were raised by Leach and Lewis (2013) who carried out a small-scale case study of circle time in an English primary school in which they explored the effect of adult-child power dynamics on children's experiences during circle time. They interviewed children in a year six class (aged 10-11 years) who reported feeling uncomfortable about having to talk about their feelings and emotions during circle time. Some children actively avoided being noticed or singled out by the teacher in case they were asked to contribute to the class discussion. Others discussed feeling upset when they had misbehaved and the behaviour was discussed in the circle time, or being excluded from the circle as a consequence of inappropriate behaviour and having to wait to be invited back into the circle after the

children had discussed their decision. Leach and Lewis (2013) argued that such practice can have the opposite effect to enhancing children's self-esteem and can in fact, cause them to feel bullied, excluded, isolated or threatened. It is plausible that the experiences of these children may be common to children engaged in carpet time activities.

Currently there are few studies that report on children's first-hand experiences or opinions of circle time and relatively few that consider it from the point of view of younger children in the EYFS. Collins (2013), however, examined circle time from a children's rights and empowerment perspective. She explored the potential for circle time to empower children and utilised children's voice and participation theories as the conceptual framework underpinning her study. Collins collected qualitative data from five Irish primary schools through direct observations of circle time sessions and unstructured interviews with teachers. In contrast to Leach and Lewis (2013), Collins (2013) concluded that circle time was an enjoyable experience for both children and teachers and that the teachers' aims of enhancing children's social and emotional development and creating a positive classroom climate were generally achieved. However, this study did not seek the children's perspectives on their experiences. It was the teachers who reported that their pupils enjoyed circle time and the researcher verified this perception through her direct observations. A notable finding of this study was the differences observed in the processes and rules of circle time among the different teachers who were observed and interviewed. In particular, Collins (ibid.) noted that teachers were inconsistent in implementing the 'pass' rule, which allows children to opt out of speaking during circle time. She observed one teacher exerting pressure on a child in the 6th grade (aged 11-12 years) to contribute during the circle, despite the child attempting to pass on the talking object. When interviewed, the teacher explained that she had put pressure on the child to join in because she felt the child had the ability to do so. In this instance, the child was able to insist on his right to pass and remain silent, but for younger children, this may prove to be more difficult. Due to their young age, they may feel an unconscious pressure to contribute and not have the self-confidence to be able to exercise their right to refuse.

In this example from Collins' (2013) study, it appears that the teacher's need to assess the child's language, social or emotional skills may have overridden the child's

right to non- participation. Hanafin et al. (2009) suggest that the pressure on teachers to assess children for accountability purposes is often an underlying reason why they conduct carpet time activities such as circle time. Rubenstein Reich (2007) found this to be the case in her study of circle time in a Swedish pre-school. In this study the use of the term, 'circle time' was atypical. It was more akin to carpet time since it was used to describe all of the group gathering times on the carpet, for example registration, transitions, story or class discussions. The teachers reported that they used circle time as a place to be seen actively teaching, as opposed to facilitating children's play. They viewed circle time as a ritual and a meeting, a means of marking transitions throughout the day, but also as an opportunity for them to engage in formal direct teaching activities and to be seen doing so by their colleagues and senior managers. Rubenstein Reich (2007) suggested that, when capitalising on circle time, as an opportunity for assessment purposes, the teachers may be inadvertently exerting their power over the children by putting pressure on them to contribute and by setting the agenda for the session.

2.1.7 Summary of part one

In part one of this literature review I have explored the physical and historical contexts of carpet time. I traced the origins of carpet time back to the 1970s when nursery classes became part of primary schools in open plan buildings, designed for flexibility and child-centred practices. I discussed whether the teaching practices of carpet time were compatible with young children's physical and emotional development. I found that for younger children, the expectations to sit still and listen were too difficult for some children to manage due to their early stage of neuro-physiological development. I also found that children who struggle to conform to the behavioural expectations of carpet time may acquire a reputation for being a 'problem' to their teachers and that this identification can impact negatively on their developing sense of self and status within the class. I then reviewed two empirical studies of carpet time. In Pichon's (2012) study the majority of the children disliked sitting on the carpet because they found it uncomfortable and they did not associate carpet time as a learning environment. Kirby's (2019) study portrayed carpet time as supporting a culture of compliance within the 'on-task' primary school that led to children feeling bodily controlled and emotionally vulnerable. Both studies highlighted the negative aspects of carpet time, such as, discomfort, children's lack

of autonomy and the potential of carpet time practices to diminish children's self-esteem. Finally, I reviewed the literature on circle time, which is a form of carpet time. There was some evidence to suggest that circle time, the educational programme, can have a positive impact on children's social and emotional development, but issues of adult-child power dynamics and invasion of children's rights to privacy were raised as significant concerns. These concerns were considered to be pertinent to all types of carpet time, regardless of the focus, as carpet time is a public forum and children may disclose personal information through their general interactions with the teacher.

In part two of the literature review I explore the literature on early childhood pedagogy.

2.2 Part two: Early childhood pedagogy

In this part of the literature review I explore literature on early childhood pedagogy, in order to develop a better understanding of the wider pedagogical context in which carpet time currently takes place. Much of the literature cited in this section aligns with a school readiness discourse, that this thesis aims to problematise. This will help me to consider what may be the main influences on pedagogical practices that take place during carpet time and the potential for such practices to enhance or constrain children's learning and development.

2.2.1 Pedagogical context

Murray (2018, p.5) suggests that pedagogy is a 'contested and dynamic space, defined and experienced in different ways'. She concurs with Conkbayir and Pascal (2014), that pedagogy is influenced by theory, policy and research and posits that it is interpreted through personal principles and values. Murray (2018) concludes, therefore, that it is more useful to consider 'pedagogies' than 'pedagogy' when examining pedagogical practices in ECE.

A helpful starting point to examining ECE pedagogy, for my study of carpet time, is the definition of pedagogy provided by Siraj-Blatchford, Sylva, Muttock, Gildon and Bell, (2002) in their influential review of early years pedagogy, which sought to

identify 'effective' pedagogical practices. They described pedagogy as the interaction between the teacher, the learner and the learning environment and identified three broad pedagogical approaches that typify early years practice; teacher-directed, teacher-guided and child-initiated.

In nursery and reception classes, where I have taught or observed, the pedagogical approach used for carpet time is generally teacher-directed and teacher-guided. The teacher leads, directs or guides the session and the children are expected to listen and respond, but only when invited or directed to do so. I have found that opportunities for child-initiated learning are typically facilitated through the provision of stimulating resources set out in distinctive areas around the classroom (for example, role play area, construction area), for children to access independently or with adult support. These classroom resources are often referred to as, *areas of continuous provision*, because they are intended to continue and/or enhance the learning that has taken place as a whole group on the carpet (Bryce-Clegg, 2013). All three of the pedagogical approaches can be facilitated through continuous provision, as the teacher may direct or guide a child's learning in continuous provision, or a child may initiate his/her own learning. During carpet times, however, I have found that the teacher initiates and directs learning through gathering the children altogether for specific purposes and it is unlikely that child-initiated learning will take place.

2.2.2 Tensions

A body of international research has reported on the pedagogical tensions that are experienced by early years teachers who are trying to reconcile child-initiated, play-based pedagogies and teacher-directed, academically oriented pedagogies (Barblett, Knaus, & Barratt-Pugh, 2016; Gibbons, 2013; Gunnarsdottir, 2014; Neaum, 2016; Nitecki and Wasmuth, 2017).

These pedagogical tensions are reported to be attributed to educational policies which emphasise the achievement of academic outcomes as a prerequisite for school readiness (Ang, 2014; Kay, 2018; Roberts-Holmes, 2019; Wood, 2019). Wood (2014) carried out a small scale qualitative study in a primary school in northern England. She used interpretative methods including naturalistic observations of ten children in a nursery class (3-4 year olds) and discussions with

their teachers and teaching assistants. Her findings suggested that although teachers adopted play-based pedagogies to facilitate child-initiated learning, there was pressure placed upon them to plan for specific learning outcomes intended to support academic goals. Wood (2014) argued that the design of curricular frameworks, influenced by government policies for early childhood education, were resulting in teachers exercising more control over children's play, in their attempts to support academic outcomes. She surmised that, despite teachers providing time and resources for children to engage in play, there were underlying struggles and negotiations for control between the adults and the children during free play sessions. Wood (2014) raised concerns that the power struggles experienced between children and adults could be limiting children's potential to gain the full benefits of play-based pedagogies, through which,

Children should be relatively free from adult intrusion and direction, enabling them to exercise agency, self-regulation, ownership, and control, and to direct their own learning (Wood, 2014, p.4).

She argued for an integrated approach to pedagogy in which teachers tailor their pedagogical choices to match both the context and the intention of the learning.

Wall, Litjens and Taguma (2015) identified similar pedagogical tensions in the English EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017). They suggested that the themes and principles underpinning the EYFS, (unique child, positive relationships, enabling environments and learning and development) (DfE, 2017, p.6), promote personalised pedagogical approaches, which are designed to support children to develop positive dispositions to learning. Yet, the EYFS contains a narrow set of academic goals for all children to achieve, regardless of their different starting points. Chesworth (2019) posited that the pursuit of prescribed outcomes, promoted through the EYFS framework, can lead to the teaching of standardised forms of knowledge, which are assumed to be of relevance to all children. She argued that this may pull against the EYFS principle of the 'unique child' (DfE, 2017, p.6) which promotes a personalised curriculum, based on individual children's interests and diverse funds of knowledge.

An important aspect of the EYFS framework that further adds to these pedagogical tensions, is the pressure for children to be made ready for more formal learning in school. The EYFS statutory guidance is intended to promote:

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, 2017, p.5).

However, Clark (2016) challenges the notion of 'school readiness,' suggesting it is an ambiguous term which is open to multiple interpretations (p.5). She raises concern that school readiness appears to be interpreted by policy makers as requiring a shift in pedagogy from child-centred practices which focus on supporting dispositions to learning, to teacher-directed, didactic methods of instruction which focus on academic outcomes. This is despite findings from a number of studies which suggest that there is no long-term gain to be had from an earlier focus on formal teaching of academic skills and knowledge (Hofkins and Northen, 2009; Kavkler, Tancig, Magajna and Aubrey, 2000; Sharp, 2002; Suggate, 2007; Walsh, Sproule, McGuinness and Trew, 2011).

The EYFS framework (DfE, 2017) appears to create pedagogical challenges and tensions for teachers. Tensions between child-initiated, play-based learning and more formal instructional pedagogies may influence the perceptions of early years teachers about the purpose and value of carpet time for their children.

2.2.3 Pedagogical dilemmas for teachers

It is evident from research that teachers are encountering pedagogical dilemmas in their planning and interactions with children, and find it difficult to achieve a balance or integration between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The review of Early Childhood Education and Care from 2004-2015 (BERA and TACTYC, 2017), highlighted a concern that, 'practitioners are being pulled in different directions as they navigate policy, practice, and their own beliefs and aspirations,' (Wood and Chesworth, 2018, p.28). Play based pedagogies were found to be particularly problematic and challenging. Although children's spontaneous play was valued for its role in supporting children's development and learning, it was found to be problematic when trying to plan for prescribed curricular outcomes. Wood and Chesworth (2017, p. 50) reported that,

Children's spontaneous play activities are promoted alongside adult-structured play as the foundations for the forms of knowledge that are valued in the

curriculum and in society. However, this assumed progression does not consistently occur in the linear steps described in ECE curriculum frameworks.

They deduced that play-based pedagogies may be at risk of becoming compromised by the impact of the school readiness discourse which promotes formal pedagogical approaches in the reception year and proposed that,

The apparent certainties of adult-led activities may be favoured over the uncertainties and complexities of where play leads children. In terms of learning and development, play may not readily produce the outcomes that are identified in policy frameworks, within the timeframes that delineate children's access to and opportunities for freely chosen play (Wood and Chesworth, 2018, p.29)

Roberts-Holmes (2014), and Wood (2014), both posited that the performativity culture in education (Ball, 2003) is influencing early years teachers' pedagogical choices, placing pressure on them to meet short term academic targets. This is concerning because:

Current research into early emotional and cognitive development suggests that long-term well-being and success at school are most powerfully supported, not by early introduction of academic content, but by children's developing executive functioning and self-regulation abilities, and by the satisfaction of their needs for feelings of autonomy, competence and 'relatedness' (Whitebread and Bingham, 2011, p.5).

In his subsequent study of early years teachers' use of data and its influence on their choice of pedagogy, Roberts-Holmes (2015) reported that teachers are increasingly using didactic methods of teaching, which usually take place through carpet time, due to the pressures of outcomes, accountability measures and performance management targets. This is despite their belief in the long-term benefits of adopting a more child-centred, play-based approach to learning and teaching.

It is known that the public nature of school inspections can also influence how schools work (Perryman, J., Maguire, M., Braun, A. and Ball, S., 2018). The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), was set up through the Education Act in 1992, and given responsibility for the implementation of the school inspection system. Perryman et al. (2018) argue that the pressure placed on schools by Ofsted, to be able to demonstrate attainment and progress, may impact the decisions that school leaders make about curriculum and pedagogy.

For example, a recent publication by Ofsted, 'Bold Beginnings' (2017) reported on the effectiveness of teaching in the reception year and recommended more emphasis should be placed on the teaching of academic skills such as phonics and mathematics, which are both predominantly taught through whole class lessons on the carpet. Ofsted inspectors visited 41 EYFS reception classes in England, in schools that were judged to be good or outstanding. The inspectors examined the pedagogical strategies used by teachers, since these schools had positive outcomes at the end of the EYFS and year one, as judged by the statutory EYFS profile assessment (DfE, 2017) and the phonics screening check (DfE, 2019). From their observations and discussions with reception class teachers and headteachers, Ofsted recommended that a stronger emphasis should be placed on direct teacher-instruction, aimed at improving academic outcomes in reception classes, especially in reading and mathematics (Ofsted, 2017, p.7). The report also stated that all schools should, 'make sure that the teaching of reading, including systematic synthetic phonics, is the core purpose of the Reception Year' (Ofsted, 2017, p.7).

This report became a highly emotive topic of debate among leading academics and early years professionals, (Bates, 2018; Jarvis and Whitebread, 2018; Richards, 2018; TACTYC, 2017). Jarvis and Whitebread (2018) criticised the report's lack of reference to the abundance of research evidence that supports play-based pedagogy and the promotion of positive dispositions to learning as important influencers of future social, emotional and cognitive development.

In TACTYC's (2017) (the Association for Professional Development in Early Years) response to the report, the authors cautioned that:

Adherence to the report's recommendations will cause long-term, detrimental effects on young children's confidence, motivation and disposition to learn, as well as on their parents' attitudes and early years teachers' professional integrity' (TACTYC, 2017, p.1).

Jarvis and Whitebread (2018) presented psycho-biological research that explains the development of children's neural pathways and argued that:

The incomplete nature of neural connections ... makes it difficult for children under seven to deal with information that cannot be processed through existing concepts within memory (Jarvis and Whitebread, 2018, p.14).

They challenged Ofsted's (2017, p.7) emphasis on formal instruction for the teaching of mathematics and reading, which typically takes place through carpet times, and advocated building on children's prior knowledge and interests, through child-initiated and teacher-guided methods in a play-based learning environment. In addition, the authors argued that Ofsted's 'Bold Beginnings' (2017) report ignored:

Established evidence on the role of self-regulation and executive function in forming strong dispositions for later learning and successful lives. (Whitebread and Bingham, 2014; Diamond, Thomas and Munro 2007; Diamond, 2013) (TACTYC, 2017, p.4).

Another key criticism of Bold Beginnings was that its methodology lacked rigour and its findings were representative of the government's rhetoric of school readiness (Kay, 2018). Bates (2018, p.279) contested that within the methodology there was an absence of, 'explicit ethical reflection' and that the report lacked, 'moral responsibility'. He argued that the report ignored much of the research on early education that supported the principles of the EYFS, a child-centred pedagogy, and focussed instead, on research studies that strongly promote the formal teaching of literacy and mathematics. Kay (2018) argued that the report positioned the reception year as the place for preparing children for the expectations of formal teaching and learning in year one, with a narrow focus on literacy and mathematics outcomes.

In defence of the 'Bold Beginnings' report, its author, Daniel Muijs, the newly appointed professor of research for Ofsted, published a response to its critics (Muijs, 2018). Muijs presented some of the research evidence that supported the recommendations outlined in the report. He cited literature that presented the case for explicit teaching of synthetic phonics (Lyon, 1999; Moats, 1996; NICHD, 2000), as the most successful indicator of later achievement in reading. He argued that the report did not refute the research findings about the benefits of a play-based pedagogy for enhancing children's dispositions to learning and cited research that demonstrated how play can support both dispositions to learning and academic outcomes (Whitebread and Bingham, 2014). He defended his claim that there was a place for direct teacher instruction in the early years and backed this up with reference to research that found a correlation between

teacher-led instruction and children's cognitive outcomes (Camilli, Vargas, Ryan and Barnett, 2010). However, the main argument he presented in his defence of Bold Beginnings, was that there was substantial evidence to support the impact of early years education on longer term outcomes for children and that this phase of education needed improving:

Programmes aimed at improving early years education can have long-standing effects, not just on educational attainment but on a range of societally desirable outcomes, such as reduced delinquency and higher graduation rates (Barnett, 2011; Kagan and Hallmark, 2001; Stipek and Ogana, 2000) (Muijs, 2018, p.38)

Muijs' (2018) defence of 'Bold Beginnings' (2018) appears to substantiate Bates' (2018) and Kay's (2018) arguments regarding the current policy trajectory for early years education. Throughout his paper, Muijs' (2018) narrative validates current early childhood policy which, 'positions children as objects of national investment' (Clark, 2016, p.9). The policy discourse prioritises children's early education as a source of future economic and societal gain, with less attention to wellbeing, fulfilment and empowerment of the children themselves.

Another indicator of the policy trajectory for early education in England is the current review of the statutory EYFS framework (DfE, 2017). Following a period of consultation, a revised EYFS statutory framework has been published and is due to be implemented in September 2021. This new version of the EYFS has been criticised by a range of stakeholders who argue that it appears to further dilute the commitment to play-based pedagogies and supports the further narrowing of focus upon academic outcomes, with reduced emphasis on supporting children's dispositions to learning (Cowley, 2019; Moylett, 2019; Pascal and Bertram, 2019). One of the policy levers for improving standards of attainment at the end of the EYFS, in preparation for the start of the National Primary curriculum, is Ofsted's most recent inspection framework for Early Years (2019). This new inspection framework focuses on the effectiveness of the curriculum. Ofsted defines the term 'curriculum' as, 'the framework for setting out the aims of the programme of education including the knowledge and skills to be gained at each stage' (Ofsted, 2019, p.4). The teaching of knowledge and skills is intended to prepare children for the knowledge-rich National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) that children will encounter in the primary school, but the pressure placed upon early years teachers to prepare

children to be 'ready' for school can lead to 'inappropriate formal teaching methods' (Clark, 2017, p. 89) being used in the reception class.

These tensions surrounding pedagogy and curriculum were reported by Wood and Chesworth (2018) as a topic of concern across all five themes of the Early Childhood research review (BERA/TACTYC, 2017). The challenges have been present throughout the last decade and, from the literature reviewed in this section, there is evidence to suggest that practitioners are still struggling to reconcile their pedagogical beliefs and curriculum choices with the policy discourse of school readiness. Fisher (2011, 2015) advocated for a flexible approach to pedagogy with more attention given to teacher-child interactions. She carried out a small-scale action research project investigating the pedagogical tensions associated with the transition from reception to Year one. Fisher concluded that teachers needed support and encouragement to adopt flexible approaches to pedagogy which focused on responding to children's needs and interests. This is consistent with Chesworth's (2019) argument for teachers to take account of children's existing funds of knowledge and Wood's (2014) intention to 'trouble the discourse' of play-based pedagogies and promote integrated approaches to pedagogical practices.

Carpet time is an under researched area of practice in which pedagogy and curriculum are both enacted. This section has highlighted integrated pedagogies within a curriculum that builds on children's existing funds of knowledge, to be a desirable approach. Fisher (2015) advocated for more attention to be placed on the interactions that take place between children and teachers, Therefore, the next section will examine literature on the impact of teacher-child interactions on children's dispositions to learning. This will help to ascertain the potential for carpet time to support children's dispositions to learning, in addition to their academic outcomes.

2.2.4 Teacher-child interactions and children's dispositions to learning

Teacher-child interactions are defined as, 'the daily back-and-forth exchanges that teachers and children have with one another throughout each day, including those that are social and instructional in nature' (Hamre, Pianta, Burchinal, Field, LoCasale-Crouch, Downer, and Scott-Little, 2012, p.89). Carpet time is a place

where teacher-child interactions can frequently take place because the teacher has the whole class together. There is strong evidence to suggest that the quality of teacher-child interactions is more influential than any other aspect of classroom quality in enhancing children's early academic achievement and their social and emotional development (Early, Maxwell, Ponder and Pan, 2017). For example, a study conducted by Ponitz, Rimm-Kaufman, Grimm and Curby (2009) investigated the links between classroom quality, children's behavioural engagement and reading achievement. The study involved 171 kindergarten children (aged 4-6 years) from primarily poor and working-class families and their 36 teachers across seven rural primary schools in the south east districts of the United States. The findings showed an indirect link between teacher-child interactions and predicted literacy outcomes. This was evident in classrooms which provided, 'rich, positive interactions' (Pontiz et al. 2009, p.102), because children were more engaged in learning activities and motivated to succeed. Equally, there are positive findings relating to the influence of teacher-child interactions on children's social and emotional development (Garbacz, Zychinski, Feuer, Carter and Budd, 2014). In particular, where teachers have been trained to interact with children in an emotionally close and responsive way, showing sensitivity to their needs, the impact has been significant. Carpet time provides many opportunities for the teacher to interact with the children in an emotionally responsive way, as they are seated in close proximity to each other and the teacher is able to observe each child individually.

Furthermore, a recent European review of the impact of early childhood education and care (ECEC) on children's learning and development, Melhuish, Ereky-Stevens, Petrogiannis, Ariescu, Penderi, Rentzou, ... and Leseman, (2015) highlighted the importance of teacher-child interactions for enhancing children's holistic development. Specifically, 'adult-child interaction that is responsive, affectionate and readily available' (Melhuish et al. 2015, p.5) is cited as one of the key characteristics of ECEC that impacts positively on children's development. The authors presented a consensus of evidence to support the impact of responsive teaching that attends to children's emotional and relational needs, but they also highlighted the importance of teacher-directed instructional support which was found to enhance children's cognitive outcomes (Melhuish et al. 2015, p.56). Keys,

Farkas, Burchinal, Duncan, Vandell, Li, ... and Howes, (2013) found that a combination of emotional and instructional teacher interaction with children is influential in preparing children for the start of formal teaching in school and Melhuish et al. (2015) cited a number of studies which suggested that:

Both the warm and responsive interaction style and learning-focused interactions predict the persistence of developmental gains into preschool years (Burchinal et al., 2008; Dickinson & Porche, 2011; Vandell et al., 2010) (Melhuish et al. 2015, p. 56).

A series of influential quantitative studies in the United States of America also highlighted that teacher-child interactions can have a positive impact on children's social and academic outcomes and help to diminish the difference between the achievement of children from disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged backgrounds (Burchinal, Kainz and Cay, 2011; Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, Early, Clifford and Barbarin, 2008; Keys et al. 2013; Mashburn, Pianta, Hamre, Downer, Barbarin, Bryant, ... and Howes, 2008). This was particularly evident in the areas of communication, language and cognitive development, but also, in relation to supporting children to develop strong dispositions to learning. The types of social skills referred to in these studies are consistent with the attributes associated with positive dispositions to learning, including the ability to self-regulate, make choices, become autonomous and form relationships with others (Whitebread and Bingham, 2011).

Mashburn, Pianta, Hamre, Downer, Barbarin, Bryant, ... and Howes, (2008) investigated how the quality of different aspects of ECEC impacted on children's academic, language and social skills. Their large scale, inter-state study in America, involving 80% of four year olds in pre-kindergarten settings, considered three aspects of quality; the quality of the learning environment, the quality of the programme structure and the quality of the teacher-child interactions. Of the three aspects of quality measured, the most significant impact on children's learning and development was found to be the teacher-child interactions. The authors used a quantitative assessment tool, known as the Teaching Through Interactions (TTI) framework (Hamre, 2014), which was developed as part of a wider framework, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), used to evaluate the classroom environment (Hamre and Pianta, 2007). The TTI framework was designed

specifically for evaluating the quality and impact of teacher-child interactions and consisted of three domains of teacher-child interactions; the emotional domain, the instructional domain and the domain of classroom organisation. The emotional domain considers the extent to which there is a positive climate for learning, based on the observed relationships between the children and the teacher, the sensitivity of the teacher towards the children's needs and the extent to which the teacher is responsive to the children's interests and ideas. The instructional domain evaluates the extent to which the teacher's interactions with children promote high order thinking skills through the quality of their feedback and their use of language through conversations and modelling. The domain of classroom organisation is concerned with issues of behaviour management and the influence of classroom routines on productivity and the extent to which teachers' instructional learning formats actively support children's engagement. The findings of the study concluded that the instructional domain and the emotional domain were the most significant in supporting children's learning and development, impacting positively on both academic outcomes and dispositions to learning:

Higher quality instructional interactions were positively associated with all five measures of academic or language skills, and higher quality emotional interactions were associated with teachers' ratings of higher social competence and lower problem behaviours (Mashburn et al. 2008, p.743).

Each of the three domains of teacher-child interaction; the instructional, the emotional and classroom organisation, are likely to take place in the context of carpet time and there is research to suggest each domain has potential to support children's developmental outcomes in different ways. For example, Siekkinen et al. (2013) reported that higher levels of instructional support resulted in children showing more empathy and displaying less disruptive behaviour. Pakarinen et al. (2011) evaluated teacher-child interactions in 49 Finnish classrooms and found that the domain of classroom organisation impacted positively on children's dispositions to learning. Children demonstrated higher levels of motivation and engagement, with fewer incidents of task avoidant behaviour leading to better outcomes in mathematics and predicted achievement in phonological awareness. The findings from a Portuguese study conducted by Cadima, Leal and Burchinal (2010) were consistent with those of Mashburn et al. (2008), reporting that the emotional and

instructional domains of interaction were the most prominent and supported children's communication and language development in particular.

A longitudinal study by Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, Early, Clifford and Barbarin, (2008) also found that the quality of the teacher-child interactions was a significant factor in promoting positive outcomes for children, both academically and socially. This study tracked the development of 3000 pre-kindergarten children across eleven of the United States of America, in order to establish the impact of ECEC on children's social and academic achievement. One of the evaluation tools used in this study was the Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) devised by Pianta (2001). This scale measured the teachers' perceptions of their relationships with the children in terms of closeness and conflict. A significant finding of this study was the extent to which a positive relationship with the teacher contributed to the children's development of strong dispositions to learning. A crucial factor was the teacher's ability to respond sensitively to the children's signals for interaction. The study concluded that the quality of the teacher-child relationship was a key factor in supporting children to develop executive thinking skills and self-regulation in readiness for starting school. Carpet time is a place where teachers and children frequently interact with each other and develop their teacher-child relationships. Therefore, it is worth exploring what quality interactions really look like in practice and the potential for carpet time to support such interactions.

2.2.5 The quality of teacher- child interactions

The three interaction domains discussed in the previous section, the instructional domain, the emotional domain and classroom organisation, provide a measure of particular types of interactions that take place in early years classrooms. However, Hamre (2014) points out that there are several key descriptors of quality that cut across all three interaction domains and collectively these are described as, 'responsive teaching':

Responsive teachers are highly engaged with children, attuned to their cues and needs, and able to respond in individualized ways that foster social, behavioural, and academic development (Hamre, 2014, p. 224).

Paying close attention to responsive teaching during carpet time may be particularly helpful in supporting children to achieve both academic outcomes and positive dispositions to learning, since responsive teaching aims to support children's

cognitive, communication and socio-emotional development (Herman, 2006). However, the teacher's ability to respond individually to children on the carpet may be challenging in a nursery or reception class when there are up to thirty children to one teacher and time on the carpet is limited. There is research to suggest that the size of the class does influence the quality of the teacher-child interactions (Blatchford, 2003). Blatchford (2003) found that in smaller classes the interactions between children and teachers were longer and more in-depth, providing children with more emotional support, resulting in children being more engaged in academic activities and more able to interact positively with their peers. Conversely, in larger classes there was less time available for each child to interact with the teacher and therefore, the children interacted more with each other and only experienced short, infrequent interactions with their teacher. This would suggest that, in smaller classes, carpet time has more potential to facilitate responsive teaching, than in larger classes.

From the literature I reviewed, there was evidence of the impact of teacher-child interactions on children's dispositions to learning, but some evidence to suggest that the quality of the interactions is often mediocre (Dickinson and Brady, 2006; Mashburn et al. 2008). These studies found that teachers mainly used didactic approaches during carpet times, often asking closed questions that required a right or wrong answer and frequently correcting children when they did not answer correctly. Low level interactions, such as these, were reported to have a negative impact on children's communication, language and literacy outcomes, particularly for children from disadvantaged areas (ibid).

These findings were consistent with the research carried out by Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2010) who sought to investigate how adults used questioning with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The purpose of their study was to continue an analysis of adult questioning that had taken place in 2000-2001, as part of the Researching Effective Pedagogy in the Early Years (REPEY) study (Siraj-Blatchford et al.), in which only a small proportion of the data had been analysed. The data had been collected from 12 pre-school settings who had been identified in the EPPE research as being 'effective'. Siraj-Blatchford and Manni (2010) completed a full analysis of the data with the intention of exploring the potential for open questions

to positively impact early childhood development. However, their findings showed that,

94.5% of all the questions asked by the early childhood staff were closed questions that required a recall of fact, experience or expected behaviour, decision between a limited selection of choices or no response at all. Only 5.5% were open-ended questions, which provided for increased encouragement (to speculate and trial and error) and/or potential for sustained, shared thinking/talking (p.5)

Sustained shared thinking (SST) was a pedagogic strategy that had also been identified through the REPEY project and was reported to be significant in supporting children's learning and development. The definition assigned to SST was:

An episode in which two or more individuals 'work together' in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, extend a narrative etc. Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend the understanding. (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002, p.8)

Although SST was highlighted as a characteristic of high-quality pre-school settings, it was found to be confusing for practitioners to understand and practise, due to its definition encompassing several themes and conditions (Allen and Whalley, 2010). However, Carr (2011) identified that simple dialogical approaches to teacher-child interactions were found to have a positive impact on children's communication and language development and also supported their engagement and critical thinking skills.

Carr (2011) conducted an action research project with a group of early years teachers in nine early years centres in New Zealand. The focus of the research was to examine the conversational techniques employed by teachers in helping children to reflect upon their learning. The findings indicated that when teachers used a conversational approach to interacting with children, following the children's leads and interests, it supported their self-confidence, promoting positive dispositions to learning. This pedagogical style helped children to develop self-efficacy as they began to see themselves as competent learners and also reinforced the concepts and knowledge that they had gained because of the reflections they were engaging in. Teachers who are leading carpet time sessions are in a good position to emulate these strategies with children as they frequently use carpet time to conduct mini plenaries in which they review the learning and activities that children have engaged in that day.

The importance of teacher-child interactions for supporting children's dispositions to learning was also highlighted in Blair and Raver's (2015) review of literature that investigated the links between self-regulation and school readiness. The literature provided strong evidence to suggest that teacher-child interactions that were based on positive relationships between children and their teachers were highly influential in promoting academic outcomes and strong dispositions to learning (Blair and Raver, 2015), both of which, are necessary attributes for school readiness.

However, Daniels (2013) warned that the tension between the pursuit of academic outcomes and development of strong dispositions to learning should not be viewed as two extreme ends of the spectrum. Both are important for children in terms of developing the skills, knowledge and attributes needed for starting school. Blair and Raver (2015) point out that, taking an interest in promoting positive dispositions to learning, 'does not supplant interest in the development of acquired ability, such as early knowledge of letters and numbers; it sets the stage for it' (p.711).

2.2.6 Teacher-child relationships.

A key finding from the influential research project on effective pedagogy in the early years (REPEY) (Siraj-Blatchford et. al. 2002) was the importance of adult-child relationships as an indicator of quality in early years settings. Subsequent studies (Evangelou, Sylva and Kyriacou, 2009), have indicated that there is a link between secure attachments in the early years and future achievement of positive socio-emotional outcomes or learning dispositions such as self-regulation, resilience and emotional competence.

Having the ability to be able to cope with and regulate emotions is significant for children in developing pro-social behaviours in the pre-school years (Blair and Raver, 2015). This is because children who can regulate their emotions in response to others are more likely to form peer relationships leading to feelings of self-worth and belonging. Denham, Blair, DeMulder, Levitas, Sawyer, Auerbach-Major and Queenan, (2003; 2012) carried out empirical studies of three and four year olds' development and understanding of emotions. They concluded that explicitly teaching children about their emotions may be supportive for children under the age of four and emphasized the need for caregivers outside of the family community to be proactive in helping children to become aware of their emotions in relation to

themselves and others. The context of carpet time is useful for this purpose in early years settings and is usually the main reason for conducting Circle Time (Mossley,1993). However, for children to develop an understanding of their emotions and self-regulation they need also to be resilient (Davies, De Schauwer, Claes, De Munck, Van De Putte and Verstichele, 2013), since emotions are fragile and subject to change in different circumstances.

David, Gooch, Powell and Abbott (2003) argue that relationships are crucial for supporting resilience. In their literature review of the Birth to Three Matters framework (2003), the authors proposed that a nurturing relationship with at least one consistent adult was key to enabling children to overcome challenging life situations and cope with adversity. This concept of the consistent adult attending to the child's care in the absence of the parent has subsequently been implemented as a statutory requirement in the EYFS (DfE, 2017) and is referred to as the 'key person' (pp. 21,22).

2.2.7 Summary of part two: Early childhood pedagogy

In part two of the literature review I have described the historical context from which current early childhood pedagogy has evolved. The literature indicates a range of demands and expectations for how teachers use carpet time, from social/emotional/relational purposes to achieving the learning goals in the EYFS. I have discussed pedagogical tensions that are apparent in the current EYFS statutory framework (DfE, 2017) and argued that the tensions are a result of educational policies which place pressure on early years teachers to meet academic goals at the end of the EYFS. I discussed Ofsted's (2017) Bold Beginnings report and the impact of its recommendations for more formal approaches to teaching in the reception year. I outlined the pedagogical dilemmas experienced by teachers as a result of pressures to ensure children meet the early learning goals in the EYFS. I presented compelling evidence from the literature that the most influential characteristic of ECEC on children's dispositions to learning, is the quality of the teacher-child interactions. I therefore, explored what quality interactions look like in practice and identified from the literature that responsive and sensitive interactions and a close relationship with the teacher were crucial to children's holistic

development. I explored how the literature examined in this section may support my understanding of pedagogy in relation to carpet time and deduced that the context of carpet time has potential to support both academic outcomes and dispositions to learning. However, the teacher's ability to develop a close relationship with each child and his/her skills in employing responsive teaching strategies appear to be of paramount importance.

In the final part of this literature review I will examine the notion of children's voices in research, in order to support me to reflect on how I may seek to involve the children as active participants and expert informants in my study of carpet time.

2.3 Part Three: Children's rights and children's voices

2.3.1 Rationale for including children's voices

Internationally and in the United Kingdom there is a strong consensus of opinion to support participatory research that privileges the voices of children, (Clark, 2005; Curtin, 2001; Dockett and Perry, 2003; Dupre, Bertram and Pascal, 2001; Forde, Horgan, Martin and Parkes, 2018; Peters and Kelly, 2011; Te One, 2007; Venninen, Leinonen, Lipponen and Ojala, 2014). Those who promote participatory research with children present compelling arguments for attempting to represent children's voices (Bitou and Waller, 2017; Fine and Sandstrom, 1988; Harcourt and Einarsdottir, 2011; Murray, 2019; Pascal and Bertram, 2009). They maintain that children are confident and capable thinkers who hold a wealth of unique knowledge and insight into aspects of their lives (Clark and Moss, 2001, p.6), and that supporting children's participation in research empowers them in the longer term for active citizenship (Pascal and Bertram, 2009). More importantly, they remind us that being listened to and consulted about matters which affect their lives are a fundamental right of every child (Murray, 2019). Following the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989), in which children were given the right to be consulted on matters which affect them (Article 12), a different understanding of childhood began to develop. Childhood was no longer viewed as a preparation for adulthood, in which children were in the state of *becoming* adults, but as a phase of life in its own right, in which

children were in the state of *being* (Qvortrup,1994). Children were viewed to be capable and competent in expressing their views and opinions and as such, were able to take on the role of social actors, influencing the decisions that concerned their lives (Christensen and James, 2008; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; Mayall, 2002).

The underlying philosophy for seeking children's opinions was based on new understandings of children's capabilities (Canella, 1997). This was partly due to a rejection of psychology's developmental model of childhood (Dalli and Stephenson, 2010), and partly due to advances in neuroscientific knowledge of child development (Gardner, 1983; Gopnik, 1996; Shonkoff, Duncan, Fisher, Magnuson and Raver, 2011; Singer, 2002). There was a new understanding that young children are, 'sophisticated thinkers and communicators and that the inclusion of children's views are pivotal if we are to understand their life worlds' (Harcourt and Einarsdottir, 2011, p.2).

For Pascal and Bertram, (2009) the notion of empowerment was at the heart of their rationale for including children as participants in research:

We operate through an ethos of empowerment of all participants, and aim for participatory research practice which has at its heart an active involvement in promoting the rights of children as citizens with voice and power (Pascal and Bertram, 2009, p.249).

Much of Pascal and Bertram's research sits within the paradigm of participatory research with children and has focused on representing the voices of children who might otherwise have been silenced. For example, the 'Children Crossing Borders' project (Bertram and Pascal, 2007), explored the experiences of immigrant children and their families as they began their pre-school experiences in England. The aim of the project was to support children, their families and the pre-school practitioners to 'co-construct' meaning (Langstead, 1994) and develop understanding of the children's experiences, so that ECEC settings could be better informed of the needs and interests of children from immigrant families and therefore, more able to support them. However, the authors were also mindful of Woodhead's (1999) alternative paradigm that highlighted the plurality of childhood and acknowledged that early education and social policy are influenced by socio-cultural factors. The authors echoed Maybin and Woodhead's (2003) warning to avoid an uncritical

understanding of participation, in which assumptions may be made about universally accepted westernised approaches to socio-cultural issues. For example, in the case of their 'Children Crossing Borders' project, although all of the children were immigrants experiencing a new culture for first time in their pre-schools, there would be differences in their cultural background and values. The expectations for how children should interact with adults and express their opinions would be influenced by their cultural background and their parents' values. Bertram and Pascal (2007) cautioned that sensitivity is required when trying to represent children's voices and especially so, in contexts where there are different values about childhood and how to raise and care for children.

Murray (2019) proposed that listening to children's voices is essential for optimising learning opportunities in their early education settings. She advised that listening to children gives early years practitioners insight into the children's interests and concerns, so that they can tailor teaching and learning opportunities to meet their particular needs. Not only does this affirm children's sense of belonging (because they feel they are important enough to be listened to in the group), but, Murray (2019) argued, it also supports their feelings of well-being and identity, leading to enhanced mental health in the long term:

If children experience provision that is attuned to their interests and needs, they are more likely to find it has meaning for them. As a sense of meaning is a key aspect of subjective well-being (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2018, 10), it may be argued that children's well-being can be enhanced when their own views are taken into account to inform their educational provision (Murray, 2019, p.1).

Conversely, if children are not listened to it conveys a strong message to them that their views are insignificant and not valued. This is likely to be interpreted by children to mean that *they* are not valued, and so, 'we incubate within each child the expectation of self as an insignificant component of an homogeneous mass, and that groupthink must be followed' (Murray, 2019, p.2). Equally concerning, is Murray's (2019, p.2) warning that:

Disregard for children's voices diminishes their experiences of autonomy and self-regulation which in turn reduces their motivation to learn (Murray and Cousens, 2019).

Both Murray's (2019) and Pascal and Bertram's (2009) rationale for representing children's voices are consistent with Hargreaves' (2017) research about children's classroom experiences. Hargreaves (2017, p.4) highlighted the importance to children themselves, of being consulted and listened to, but also found that children do not often experience having their views taken seriously by adults. Therefore, they may be wary of opening up to researchers who enter their social spaces. Her account of Riham, a ten year old Egyptian pupil, is a heartfelt call to researchers to respect children's voices and attempt to represent them:

I am very hopeful that someone will read this and know what I need and the way I want to learn. I hope you do not throw my (response) paper away and say it's children's talk. Please take what I say seriously as I am hoping that education will improve. This is the first time that someone has listened to what I would like to say. (Riham) (Hargreaves, Mahgoub, and Elhawary, 2016, p.7).

By the start of the new millennium there was agreement between many researchers that children were experts in their own lives (Langstead, 1994). Recognition was given to their potential to inform our understanding of their lived cultural experiences and thus, contribute to the wider social practices of their communities and beyond (Hart, Newman and Ackermann, 2004). The challenge for many researchers was learning to listen to young children, so that they could *listen to learn* (Jalango, 2008). In their attempts to elicit children's voices, they began to use, 'creative research methods that suit young children's competence, knowledge, interest and context' (Schiller and Einarsdottir, 2009, p.2).

2.3.2 Participatory methods for researching with young children

Through their influential study, 'Listening to Young Children, the Mosaic approach', Clark and Moss (2001) introduced a creative approach to researching with young children. The Mosaic approach involved using a combination of several child-friendly methods to try to gain an insight into children's perceptions and opinions. Based on the premise that children communicate in many different ways (Edwards, Gandini, and Forman, 1998), the authors sought to provide multiple means through which young children could express their opinions. For example, they asked children to conduct guided tours of their setting and gave them cameras to photograph what interested them and engaged in book-making and map-making.

Similarly, Docket and Perry (2003) used drawings and written narratives as a medium for children to express their experiences of starting school and of what schools were like. These revealed that children all experienced schools in different ways and their pictures provided many different representations of their schools. Hargreaves (2017) investigated children's experiences of classrooms and reported on four of her own studies in which she used creative, child-friendly methods for exploring children's perceptions. These included the use of drawing exercises, sentence completers, interviews, observations, video recordings and group reflections, (Hargreaves, 2012, 2015; Hargreaves and Affouneh, 2017; Hargreaves, Mahgoub and Elhawary, 2016). Hence, much of the qualitative research in the last two decades, that has sought to involve children as informants, has drawn on and adapted the Mosaic approach, in an effort to try to represent children's voices. The range of participatory data collection tools have frequently included; children's conversations and picture-stories (Wiltz and Klein, 2001), naturalistic observations and child interviews (MacNaughton, 2003), puppets and small world resources (Levy, 2009), video stimulated recall dialogues (Morgan, 2007), and inviting children to draw, paint or role play their experiences (Dockett and Perry, 2011).

Darbyshire, MacDougall and Schiller (2005) found that combining a range of child-friendly methods did not merely duplicate data findings, but was helpful in providing complementary insights into children's experiences. Their two studies of childhood obesity in Australia investigated how children aged 4- 12 years engaged in physical activity in their social and recreational spaces. The authors used a multiple method approach that included focus groups (Green and Hart, 1999), mapping (Morrow, 2001) and Photovoice (Booth and Booth, 2003) activities. Mapping involved children drawing maps of the recreational spaces where they took part in physical activity and the Photovoice involved children taking photographs of their environment. The photographs were intended to support children who would be reluctant to speak in a focus group, or who had limited language acquisition. Darbyshire et al. (2005) found that by using multiple child-friendly methods they were alerted to aspects of children's experiences that they would otherwise have missed. Darbyshire et al. (2005) reflected on and critiqued their use of multiple methods in participatory research with children and concluded that the benefits of

this approach outweighed the pitfalls and challenges they experienced. They concluded that research which seeks to consult children and represent their voices:

Demands flexibility and creativity on the part of both the researchers and their 'data collection' approaches. Such flexibility is, we contend, not methodologically sloppy, but an important element of a research relationship with children (Darbyshire et al. 2005, p.428).

The research relationship alluded to by Darbyshire et al. (2005) was a recurrent theme in the literature I reviewed (for example: Barley and Bath, 2004; Bertram and Pascal, 2007; Mannion, 2007). This suggests that listening to children requires more than just the creative child-friendly methods that researchers design.

Lancaster (2006) introduced a framework for listening to young children. This was designed as part of a toolkit for children's services, to provide guidance for professionals on *how* to listen to young children and also outlined the conditions that were conducive to allowing children's voices to be heard. The framework was described as, 'RAMPs' which is the acronym for:

R: Recognising children's many languages

A: Allocating communication spaces

M: Making time

P: Providing choice

S: Subscribing to reflective practice

This framework served as a useful guide for researchers on how to listen to young children, but also provided an evaluation tool for assessing the nature and extent of participatory research with young children. The conditions described in Lancaster's (2006) framework are compatible with the conditions described across much of the literature I have reviewed on participatory research with children. Yet, in contrast, Lancaster's framework does not specify the role of the researcher in forging a trusting and respectful relationship with the children.

Stephenson (2009), however, also offered guidance on participatory research with young children and found that the conditions for listening to children's voices were facilitated well through the use of ethnography. Stephenson (2009) investigated children's experiences of the boundaries of an early years curriculum. She used

photographs of the learning environment and children's own photographs to stimulate conversations with children of two to four years about their perceptions of their experiences in the early childhood centre. During the data analysis stage of her study, she began to reflect on the methods she had used to engage the children in conversations and realised that, in addition to her use of photographs, two other, more subtle strategies, were important. These were her commitment to sustained and prolonged involvement in the setting and the process of 'intellectually stepping back' from the research topic (Stephenson, 2009, p.132). Stephenson found that by spending a prolonged amount of time in the setting she was able to develop a relationship with the children which enabled her to engage more naturally with them and capture their communication over time. This enabled her to piece together their snippets of conversations and their comments and reactions, helping her to make sense of their communication over time. By freeing herself intellectually from thinking about the research questions and seeking to find the answers to them, she was able to tune into the issues that were of most importance to the children and develop a deeper understanding of their perceptions.

Similarly, Merewether (2017) offers guidance to researchers on how to listen to children. She asserts that the use of pedagogical documentation (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999) is a way for researchers to listen to young children who do not always have the conversational language to be able to express their perceptions. Pedagogical documentation is a process of reflection between children, teachers and parents through which children and adults reflect together on the child's learning:

The observation and documentation of children's and teachers' conversations, work and encounters, recorded using, for example, notes, photographs, audio and video recordings, allows ongoing interpretation involving teachers, children, families and the wider community (Merewether, 2017, p.261).

The type of listening involved in using pedagogical documentation, is described by Davis (1998) as 'emergent listening' (p.21), in which the researcher is open to new understandings based on the experiences of the children. Like Stephenson's (2009) process of intellectually 'stepping back', it requires the researcher to try to abandon his/her own prior experiences and to listen in a more attentive and open manner. This is challenging because it is unlike the usual way of listening, in which

we tend to listen out for information that helps us to make sense of what we already know (Merewether, 2017).

Both Stephenson (2009) and Merewether (2017) provide suggestions and guidance for listening to children's voices in research. Lancaster (2006) provides a useful framework for creating the conditions for listening to children's voices and the Mosaic approach of Clark and Moss (2001) illustrates the many methods that may support children's voices to be heard. However, in reviewing the literature on children's voices, I also found strong recognition of the challenges, pitfalls and difficulties that were associated with trying to represent children's voices in research. In the next section I will discuss some of the literature that addresses these issues.

2.3.3 Challenges in trying to represent children's voices in research

Despite there being a strong rationale for conducting participatory research with young children, an on-going debate has developed among early childhood researchers about the extent to which it is possible to actually represent children's voices (Chesworth, 2018; Eldén, 2013; James, 2007; Pascal and Bertram, 2009; Waller and Bitou, 2011). Schiller and Einarsdottir (2009) question whether the 'pendulum has swung too far' (p.127) in favour of children's voices and warn against giving overriding precedence to children's voices, to the point where the child's perspective is being presented as the most important. They point out that children's lives are co-constructed by adults and their voices are mediated by those adults and the contexts in which they interact (Mannion, 2007). They conclude that, ultimately, 'child-adult relations and spatial practices are central in deciding which children's voices get heard, what they can speak about and what difference it makes' (Schiller and Einarsdottir, 2009, p.127).

Punch (2000) and Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) challenged the assumption that using child-centred methods will automatically lead to participation. They argued that the use of child friendly methods are not always fully critiqued and may inadvertently, be limiting, rather than enhancing, children's participation. It is the adults who decide which methods to use and how and when to use them, yet, the children may not necessarily be attuned to communicating their perceptions through the chosen media of the adult, or at the time, or in the space chosen by the adult (Holland, Renold, Ross, and Hillman, 2010). Child-friendly methods, designed with

the intention of empowering children through having their voices heard, may actually have the opposite effect, 'imposing fixed and homogenous identities upon children' (Chesworth, 2018, p.3) and may act to reinforce the adult-child hierarchy that positions adults as more powerful than children (Chesworth, 2018).

Murray (2019) also considers the subtle but significant effect that a binary definition of adulthood and childhood can have on participatory research with young children. She suggests that the language used, as well as the choice of methods, can be problematic:

The terms 'student voice' and 'pupil voice' reflect a hierarchy where 'students' or 'pupils' are othered as less powerful than teachers (Cruddas 2007). ...Moreover, the phrase 'children's voice' assumes that all children always share one view (Bakhtin 1963); discourse concerning 'voice' aligns with 'identity, agency and empowerment' (Maybin 2013, 383), so individual children may have their own views (Murray, 2019).

Thomson (2007) grappled with the concept of adult/child identities when carrying out participatory research projects with children. She reflected in depth on the methodological question: 'is doing research with children different from doing research with adults?' (p.208) and used Punch's (2000) question as a springboard for reflection:

If children are competent social actors, why are special 'child-friendly' methods needed to communicate with them? (Punch, 2000, p.1).

Thompson (2007) was not an early childhood researcher, but worked in the field of participatory research and engaged with groups of people of all ages. She found that she did not need to adapt her methods according to the characteristics of the group, but was often challenged by professionals, who worked with children, to justify why she did not adapt the methods to account for children's limited life experiences. Informed by epistemological assumptions of participatory research that view the labelling of social identities as a constraint, Thompson (2007) drew on hybrid theories of identity (Adams, 2006; Benhabib, 1992; Butler, 1990) that promote identities as multiple and fluid. In adopting this stance, Thompson was able to consider Punch's (2000) argument from a different perspective. Rather than revisiting the debate around adult/child power and competency, which she felt was

unresolvable, she focused on the concept of identity and positioned it as the crucial factor in understanding participatory research. She argued that the participants' power and competency are irrelevant in participatory research because it takes a 'bottom-up' approach, in which participants are invited into a research space and engage in the research by performing their identity (Thrift, 2000), by 'doing' and by, 'being' who they are (Butler, 1990).

Thompson's (2007) stance provides an interesting adaptation to Qvortrup's, (1994) notion of children being viewed as people who are 'being', as opposed to people who are 'becoming'. She removes the distinction between children's and adults' positions as research participants, showing how we are all able to be viewed as people who are 'becoming', because our identities are constantly in the process of formation, as they are influenced by our spatial and relational experiences. Her theory aligns to that of Mannion (2007), who suggests that researchers who undertake participatory research with children should be aware of spatial and generational influences, since these may determine whose voices are heard, when they are heard and to what extent.

The problems of reconciling the adult/child power relations in participatory research was a prominent theme throughout the literature I reviewed. Both Thompson (2007) and Mannion (2007) provide a way of managing and attending to potential tensions, but there was consensus of opinion that the use of researcher reflexivity is an essential component in all aspects of research that seek to represent children's voices (Davis, 1998; Holland et al. 2010; Punch, 2000; Spyrou, 2011; Stokes, 2019):

Reflexivity should be a central part of the research process with children where researchers critically reflect not only on their role and their assumptions (Davis, 1998), but also on the choice of methods and their application (Punch, 2000, p.4).

From the literature reviewed there were a multitude of ethical questions that were present as a consequence of the adult/child power dynamics in participatory research with children. Flewitt (2005) discussed the problem of ensuring children understand what they are assenting to, but also knowing that they have the right to opt out. Brostrøm, (2006) grappled with the dilemma of trying to balance children's rights to participate with their rights to privacy and raised the question:

If we truly respect children and childhood, when and to what extent is it in the children's best interest for them, knowingly or unknowingly, to help adults uncover details of their everyday life and secret spaces? (Brostrøm, 2006, p. 241).

Flewitt (2006) suggested that children cannot be expected to give informed consent, since they do not have the level of cognitive development to be able to fully understand the consequences of participation and therefore, they can only be expected to express their 'assent' and their guardians are the ones to give consent. However, Harcourt and Conroy (2011) stress that it is the child's right to be informed about the details of the project and to decide for themselves if they wish to participate. How researchers deal with this dilemma will depend on their perception of childhood and the extent to which they believe that children are competent social actors. As Davies (2013) points out, such research that explores 'encounters' between researcher and participants will require a self-reflexive stance, since:

Such encounters do not foster research practices that engage in methodical rule-following, and they do not impose or presume a moral framework. Rather they open up a moment-by-moment ethical questioning that asks how things come to matter in the ways they do (Davies, 2013, p. 681).

2.3.4 Summary of part three: Children's voices in research

I began this section of the literature review with a rationale for including children's voices in research. I found a large body of research that sought to represent children's voices. In the main, this has grown from the new sociology of childhood (James and Prout, 1997), which views children as competent social actors, able to make decisions and contribute to matters which are of concern to them. The literature also highlighted that listening to children is important for empowering them as active citizens, for enhancing their learning and development and ultimately, for supporting their well-being and mental health. It is also important to children themselves, that their voices are heard and that they are taken seriously and their views respected.

In the second section I discussed the creative, child-friendly methods that many researchers have used for listening to young children. The Mosaic approach, devised by Clark and Moss (2001), has helped researchers to develop new strategies for children's voices to be heard. Researchers who used multiple

methods, such as the Mosaic approach, agreed that this generated richer data. It supported the children to communicate in their preferred mode and also limited the chances of researchers missing salient issues that may not have been noticed through the use of a single method. The literature contained some guidance on how to listen to children's voices and the conditions under which they are most likely to be heard. There is a consensus of opinion that the researcher/child relationship and the spaces in which the research is conducted are crucial elements of quality participatory research with children. An ethnographic methodology is upheld as an ideal approach for creating conditions for listening to children's voices, as it provides time to build up relationships and engage in natural conversations. Within this context, the conduct of the researcher is highlighted as being particularly significant. A consistent theme throughout the literature is that researchers need to be flexible in their approach to listening to children, open to uncertainty and able to intellectually step back to enable children's voices to be heard.

In the final part of this section I explored some of the challenges of trying to represent children's voices. The tensions caused by adult/child power dynamics and the binary definition of adulthood and childhood created challenges and ethical dilemmas for researchers. There is a current debate among early childhood researchers about the extent to which (and even if) it is possible to elicit children's voices. There are many studies which reported on children's views, opinions and lived experiences, but the means through which children's voices have been heard are controlled by the adults who create the spaces, time and methods for listening to children. It is also the adults who interpret and then choose how to report on children's voices. Given that the rationale for seeking to represent children's voices is so compelling, I looked through the literature for guidance on how to manage the dilemmas associated with participatory research with children. There was a consistent call for the researcher to be self-reflexive in all aspects of the research and a caution to expect and embrace uncertainty, but to stay with the uncertainty and be open to new understandings that may spontaneously emerge.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The aim of my study was two-fold. Firstly, I sought to gain an insight into children's and teachers' perceptions and lived experiences of carpet time in the EYFS in a school in Greater Manchester. Secondly, I aspired to use the findings from the study to support understanding and development of pedagogical approaches to carpet time in the EYFS.

The following questions were posed:

1. What are the features of carpet time in the Early Years Foundation Stage in one primary school in Greater Manchester?
2. What are teachers' and children's understandings of the purpose and value of carpet time?
3. How does the action and social interaction during these times support and enhance extant ideas about the purpose and value of carpet time?
4. What implications do the findings of this study have for the understanding and development of pedagogical approaches to carpet time?

Sikes (2004) suggests that:

Usually, the most significant factor that influences choice and use of methodology and procedures is 'where the researcher is coming from' in terms of their philosophical position and their fundamental assumptions concerning:

- Social reality – their ontological assumptions;
- The nature of knowledge – their epistemological assumptions;
- Human nature and agency- specifically their assumptions about the way in which human beings relate to and interact with their environment (Sikes, 2004, p.18).

Therefore, in this chapter I outline my philosophical position and fundamental assumptions and provide a rationale for the design of the study, an auto/biographical ethnographic study. I state my ontological and epistemological stance and provide a justification for situating my study within a children's rights and empowerment framework. In addition, I explain the data collection methods and the processes of analysis. I present the ethical considerations that were addressed and

conclude by considering issues of trustworthiness and the limitations of my methodological approach.

3.1 Philosophical Position

Ontology 'is the study of being' (Crotty, 1998 p.10), it is concerned with our fundamental beliefs about the nature of reality, whilst epistemology is concerned with 'the nature and forms of knowledge' (Cohen, Manion and Morrisson, 2007, p.7), our understanding of what can be known about the social world.

The way in which reality is perceived and how knowledge is deemed to be constructed situates the researcher generally within one of two opposing paradigms, positivist and interpretivist (O'Donoghue, 2018; Rosiek and Gleason, 2017). Although these two paradigms present an over-simplification of researchers' ontological and epistemological understandings, it is helpful to describe the opposing standpoints, in order to locate my choice of research paradigm. Researchers working within the positivist paradigm tend to view reality as definitive, absolute and fixed (Wellington, 2015). They seek to understand reality and gain empirical knowledge through objective means, for example, through using scientific methods, testing for cause and effect. In contrast, interpretivists tend to view reality as being socially constructed (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017), dependent on the scope of each individual's experiences, perceptions and understanding (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

Interpretivists view the concept of truth in relative terms, believing that there is not one 'truth' to be grasped when it comes to the social world, since each person's understanding of the world is their interpretation of it (Schwandt, 1998, p.222) and therefore, individuals make sense of it in their own way, depending on their unique experiences, prior knowledge and social relationships (O'Donoghue, 2018, p.9). From an interpretivist perspective, it is necessary to respect, 'the complexity of meaning-making processes and the contradictions of the lived world' (Rogers, 2012, p.4). Interpretivist researchers utilise subjective methods to gain knowledge and understanding of the world, for example, through interpretation of the words, perceptions and actions of others.

However, these binary definitions are a relatively simplistic lens for understanding research paradigms. The researcher's philosophical stance may have to be more nuanced and multi-faceted than these two extreme positions imply (Blaikie and Priest, 2017). My ontological and epistemological stance is situated broadly within the interpretivist paradigm. I believe that human experiences, actions and interactions are influenced on multiple levels, and they are, 'infused with social or cultural meanings, by intentions, motives, beliefs, discourses' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.7) and values. The fundamental assumption that underpins my epistemological stance is that social phenomena, 'cannot be understood in terms of simple causal relationships or the subsumption of social events under universal laws' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.7). Rather, it is interpreted and presented in different ways through the researcher's lens (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.17). For example, several people may all experience the same event, but each will have their own different interpretations of the experience, based on their past experiences, assumptions and values (Crotty, 1998, p.9). Thus, knowledge is constructed through the perceptions, reflections and understandings of the participants, which is then interpreted by the researcher (Yanow and Ybema, 2009, p.39).

In my study, I sought to interpret children's and teachers' perceptions of their lived experiences of carpet time. In doing so, I endeavoured to gain insight into the impact of influences; personal, social, cultural, political and emotional.

3.1.1 Fundamental assumptions and values

From my interpretivist standpoint there is no such thing as value free research (Longhofer and Floersch, 2014). Our values influence our perceptions, understanding and interpretation of events and experiences and therefore, our methodological decisions (Cousin, 2010). Denzin proposes that, 'interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher' (Denzin, 1986, p.12) and therefore, it is important that researchers declare their positionality through reflexive accounts of their connectedness to their research topic. I agree with Denzin and also with Cousin (2010) who advises that researchers should not view themselves as 'some kind of virus that contaminates the research,' but should embrace their positionality and see themselves as 'the research tool' (Cousin, 2010,

p.10) that enhances the process and informs their choice of methodology. Chapter one included an account of my positionality and connectedness to the research topic, but in order to explain my choice of methodology and methods, I feel it is helpful to outline the underlying values and assumptions that have influenced my choices. These were:

1. My ontological and epistemological stance which sits within the interpretative paradigm. I aimed to gain an insight into children's and teachers' lived experiences of carpet time. I recognised that my account of their experiences would be influenced by my personal interpretation of what I observed and my understanding of their accounts.
2. My understanding of children's capabilities. I believe that children are active agents in the construction of their social identities within the context of cultural milieux (Corsaro, 2011), that may enable or constrain the development of their identities.
3. My understanding of how children learn. My pedagogical values are aligned with socio-constructivist and socio-cultural theory. I believe that children learn through exploration, experimentation, trial and error and socially, through observing others and through reflecting upon their experiences (Bruner, 1986). I think that children's development and learning is strongly influenced by the familial, cultural and socio-economic context in which they live (Bronfenbrenner, 2009; Rogoff, 2008).
4. My commitment to the rights of children to have a say in issues which affect them (UNCRC, 1989). It is important for me to support children's agency, and their right to participate in decisions that affect their wellbeing and education (Hart and Brando, 2018).

In the following section I explain my methodological framework and illustrate how my philosophical position, assumptions and values underpinned my choices.

3.1.2 Children's rights and empowerment

The ratification of children's rights to participate in decisions on matters which affect (UNCRC, 1989, article 12) them was indicative of the newly emerging sociological concept of childhood (James and Prout, 1997). Children were no longer viewed as,

'incomplete adults' but as 'actors in their own rights' (Scott, 2000, p.98). This understanding of childhood portrayed them as being active participants in childhood research, capable of making decisions and communicating their opinions (Christensen and James, 2017). Beazley (2009) argued that, 'children have the right to be properly researched' (p.370), which means that, as participants, their opinions and perceptions should always be included.

My study is situated within a children's rights and empowerment framework (Kellett, 2011; Pascal and Bertram, 2009). I adopted Gallacher and Gallagher's (2008) stance, that my research would be 'for and with' children, rather than, 'on or about' children (p.50), so I sought to gain the children's perspectives as much as I did the adults'. I agree that children are capable of *participating in* and *contributing to* research and view this to be their entitlement (Pascal and Bertram, 2009), but, although I am open to the possibility of children acting as *co-researchers* (Hill, Davis, Prout and Tisdall, 2004; Pahl and Allen, 2011), I am still unsure of the extent to which this is aligned to my understanding of what 'co-researching' means and whether this is possible with children aged 3-6 years old. My understanding of the term, 'co-researcher' is one which means that children are engaged in decision making about how data is collected and are active in collecting and analysing that data. They may also, as in the studies conducted by Hill et al. (2004) and Pahl and Allen (2011), decide on the focus of the research, have a personal motivation for undertaking the study and contribute to the research questions and design of the study. This was not the case in my study and therefore, I describe the children as *participants who contributed* to the research, through sharing their understanding of their carpet time experiences with me. Although the children were not involved in the design of the study, their comments about what was happening throughout the study were valuable contributions that supported me to adapt the design. On occasions, I responded to their suggestions, for example, their request to be interviewed and allowing them to use the video camera to film their small world play. However, I do not view this to be 'co-researching', but rather 'participating', since there was no indication that their requests were motivated by a desire to carry out research. Rather, I understood their suggestions to be stimulated by their interest in using the technical equipment (dictaphone and video recorder). Nevertheless, I

valued their contributions and in responding to their requests, I believe the study generated richer data.

My interpretation of participation for the children is aligned to that of Dahlberg and Moss (2005), which foregrounds 'listening' as central to its meaning. For children to participate they need to be listened to with sincerity and respect (Graue and Walsh, 1998). Dahlberg (2003) describe this as an, 'ethics of encounter' (p.262). It is based on relationships and requires time and patience on the part of the listener to be able to pick up on the interests and matters that are important to children, and to tune into what they are communicating. The goal of participation in this context is to give children a sense of belonging to a community and affording them the opportunity to be able to contribute to it.

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) drew on Rinaldi's (2006) pedagogy of listening, in which the child is understood to communicate in multiple ways. This promoted the children's:

Right to freedom of expression...either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice (Article 13, UNCRC, 1989).

It was important for me to elicit children's voices by tuning into the different ways in which they communicate. However, from my interpretivist perspective, I do not believe we can ever fully represent the thoughts or perceptions of another person (child or adult), as we will inevitably interpret what we hear through our own lens, drawing on our experiences, understanding and perceptions. Also, language is limited in the extent to which it can fully express each person's reflections. Therefore, I am tentative in my claim to elicit children's voices and I discuss this in more detail in the next section, but I tried to capture their perceptions through facilitating opportunities for them to reflect upon their memories and experiences of carpet time. I identified with Levy and Thompson's (2015) view of participatory research being a broad concept using, 'conversation based methodological techniques to include young children's voices' (p.139). Examples of the techniques I used were the child-chats. These were play-based, conversational activities intended to provide a context for the children to express their perceptions of their experiences of carpet time, whilst chatting informally in a group situation.

3.1.3 Participatory Research with Young Children

The rapid increase in participatory research with children that has taken place in the past 20 years, has led to methodological debates about how to include children's voices (Punch, 2002). The work of Clark and Moss (2011) has been influential in supporting researchers to consider a range of child-friendly tools for data collection, including taking photographs, drawing pictures and asking children to carry out and articulate tours of their classrooms. However, Punch (2002) and Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) argue that the claims made about the use of child-friendly methods are not always fully scrutinized. In reflecting on her doctoral thesis, that incorporated the use of child-friendly methods, Chesworth (2018) also acknowledged this dilemma. She surmised that the use of child-friendly methods does not necessarily mean that children's voices are truly represented and may not equate to genuine participation. Chesworth argued for:

A shift in the focus of attention from method towards a more reflexive consideration of the ontological, epistemological and ethical questions regarding the researcher's engagement with children and their everyday lives (Chesworth, 2018, p.2).

As a novice researcher embarking on my first experience of carrying out participatory research with children, I remained open to the possibility that the child-friendly methods I devised, specifically to support the participation and empowerment of children, could inadvertently result in having the opposite effect:

Within an imposed research design (Waller & Bitou, 2011), there is a tendency for task-based methods to define and limit the terms for children's engagement with adults determining where and how children are able to engage in the research process (Holland, Renold, Ross, and Hillman, 2010). (Chesworth, 2018 p.4).

Therefore, I endeavoured to engage critically with the methods I devised for ascertaining children's perceptions. I decided to utilise a range of data collection strategies (classroom observations, child-chats and fieldnotes), in the hope that using multiple opportunities and methods for children to express their perceptions would better enable me to capture the matters that were of importance to them, without pressurising them to engage. I found that my child-chat methods were helpful in providing space and time for me to interact with the focus group of children

and they did help to provoke conversations about carpet time, but I continuously questioned the notion of children's voices in research.

3.1.4 Eliciting children's voices in research

Mannion (2007) argued for a reframing of children's participatory research to focus on child-adult relations. He posited that spatial practices and generational relationships determined whose voices were heard and which topics they talked about. Generational relationships are defined as the hierarchical positions of children and adults in relation to each other in institutional settings such as the home and the school (Bae, 2009; Mayall, 2002). Several studies indicate that in classrooms where these generational relationships are already established, opportunities for children's voices to be heard can be limited (Houen et al. 2016; Theobald and Kultti, 2012; Warming, 2016). In the classrooms where I conducted my research the generational relationships between children and adults were already clearly defined and the spatial practices, particularly in relation to carpet time, were controlled by the adults, although on occasions, the children attempted to exert their control in subtle ways.

I found it helpful to adopt the approach advocated by Mayall (2008), which does not discount the influence of adult-child power relations but, recognises that the child is the authority in knowing what it is like to be a child in the situation that is being researched. This approach positions the researcher as a learner and the children as expert informants (Breathnach, Danby and O'Gorman, 2018). The researcher continues to behave as an adult, but does not take on an authoritative role. In my case, I was able to interact with the children as an adult, but directed them to their teachers if they wanted permission to do something or needed support. I was able to ask questions about their routines, the expectations for behaviour and why things happened in the way they did. Studies of this approach, in ethnographic research with children, suggest that the creation of interactional spaces in participatory research opens up greater opportunities for children to act as informants and could lead to the co-production of knowledge between children and adults (Breathnach et al. 2018).

In my study I tried to provide interactional spaces through the child-chats I conducted. I had hoped that the child-chats would enable me to elicit the children's voices, but on reflection, I began to understand that they were more about relationship building and establishing our child-adult positions (Mannion, 2007), myself as the learner and the children as the informants. In the earlier child-chats, I found myself leading and steering the conversations to try to keep the focus on the topic of carpet time. Yet, frequently the children would move away from my topic, as something would trigger a thought in their mind. For example, on one occasion a child commented that she did not like sitting on the carpet because it was not comfy and it itched her. This prompted a response from another child, a boy of Indian heritage, who commented that the carpets in India are much better and this then developed into a long and elaborate conversation about the times he spends with his grandparents in India. At first, I experienced feelings of frustration, feeling compelled to collect data specifically about the children's experiences of carpet time, but then I began to realise that these encounters were more about relationships than eliciting children's voices. They were the interactional spaces that enabled me and the children to get to know and understand each other. The children were drawing me into their world (Chesworth, 2018) and talking about what was important to them. I realised that if I continued to try to steer the conversation to my agenda of carpet time, I was preventing the children from participating in the study and silencing their voices. This was a difficult transition for me, but one of the key learning points that I gained from conducting the study. As I learnt to let go a little and trust the children to participate in the ways that suited them, we got to know each other better and I became more comfortable in my understanding of the notion of voice in research with children. I moved away from believing it was possible for me to elicit children's voices and became less anxious about wanting to do so.

St. Pierre (2008) suggests that too much credence is given to the concept of voice, questioning whether it is possible for meaning to be transported from one being to another, without some form of mediation by the researcher. St. Pierre (2008) did not discount the significance of participants' voices in research, but argued against privileging voice as representing 'truest meaning' (p.320). She suggested that research that positions participants' voices as an authentic representation of reality, is more aligned to a positivist stance than a qualitative perspective and concluded

that, 'there is no need to give up on voice but rather to bring into question its authorizing power' (p.232).

St. Pierre's (2008) discussion supported me to critique the methods I used, which were designed to access the voices of the participants, both children and adults. In seeking to gain access to the children's voices, I was the authorizing power. I determined when and how the children voiced their perceptions of carpet time, through the child-chats I conducted. In gaining access to the adults' voices, I was also exercising my power. I guided the conversations during semi-structured interviews and prompted for more information when something caught my interest.

From my interpretivist stance I did not believe I could ever fully represent the participants' voices and I acknowledged from the outset that the findings from my study would be my interpretation of the participants' lived experiences. Having completed the research, the findings of my study are my interpretation of their experiences, but I now recognise myself and my experiences as part of the data. I have moved from a position of believing I could elicit children's voices, to one in which I attempted to interpret their communication (in all its forms, not just voice) through my own experiences, perceptions and understandings. From this position I believe it is possible to surmise that the knowledge gained from my study has been co-constructed with the children. However, I remain wary of making that claim, as I interpret 'co-construction' to mean that the children were consciously aware of the task of constructing knowledge and jointly invested in the end goal. Yet, I cannot know the extent to which the children were consciously engaged in the co-construction of knowledge with me. I am more comfortable in concluding that the children were active participants in the research and contributed as expert informants. I interpreted their perceptions of the value and purpose of carpet time through my own biography and I utilised my interpretation to construct my knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of carpet time.

3.2 Research Design

In this section I outline how my choice of design, an auto/biographical ethnographic study, is fit for purpose.

3.2.1 Ethnographic study

I understood the anthropological origins of ethnography to be concerned with exploring the culture of a community (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019), and that contemporary ethnographers examine the ‘grainy’ details of naturally occurring social practices and cultural forms, to try and explain what people do and why they do things in the way they do (Atkinson, 2017, p.11). I felt this was compatible with my study, as I sought to understand the ‘culture’ within which carpet time takes place. I was aware from my professional experience, that carpet time has its own cultural practices, for example, accepted norms for behaviour and rules that govern the activities that take place there. However, carpet time is also only one aspect of classroom practice and I could not examine it in isolation from the daily classroom activities of which it is a part. Therefore, an ethnographic study was a suitable design, since it enabled me to explore a particular aspect of classroom practice through experiencing it first-hand within the context that it takes place.

3.2.2 Ethnography

The term ‘ethnography’ has many connotations and its meanings have become blurred over time as its use in research has developed (Hammersley, 2019; Wolcott, 1990). It can be understood as a methodology, a method, an act of writing and also a research practice that is framed by a methodology (Madden, 2010). I drew on ethnography mainly as a method and a research practice, framed by my methodological choice of participatory research with children.

3.2.3 Ethnography as a method

Ethnography was the most appropriate method to examine the children’s and teachers’ lived experiences of carpet time and this would entail spending a large amount of time with them in the classroom to observe first-hand the social practices and cultural traditions (Walford, 2018) that typified their experiences.

Of utmost importance to me, was to design the study in a way that valued the children as active participants and sought to ‘elicit their voices’ (although, as discussed in the previous section, my understanding of the concept of children’s voices in research altered as the study progressed). Young children express themselves in many different ways (Clark and Moss, 2011; Edwards, Gandini and

Forman, 1998) which cannot easily be captured through a single interview or observation. I wanted to try to gain an insight into the children's perceptions of carpet time and therefore, I needed to develop a relationship with the children, which was based on trust, respect and equality (Corsaro, 2000). Relationship building takes time and adopting an ethnographic method enabled me to spend one day a week with the children in school over a period of seven months.

Ethnography is compatible with a sociocultural theoretical framework that takes into account simultaneously, the macro and micro aspects of the lived experiences of a social group of people (Buchbinder, Longhofer, Barrett, Lawson & Floersch, 2006). It supports the researcher to take account of how the wider policy context may be impacting upon the actions and social interactions of the participants in the narrower context of their shared experiences. This was particularly relevant to my study and aligned with my theoretical understanding of early childhood, which is founded on the sociocultural theories of Bronfenbrenner (2009). I was interested to explore how the wider context (the macro) may be influencing the everyday classroom practice of carpet time (the micro).

3.2.4 Ethnography as a research practice

At the start of my study I had only limited understanding of what ethnography as a research practice would entail. I understood this to mean that I would be immersing myself in the setting, searching for meaning and understanding, without a set agenda, but allowing the description and analysis of what I found, to come together to answer questions and build theories (Madden, 2010). This theory *generating* aspect of ethnography fitted well with my participatory approach in which I hoped to be co-constructing knowledge with the participants. Ethnographers do not control the research process, they take their time, 'establishing long term relationships based on trust and empathy' (O'Reilly, 2012, p.198), but I also found it took time for me, the researcher, to build up trust in the process of ethnography. Being able to suspend my agenda was something I struggled with at the start of the study. As I learnt to slow down and trust the process (Horton and Kraftl, 2006), I was more able to reflect on the everydayness of the classroom and ordinary aspects of our conversations.

As is often experienced in ethnographic research, the definition of ethnography for my own study became clearer as the design of the study evolved (Savage, 2000). My understanding of ethnography developed through my fieldwork experiences, academic reading and reflections. I started to appreciate that ethnography encompasses all aspects of the research, from the initial planning of the study, through to the data collection, the analysis and the writing up of the findings (Atkinson, 2017). I also started to see more clearly that my own biography was integral to the study. It fuelled my motivation for the research topic and informed my theoretical understanding.

I had framed the research within a children's rights and empowerment agenda (Kellest, 2011; Pascal and Bertram, 2009). I wanted to find out what children's and teachers' lived experiences of carpet time were like, in the hope that the knowledge I produced would be able to inform the future practice of trainee teachers through my role as a teacher-educator.

I already had first-hand experience and knowledge of carpet time. This personal perspective, incorporating my biography and all that it encompasses; my experiences, emotions, theoretical knowledge and values, meant that I could not be personally or emotionally detached from the topic of my research. Neither could I be theoretically detached from the topic, as I had already formed an understanding and knowledge of theories relating to early childhood and pedagogical practices in early education.

I therefore made the decision to incorporate my biography into my ethnographic research. In choosing to incorporate my biography I could have carried out the research as an autoethnography (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011). However, my primary focus was to explore the lived experiences of others, but through the lens of my own experiences and knowledge. Therefore, an auto/biographical methodology was more suitable. I recognised that there are a multitude of understandings and a diverse range of approaches within the field of auto/biographical research (Denzin, 2006). It is a fluid, developing and contested area of practice (Roth, 2005). Indeed, all qualitative research may generally include an element of auto/biography, in the sense that the researcher can never be fully detached from the research (Berger, 2013), and will inevitably interpret the data and

present their findings through their unique perspective. However, in choosing an auto/biographical stance, I actively incorporated my biography into the ethnography, rather than just acknowledging its influence. I sought to merge autobiography (my story) and biography (the participants' story). The way in which I incorporated my biography into my study was informed by Babcock's (1980) style of reflexivity, which involves turning or bending back on oneself so that the self becomes a focus of research alongside the lived experiences of the participants. In effect, I found I was looking inwardly as if from the outside and looking outwardly from the inside. This way of looking and of knowing acknowledges, 'a reflective, self-critical awareness of our limits as interpreters' (Foley, 2002, p.473) and is closely aligned to an auto/biographical perspective (Stanley, 1993).

3.2.5 Auto/biography

Auto/biographical researchers reflexively incorporate their intellectual and personal biography into all aspects of their research (Hugill, 2012). There is a merging of autobiography (one's own life story) and biography (the life story of another person). Auto/biographical research is based on the premise that reality is multi-faceted and sociological knowledge is constructed, rather than discovered (Stanley, 1993). Our own life story influences how we interpret reality, but our own life story is built up through our interactions with our social world and the people within it. The construction of knowledge is facilitated through the knowledge-producer's own perceptions, experiences, values and beliefs, yet, there is recognition that these are not formed in isolation, but are influenced by the experiences of others and formed through our interactions with them (Atkinson, 2017). Essentially, 'auto/biography' disputes the conventional genre distinction between biography and autobiography as well as the divisions between self/other, public/ private, and immediacy/memory' (Stanley, 1993, p.42). In adopting an auto/biographical stance I was supported to embrace my close connection to the topic and draw on my prior experience, knowledge and understanding in a reflexive way to support my interpretation of the participants' lived experiences of carpet time.

3.3 Conduct of the study

In this section I outline how I conducted the study. I describe how I selected the setting and the participants, how I carried out my fieldwork and my choice of tools for data collection.

3.3.1 The setting

This ethnographic study would entail me spending regular periods of time in the setting over a sustained period of time, I prioritised schools where I had a connection to a senior staff member. I wanted to secure a 'gatekeeper' (LeCompte, 1999) who would potentially help me gain access to the field and negotiate continued access throughout the study. I selected schools in accessible locations, but outside my professional work boundary, to avoid any conflict of interest.

I was accepted by the first school I approached and given exceptional support through the whole of the study. The school was an average size, urban, Roman Catholic primary school with a nursery and reception class whose curriculum adhered to the EYFS statutory Framework (DfE, 2017). It had an Ofsted rating of 'outstanding' and a headteacher who was interested in engaging with research. The school was situated in an area of disadvantage with a relatively small number of children from ethnic minority communities who also spoke different languages and there was an average number of children who had Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). At the start of the study 56 children attended the nursery and reception class. In the autumn term of the study the school expanded their nursery provision to provide for 30 hours of free nursery education, which meant providing an afternoon nursery session in addition to the morning one. The children who participated in this study were from the original morning nursery class and the reception class and continued to participate when they moved into reception and year one.

I was relatively familiar with the school, having visited it many years ago as an early years consultant. The headteacher and I had belonged to the same deputy headteachers' network. I did not know the staff members, but I had met the reception class teacher occasionally at early years network meetings.

3.3.2 The participants

My study entailed carrying out naturalistic observations (McKechnie, 2008) of the participants and interacting with them in their classroom. Therefore, it was necessary to include all 56 children (made up from one nursery class and the reception class) and the eight staff members. A focus group of ten children (five from each class) was also selected from the whole group to act as ‘informants’ for the study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). Having a range of informants with different attributes helped me to hear different views and perceptions. By spending whole days in school at different times of the week, I was enabled to observe the participants in different contexts, not just in the context of carpet time. I saw how they behaved and interacted during all parts of the day and in different places, the classroom, the dining hall, the outdoor play area, the playground and on one occasion, the church. This helped me to avoid reliance on a narrow understanding of their experiences, based only on one context (Kawulich, 2005).

3.3.3 The focus group of children

I asked the class teachers to each select five focus children who were representative of their class. The teachers chose children based on the following characteristics; a range of academic achievement, age, ethnicity and behavioural traits. They also took into consideration the children’s perceived confidence, willingness and ability to engage in the study. An aim of my study was to try to comprehend the meaning and understanding that children attributed to carpet time, therefore a representative sample of children was appropriate. Drawing on the teachers’ knowledge of the children’s social and emotional competencies was not only supportive to the study, but it was also ethically sound practice to consider their wellbeing and comfort (Flewitt, 2005). The tables below outline the characteristics of the teachers and focus children:

Pseudonym	Role	Background information
T1: Maria	Nursery teacher and deputy headteacher	15 years teaching experience. Second year teaching in EYFS, has previously taught in Y5 and Y6.

T2: Louise	Reception class teacher and EYFS lead	17 years teaching experience. Always taught in EYFS and KS1. Fifth year as EYFS lead.
T3: Emily	Reception class teacher	NQT in her first post. Joined the school in the autumn term of 2017. Trained in EYFS and KS1.
T4: Laura	Year 1 teacher	4 years teaching experience. Is in her first teaching post and has remained in Year 1.

Table 1: Teacher Participants

Pseudonym	Year group	Age at start of study	Background information
Child A: Billy	Nursery	43 months	White British male, achieving at age related expectations
Child B: Lucy	Nursery	45 months	White British female, youngest girl in the class, achieving slightly below age related expectations
Child C: James	Nursery	52 months	White British male, older age range in the class, achieving above age related expectations
Child D: Raymond	Nursery	50 months	Asian male, Indian heritage, EAL, achieving below age related expectations for communication and language and personal, social and emotional development
Child E: Katie	Nursery	48 months	White British female, Looked After Child, being fostered, achieving at age related expectations

Table 2: Nursery Focus Children

Pseudonym	Year group	Age at start of study	Characteristics
Child A: Amy	Reception	66 months	White British female, achieving at age related expectation

Child B: Joe	Reception	56 months	White British male, achieving slightly below age related expectation
Child C: Vincent	Reception	62 months	Asian male, Indian heritage, EAL, achieving at age related expectation
Child D: Dylan	Reception	59 months	White British male, generally achieving at age related expectation, but below for personal, social and emotional development
Child E: Evie	Reception	58 months	White British female, achieving above age related expectations

Table 3: Reception Focus Children

3.3.4 The fieldwork

I carried out the fieldwork during the summer and autumn terms of 2017. I had decided it would be better to observe the children at the end of the school year when their carpet time practices were already well established, and again after the summer break when they would be in their new classes with different teachers in a different classroom. This enabled me to gain a comparative view of how the children responded to carpet time in a different context with a different teacher.

In the summer term I conducted fieldwork in the nursery and reception classes involving all 56 children and five members of the staff (two teachers and three teaching assistants) and I interviewed the nursery and reception class teachers. In the autumn term I observed the children in their new classes and met with the focus children to carry out a drawing activity to generate conversation about carpet time in their new class. I gained consent from the new reception class teacher to observe in her class and I interviewed her and the year one teacher.

When the children were not gathered together on the carpet I carried out participant observations (Kawulich, 2005) of children and staff as they were engaged in their daily classroom activities. I did not record these observations in writing, as I was interacting with the participants, but I occasionally jotted down notes to remind me of events that I wished to reflect upon at the end of the day.

When I was observing the carpet time sessions, I undertook non-participant observations and these were recorded in writing in my notebook. I have been used

to writing non-participant observations of children and of teachers throughout my career, so I decided to write these in the same way that I always have. These involved sitting apart from the group and writing as accurately as I could, what I saw and heard and then, after the event, analysing the observations, ascribing meaning and significance to them. Unlike in my previous experiences of carrying out observations, in this instance, I had no evaluative criteria upon which to base my analysis, (for example, child- development levels, curriculum outcomes, nationally agreed professional standards of teaching). My ‘analysis’ became an act of sense-making through personal reflection, in which I drew upon my own theoretical knowledge and personal biography (Hugill, 2012). I shared my initial analysis with the staff and the children through informal conversations and their comments also helped to inform the analysis.

3.3.5 Research methods

My research methods were typically ethnographic, consisting of participant and non-participant observations and open-ended interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019; Madden, 2010; O’Reilly, 2012). I used a fieldwork journal to record my classroom observations, notes of conversations and reflections at the end of each day. I carried out 80 non-participant observations of carpet time and interviewed four teachers. Taking the age of the children into consideration I decided, as an alternative to interviewing them, to carry out several ‘child-chats’. These ‘creative child-centric methods’ (Martin, 2019, p.5), took the form of play-based activities through which I hoped to develop a relationship with the children and engage them in conversations about their perceptions of carpet time.

The table below provides a summary of the total data collected and is followed by an explanation of each of the methods in more detail.

Description of Data	Participants	Transcribed
Audio recorded interviews with teachers T1 Nursery teacher- 44 minutes T2 Reception teacher - 29 minutes (additional 40 mins of interview did not record due to a technical problem) T3 New reception teacher- 11 minutes T4 Year 1 teacher - 32 minutes	All four teachers	Yes
Fieldnotes (A5 journal, 212 pages) consisting of 80 carpet time observations (non-participant) and jottings/reflections	All participants	N/A all handwritten

Carpet time observations, number of minutes observed: Nursery children: 335 minutes in nursery class and 90 minutes when they moved up to the reception class. Total: 445 minutes. Reception children: 465 minutes in reception class and 90 minutes when they moved up to the Year 1 class. Total: 655 minutes.	All nursery children, nursery teacher +TA All reception children, reception teacher and 2 TAs. NQT teacher and Year 1 teacher	N/A All handwritten in fieldwork journal
Child Chat 1: Photocards activity Audio recording 13 minutes	Reception class focus children A, C and D	Yes
Child Chat 2: Videos made by children of small figures enacting carpet time X 23 each lasting between 2 and 6 minutes No children shown on videos	Reception class working in groups	N/A
Child Chat 3: One to one chats with children whilst playing with the small world 3 audio recordings Child A - 8 mins Child B – 6 mins Child C – 6 mins	Reception class 3 of the focus children A, B and C	Two transcribed A and C
Child Chat 4: Focus group analysis of video footage of carpet time 3 audio recordings Nursery class 11 mins Reception class 12 mins Reception class 8 mins	Nursery focus children A, C and E Reception focus children Group 1 A, C and E Group 2 B and D	Two transcribed Nursery and reception group 1
Child Chat 5: Chatting to focus group children in new classes whilst drawing pictures or carpet time 3 audio recordings Nursery focus children (now in reception) 14 mins and 23 mins Reception focus children (now in Y1) 16 mins	Nursery focus children A, B and C Group 2 D and E Reception focus children A, B and C	Yes
Staff focus group analysis of video footage of carpet time 1 audio recording 13 minutes	T2 Reception class teacher and 3 Teaching Assistants	No

Table 4: Summary of Data Collected

(i) Classroom observations

I carried out two types of observations: participant observations and non-participant observations. Participant observations were those in which I was a participant, but also an observer. These tended to take place when the children were involved in

self-chosen activities and I was mingling among them and interacting with them. These took the form of jottings in my notebook or more detailed descriptions shortly after the event. Non-participant observations were the ones that were recorded as they took place. These involved recording in writing, as accurately as possible, what I saw and heard. I used non-participant observations to record carpet time sessions and some of the activities that the focus children were involved in.

(ii) Open-ended Interviews

I conducted open-ended interviews (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019) with four teachers; the nursery class teacher, the reception class teacher, the Year 1 teacher and a newly qualified reception class teacher who started work in the autumn term. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed by hand. The transcripts were sent to the interviewees for accuracy checking.

Unlike structured interviews or surveys, in which the questions are pre-planned and used consistently, my approach was more open-ended and conversational, 'collaborative rather than interrogative, guided rather than structured, flexible, and ... informal' (O'Reilly, 2012, p.5). I used a 'structured conversation', broad questions followed by prompts and questions to delve deeper (Cannold, 2001, p.179). I was seeking to understand the individual perspectives of the participants' experiences of carpet time and more specifically, their understanding of its purpose and value. This type of interviewing enabled me to follow the lead of the interviewees, picking up on issues that appeared to be important for them (Fielding and Thomas, 2008). Each interview followed the same broad questions:

- What is the purpose of carpet time for you?
- What do you value about carpet time?
- Do you enjoy it? Why?
- Is there anything that you find challenging about it?
- Have you ever used 'circle time' as a carpet time session? Can you tell me about it?

The follow up questions and prompts that ran through the interviews were different for each interviewee. The interviews took place after school in an empty classroom and lasted between 30 and 70 minutes.

(iii) Child-chats

The design of the child-chats was based on the Mosaic approach of Clark and Moss, (2011) in which multiple methods were used to ascertain children’s views on their classroom learning environment. I had some ideas at the start of the study of the types of methods I intended to use, but these were adapted in response to the children’s suggestions, as the study progressed. The following table provides an overview of the child-chats:

	Activity	Description	Details
1	Photographs discussion	The children were shown photographs of the different areas of their classroom and discussed what they typically do in that space and whether they liked it there	Reception class Audio recorded and transcribed
2	Making films of carpet time situations using small world resources	The video camera was set up in the quiet room with the small world classroom scene. Children role played carpet time using the small figures. They later asked if they could watch all of the films together as a whole class which led to their commentary on what was happening	Reception class The children’s faces are not seen on the videos, but their voices are heard.
3	Interviews with individual children whilst playing with the small world resources	The reception class teacher explained that she was having an interview with me. The children asked if they too could be interviewed, so I invited the focus group children first to be interviewed and then offered a general invitation for any more children	Reception class, audio recorded and transcribed for focus children only
4	Focus group: Analysis of video footage of their class carpet time session	A video was taken of each of the two classes engaged in carpet time. Groups were invited to watch it together and discuss it. The adults also met as a group to discuss the video footage. At first the volume was on and the children simply joined in with the lesson as it was taking place on the video. When I suggested they turn the volume off so that they could talk about what was happening, it generated much more conversation and this method was then applied to all the other groups, including the adults.	Reception and nursery children focus groups audio recorded and transcribed
5	Drawing activity of carpet time in their new class	When the children moved up into their new classes the focus children were invited to draw a picture of their class engaging in carpet time in	Focus children from both classes, audio

		their new class. Whilst they were drawing I chatted with them about their drawings and their experiences on carpet time in their new classes.	recorded and transcribed
--	--	---	--------------------------

Table 5: Description of the Child Chats

In summary, I used three strategies for data collection: recording my classroom observations and reflections in my journal (fieldnotes), open-ended interviews with the teachers, and a series of child-chats with the focus children. This generated three sets of data for analysis: fieldnotes, teacher interview transcripts and child-chat transcripts. When analysing the three data-sets I grouped them into two categories:

1. Fieldnotes including classroom observations. These were analysed thematically following the approach of Braun and Clarke (2006)
2. Interview and child-chat transcripts. These were analysed thematically following the approach of Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009).

Categorising the data in this way provided me with a deeper insight into the participants' lived experiences of carpet time. It supported my interpretation of, not only, what I observed the participants doing (their actions and behaviour), but also, their perceptions of their experiences through what they told me in the interviews and child-chats.

In the following section I explain in more detail how I carried out the analysis and my reasons for using two different approaches.

3.4 Data Analysis

An inductive approach to data analysis is one in which the theory is 'grounded' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the data. Theory is generated inductively, though the discovery of emerging patterns in the data (Birks and Mills, 2015). The opposite approach would be a deductive strategy, in which the researcher uses the data to test out a pre-existing theory or hypothesis. My approach was a mixture of inductive and deductive reasoning, in the sense that I took an abductive stance (Madden,

2010), allowing myself to move back and forth from the data to the theory and from theory to data. For example, when observing carpet times, something would occasionally catch my attention and trigger me to apply my knowledge and experience of carpet time to analyse what I observed. The observation of the NQT teacher struggling to engage the children in a phonics lesson was an example of this. I did not know what I would be observing, but throughout the observation I drew on my theoretical knowledge of phonics, of teacher training and of educational policies to analyse what was happening and to consider reasons why. On this occasion, I was using a deductive strategy, drawing on my knowledge to test my hypotheses about the teaching of phonics, by an NQT, to a class of four to five year olds. On other occasions, something would catch my attention and trigger my curiosity. Having no prior knowledge or experience to draw on, I used inductive strategies, looking for the theory, through seeking patterns or connections in the data. An example of this, was viewing the video footage of carpet time, without the sound. I was drawn to the child who could not manage to engage a child to be his talk partner. This was something I had not noticed before, or experienced, and it prompted me to look for how this child interacted with children in other contexts. The video data also may have alerted me more acutely to the child who struggled to get her voice heard at carpet time. Using an inductive approach, the theory was generated through the data. I started to understand how carpet time can influence a child's self-esteem and identity positively or negatively, depending on their experiences of it.

Jerolmack and Khan (2018) suggest that ethnographers' analytical choices determine what they observe, for example, the micro or the macro, the situation or the structure. From a micro and situational perspective, I was interested in exploring the participants' lived experiences of carpet time, which would lend itself to inductive analysis. Yet, from a macro and dispositional perspective, I was also interested to find out about the influence that external structures may be having upon early years teachers' pedagogical choices in relation to carpet time. I do not view this dichotomy between inductive and deductive analysis, micro and macro perspectives, as an absolute. I concur with Jerolmack and Khan (2018) that an abductive stance is possible, in which the meso-level perspective is viewed. From this viewpoint and through my auto/biographical lens, I sought to explore in detail the children's and

teachers' perceptions of their experiences of carpet time, as well as considering the external structures that may be influencing their experiences.

For these reasons I used a crystallization (Richardson, 1994) approach for the generation and analysis of the data. This approach favours the use of different techniques for data collection and analysis. 'In the crystallization process, the writer tells the same tale from different points of view. Crystallized projects mix genres and writing formats, offering partial, situated, open-ended conclusions', (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.5)

Richardson (1994) used the metaphor of crystals to illustrate how a combination of different approaches can support a more nuanced view and interpretation of the same social phenomena. This is what I wanted to achieve through my analysis; a combination of a micro view, supporting me to comprehend the subtle shades of meaning that children and teachers attribute to their lived experiences of carpet time, whilst also keeping the macro in sight, to help me uncover some of the underlying, perhaps unseen, influences that may impact their experiences and perceptions of carpet time.

I completed the analysis of the fieldnotes using Braun and Clark's (2006) approach (explained in more detail with examples in the next section) and I identified three broad themes that I wished to investigate further through the analysis of the interviews and child-chats. Whilst I was listening to and transcribing the teacher interviews I became aware that there appeared to be some underlying issues and interests associated with the teachers' experiences of carpet time that the interviewees were potentially unaware of. When the teachers described their experiences of carpet time they sometimes used emotive language and alluded to internal and external factors that may have been influencing their pedagogical choices. I was interested in exploring if there were underlying influences operating below the surface of what was being voiced (Smith and Osborn, 2003) and whether these influences may be inadvertently impacting on how the teachers engaged in carpet time with their pupils.

I therefore decided to undertake a more detailed analysis of the interviews, paying more attention to the language used by the participants and drawing on my own biographical interpretation to support the analysis. For guidance, I followed the

steps outlined in the framework devised by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) for transcribing interviews in Interpretative, Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) field of research (I explain these in the next section). I hoped this would support a greater depth of exploration of how these teachers made sense of their experiences of carpet time, because IPA takes closer notice of the language used by the participants and encourages the researcher to engage personally with the data, bringing her own theoretical knowledge and experience into the analysis.

I wish to be clear that my study is not a phenomenological study, since phenomenology is not consistent with my auto/biographical methodology. Phenomenology is concerned with seeking to understand the perceptions of others through their lens, whilst attempting to bracket out one's own perceptions (Maggs-Rapport, 2000). Auto/biography is concerned with seeking to understand the perceptions of others through an autobiographical lens, whilst accepting and utilising one's own perceptions (Stanley, 1993). Although my study does not follow a phenomenological methodology, I have used a strategy that has come from the field of IPA, for transcribing and analysing the interviews and child- chats. Therefore, I feel it is helpful to provide a brief explanation about IPA and how this approach is compatible with ethnography.

3.4.1 Interpretative phenomenological analysis

Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) is a methodological approach that is well suited to qualitative research and is most frequently used in psychology and health related fields of research (Brocki and Wearden, 2007). IPA is founded on an understanding of reality as being subjective and the belief that people are continuously reflecting on their experiences as they attempt to understand their world and their lives (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). IPA seeks to explore the lived experiences of research participants from their own perceptions and reflective accounts that describe their understanding. In my study this was compatible with my purpose for conducting the teacher interviews and the child-chats. I wanted to explore the experiences of children and teachers during carpet time, from their individual perspectives based on their reflective accounts. It was through repetitive reading of the transcripts of the teacher interviews that I felt the need to drill down deeper to explore the 'content' of the participants' accounts (Smith, Flowers and

Larkin, 2009, p.74), the unseen factors, interests or motivations that shaped the participants' understandings of their experiences of carpet time.

One of the ways in which IPA is a variant of phenomenology is in its acknowledgement that researchers cannot ever fully bracket out their own experiences and assumptions and therefore, it is accepted that the interpretation is processed through the lens of the researcher (Smith, 2004). This approach aligned to my auto/biographical stance. I knew it would not be possible for me to bracket out my prior knowledge, experiences and understanding of carpet time and that I would interpret the participants' perceptions through my lens, drawing on my experiences and my understanding of pedagogical practices in early years.

Maggs-Rapport (2000) discusses the benefits of combining IPA within an ethnographic study. She suggests that a combination of both approaches is helpful in providing the researcher with a rich description of the phenomena and can enable the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of her own interpretation of the phenomena and the participants' experiences of it. She explains that these two approaches are complementary and, like Richardson (1994), she suggests that the combination of different types of data can add rigour and depth to the research. However, she cautions that the researcher needs to be clear about the extent and purpose to which each approach is used, so that the value of each methodological approach is not compromised.

As previously stated, I did not use IPA as my methodological approach. Rather, I adopted an analytical framework from the field of IPA research, for analysing the interviews and child-chats. I did this because it supported a closer analysis of the language used by the interviewees and helped me to examine the data through my interpretative auto/biographical lens.

Willig (2013) raises some questions concerning the use of IPA in some circumstances, for example, the limitation of language for describing our perceptions of our experiences. I took this into consideration when deciding whether to use this approach for the analysis of the audio recorded child-chats. Waller and Bitou (2017) and Murray (2017) all argue that we should not underestimate children's capacities to contribute to our research and we ought not to presume that the methods we use for adults are not suitable for children. I identified

with the suggestion that we all make sense of our experiences through a process of self-reflection (Chapman and Smith, 2002; Smith et al. 2009) which is at the heart of IPA, and I view young children as being capable of engaging in such a process. The children who took part in the audio recorded child-chats all had a sufficient grasp of spoken language to engage in a conversation with me, so I felt assured in using this approach. When I used the IPA framework to analyse the children's interview transcripts I found the themes to be more visible and prominent than they had been in the adults'. Perhaps this was because the children were more direct in their verbal communication, precisely because they had a smaller vocabulary to draw upon than the adults and a less sophisticated command of language. They used simple sentences and often repeated words or phrases. They said very little about something before moving off topic, but frequently returned to a consistent narrative. For example, Vincent's narrative focused on him always sitting alone on the carpet and how some children push you when they are on the carpet, Alicia's narrative often returned to the subject of expectations for behaviour and Jack frequently talked about feeling bored. Whilst I can have no certainty about my hypothesis regarding the use of IPA for interpreting children's interviews, I can conclude that I found the process useful. It required me to slow down and pay more attention to the words that children used and to reflect on what meaning they attributed to their experiences. I felt assured that using this approach, in addition to a thematic analysis of the classroom observations, gave me a more holistic insight into the children's perceptions of their carpet time experiences.

In the following section I illustrate how I used the two approaches in practice; Braun and Clarke (2006) for the fieldwork and Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) for the teacher interviews and child-chats.

3.4.2 Analysis of the fieldnotes

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that a thematic analysis can be either inductive or theoretical. An inductive approach is supported by engaging less with the literature prior to analysis, whereas a theoretical approach would require engagement with literature to have taken place before the analysis has begun. They point out that researchers tend to work somewhere between these two extremes. My analytical approach was more inductive than theoretical, although I was aware of and

embraced the theoretical understanding I brought to the analysis. I wanted to explore the lived experiences of the participants, searching for meaning through interacting with the participants and observing them in their natural setting (Jeffrey and Troman, 2004). I looked for patterns across the data, based on my observations and reflections, rather than looking for patterns based on my theoretical knowledge. Braun and Clarke (2006) devised an analytic framework, consisting of six phases of analysis, but they advise that, ‘analysis is not a linear process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Instead, it is a more recursive process, where movement is back and forth as needed, throughout the phases,’ (p.86). I found this to be the case as I conducted my fieldwork. After each school visit I read through my fieldnotes (appendix 1) and wrote up a summary of the day in a systematic way (appendix 2) and started to identify themes that were of interest to me, or were recurrent. This guided my analysis, which became an on-going integral part of the fieldwork, as well as an event taking place at the end of it. By the time I finished the fieldwork I already had all of my fieldnotes coded with possible themes for analysis. I followed the first five phases of Braun and Clarke’s (2006) analytic framework to identify the final three broad themes from the fieldwork. The table below illustrates how I did this:

Phase and description of the process	How I did it
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas	At the end of each day I read through my fieldnotes and wrote a brief summary and reflection on what I had experienced. Each time I would re-read a few of the previous entries and this helped me become very familiar with the data.
2. Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code	I coded manually when I wrote up my summary at the end of each day (see appendix 15). I would write a word or a phrase on the page alongside the text that corresponded to it.
3. Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme	Using the long list of codes I had created I looked for connections where they fitted together, or were repeated. I highlighted codes that connected together to form one theme. If a code fitted into more than one

	theme I highlighted it and added a different coloured border to match the other theme.
4. Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis	I wrote each code on a post it, so that I could physically group them together around a theme and spent time going back and forth within the journal reading the extracts to check that they made sense in relation to the theme and that the theme adequately captured the extract. This resulted in a first attempt at a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme	At this stage I focused on the themes to spot for ambiguities of meaning or opportunities to collate and re-group further to provide greater clarity. Through several attempts at naming and refining the groups I was able to generate three broad themes.

Table 6: Phases of thematic analysis based on Braun and Clarke, (2006, p. 87)

By the end of the process I felt satisfied that I had carried out my analysis in a systematic way, in accordance with the guidance given by Braun and Clarke (2006) and that the three themes I had generated were consistent with their definition of what a 'theme' should be able to do:

A "theme" captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.10).

3.4.3 Analysis of the teacher interviews and child-chats

The table below illustrates how I followed the four stage framework of Smith, Flowers and Larkin, (2009) for the analysis of the teacher interviews and child-chats. (Appendix 16) contains samples of analysed data to illustrate each of the stages in detail.

Stage	Activity	Explanation
-------	----------	-------------

One	Reading and re-reading the transcriptions whilst also listening to the audios	I familiarised myself with the content, checked for accuracy of transcription and reflected on my initial thoughts.
Two	Noting exploratory comments in a column alongside the text and coding these as: descriptive – describe your initial response Linguistic- note the language used Conceptual – note the concepts	I jotted down my initial responses to the text (descriptive – black font). I made a note of words, phrases and linguistic patterns (linguistic – blue font) and what these suggested to me. I noted key concepts (conceptual – red font) that occurred to me as possible areas to explore further.
Three	Developing emergent themes	I read through my exploratory notes in the right hand column and identified emerging themes, writing them alongside the text on the left side of the page.
Four	Making connections across emerging themes	I reviewed the emerging themes in the left hand column and made connections across them, clustering some into one superordinate theme. Taking the list of superordinate themes I then recorded these onto a second sheet with the snippets of text alongside them so that I could refer back to the original text if needed.
Five	Moving on to next transcript and repeating stages 1-4	I repeated the four stages for each of the other interview transcripts, resulting in one summary sheet for each transcript.
Six	Looking for patterns across cases	I wrote each superordinate theme onto a post-it and arranged them on a table in different ways until I was satisfied that I had identified one list of superordinate themes across the group of interview transcripts.

Table 7: Framework for analysis of interviews and child-chats based on Smith, Flowers and Larkin, (2009)

3.4.4 Mapping the themes from all three data-sets

Having completed the analysis of all three data-sets; the classroom observations, the teacher interviews and the audio recorded child-chats, I was then able to work with the identified superordinate themes across the three data sets to identify nine dominant themes, which were then collated into four overarching themes.

The list of nine broad themes from the three data-sets taken as a whole were:

- 1) Community
- 2) Identity
- 3) Control
- 4) Pedagogy
- 5) Struggles
- 6) Relationships
- 7) Instruction
- 8) Emotions
- 9) Physical space

These were grouped together to generate the final four themes:

Final Overarching Themes
1. Carpet time can facilitate community building and belonging
2. Carpet time can be a place where identities are formed and constrained
3. Carpet time can be a place of control
4. Carpet time can be a place where pedagogical issues can surface

Table 8: Final four themes identified from all three data-sets

The following is a detailed summary of how the different data sets were brought together to generate the final four overarching themes:

Step one: I analysed each data set in turn using a thematic approach, as explained in sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3. This generated a set of superordinate themes for each data set. These can be viewed in Table 9 below (9a, 9b, 9c).

Step two: Each of the superordinate themes from each data set was written on a post-it note. There were four themes generated from the classroom observations

(Table 9b) and nine from the child-chats (Table 9c). For each of the teacher interviews there were between six and nine themes (Table 9a), so, where a theme was identical across more than one interview (for example, *instruction*, *behaviour*), it was written once on a post-it with a tally to show how many teachers it related to.

Step three: The post-it notes were all placed on a table in three columns, one for each data set. I began by collating identical themes into piles. I knew I could still identify where each theme had come from because I had put a colour on the back of each post-it to identify which data-set it belonged to. If the same word appeared on more than one post-it, these were placed one on top of the other and moved to the side of the table. I saw these as prominent themes because they were replicated. I then began to gather similar themes together, for example, *togetherness*, *community* and *belonging*, were similar words with a similar meaning. I spent time looking back to the origins of the themes within the raw data when I had a set of similar words like these, to decide if they were representing a consistent theme.

Step four: I photographed this first combination of post-it notes, so that I had a record of my initial coding and could go back to it if needed. I then proceeded to try slightly different combinations, moving one theme to join a new pile where there were also similarities. Again, I found it helpful to keep a photographic record and to keep looking back to the raw data to ascertain consistency of meaning.

Step five: After several combinations, and much time pondering over the data, I was satisfied that I had encompassed all of the themes within nine dominant themes (Table 9d shows each dominant theme and the combination of themes from across the data sets that are within it).

Step six: The nine dominant themes were placed onto post-its on the table and I overlapped the post-its where they appeared to correlate. This is shown in Table 9e:

- The themes of *community* and *relationships* were placed together as one overarching theme about carpet time facilitating community building.

- *Identity, struggles* and *emotions* were merged to become the second overarching theme of identities being formed or constrained through carpet time
- *Control* and *physical space* became the third overarching theme of carpet time being a place of control
- *Identity, pedagogy, struggles* and *emotions* became the fourth overarching theme of carpet time being a place where pedagogical tensions can surface

I have illustrated my explanation on the following page in the form of a route map showing the journey from identifying the original superordinate themes from the three data-sets, through to the final four overarching themes.

Table 9: Route map of journey from original superordinate themes from the three data-sets to generating the final four overarching themes

9a Themes identified from teacher Interviews

	T1: Maria	T2: Louise	T3: Emily	T4: Laura
Superordinate themes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruction 2. Behaviour 3. Quiet and calmness 4. Control 5. Struggles 6. Teacher-Child Relationships 7. CT is a place where children's identities are formed or constrained 8. Teacher identity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Togetherness 2. Pedagogy 3. Teacher-Child Relationships 4. Identity 5. Control 6. Belonging 7. Gender 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruction 2. Pedagogical dilemmas 3. Struggles 4. Assessment 5. Being acknowledged 6. Behaviour 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning 2. Pedagogy 3. Control 4. Identity 5. Challenging children 6. External Pressures

9b Themes identified from classroom observations

Carpet time facilitates community building and belonging
Carpet time is where identities are formed and constrained
Carpet time is a place of control

9c Themes identified from child-chats

	Reception class
Superordinate Themes	1. Learning
	2. Children try to exert control

	3. Feelings
	4. Rituals
	5. Behaviour and sanctions
	6. Identity
	7. Carpet rules
	8. Physical space
	9. Struggling to concentrate

9d List of themes identified from classroom observations, interviews and child-chats taken as a whole

		<i>Nos. relate to superordinate themes in charts above for teacher interviews and child-chats</i>				
Theme	Classroom observations	Maria	Louise	Emily	Laura	Child -chats
Community	√		1 Togetherness 6 Belonging			4 Rituals
Identity	√	7 Children's identities are formed or constrained 8 Teacher identity	4 Identity 6 Belonging 7 Gender	5 Being acknowledged	4 Identity	6 Identity
Control	√	1 Behaviour 4 Control	5 Control	6 Behaviour	3 Control	2 Children trying to exert control 5 Behaviour and sanctions 7 Carpet rules
Pedagogy	√	2 Behaviour 3 Quiet and calmness	2 Pedagogy	2 Assessment	1 Learning 3 Pedagogy	1 Learning
Struggles		5 Struggles		2 Pedagogical dilemmas 3 Struggles	5 Challenging children 6 External pressures	9 Struggling to concentrate
Relationships	√	6 Teacher child relationships	3 Teacher child relationships			
Instruction	√	1 Instruction	2 Pedagogy	1 Instruction	2 Learning	1 Learning
Emotions		4 Control	1 Togetherness 6 Belonging			3 Feelings
Physical space						8 Physical space

9e Final list of themes drawn into four overarching themes (the four overarching themes are shown in the final table below)

Final list of themes from all three data-sets	Where covered in relation to the final overarching themes
Community	overarching theme 1
Identity	overarching theme 2, 4
Control	overarching theme 3
Pedagogy	overarching theme 4
Struggles	overarching theme 2, 4
Relationships	overarching theme 1
Instruction	overarching theme 4
Emotions	overarching theme 2 , 4
Physical space	overarching theme 3

9f Final Overarching Themes

Final Overarching Themes
1. Carpet time facilitates community building and belonging
2. Carpet time is where identities are formed and constrained
3. Carpet time is a place of control
4. Carpet time is a place where pedagogical issues can surface

3.4.5 Verification of data and findings

The data collected from the classroom observations were verified informally with the staff on a daily basis. The EYFS team always sat together in the reception classroom to eat. They usually had about twenty minutes after carrying out tasks for preparing for teaching. I would help out with the tasks then sit with them to eat. All of the staff, apart from the nursery teacher, were there for lunch and they all showed a keen interest in what I had observed. I made a point of using this time to chat about my observations and to ask questions. In addition, the EYFS leader had been allocated the role of gatekeeper and she was very keen to discuss the research, enjoying the opportunity for professional conversations about our experiences of teaching in the EYFS. She and I would chat at the end of the day, discussing what I was understanding from the data and clarifying the next steps in the project.

The teacher interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. The teachers were sent a copy of the transcription to verify for accuracy. Three of the four teachers responded with their agreement, but the nursery teacher did not. She was the deputy head teacher and was usually very busy with less time to engage in the research than the other staff. I checked with the gatekeeper that she was still working in the school and found out that she had moved back into key stage two. After a reminder email with no response, I decided not to pursue her again, as I felt it would be too intrusive to do so.

The child-chats were not easy to verify with the children. Most of the child-chats were audio recorded and transcribed. I gained their feedback on the video footage by discussing it with them as they watched it, and we watched, as a whole class, their small world video films of carpet time that they had made. I viewed these as opportunities for data verification.

The findings of the study have not yet been formally shared with the participants. I had intended to meet with the staff to share the findings after I had completed the data analysis. However, this was postponed due to me taking a leave of absence for six months. Since returning to the study and writing up the findings, I have not yet arranged to meet the staff, due to the pandemic, but this is something I intend to do after handing in the thesis and can be offered as a remote meeting if required. Informally, the emerging findings of the study were shared with the staff in the autumn term when I returned for the final stage of the fieldwork. I had shared with them the

emerging themes of 'community' and 'children trying to gain control'. The issues of pedagogy and tensions were a constant theme of conversation between myself and the two main teachers, the nursery and the reception class teacher.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Throughout all stages of the study my decisions and actions were guided by the British Education Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (2011) and (2018) and ethical approval was gained from the University of Sheffield ethics review panel (see appendix 17). Guillemin and Gilliam (2004, p.264) make a useful distinction between, 'procedural ethics', which encompass the processes of formal ethical review and, 'ethics in practice', which addresses the practice of making decisions in response to the ethical dilemmas during the study. The ethical procedures that were outlined in my ethical application related to issues of; gaining informed consent from the participants, ensuring anonymity, confidentiality and trust, and potential for harm for the participants or myself.

Although each of these issues can be described as 'procedural' to some extent, in the sense that I could plan actions or processes to try to secure ethical practice, I also viewed them as 'ethics in practice', as I had to continuously reflect upon and respond to these issues. Having the procedures in place was helpful to support ethical practice, but I found that, 'ethics in practice' went beyond the basic procedures and required an ethical attitude. This meant respecting that each participant and situation was unique, so there was not one standard answer or procedure to fit the same issue (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019, p.216), whilst also respecting my own needs (BERA, 2018), so that the decisions I made did not leave me feeling compromised in relation my personal welfare.

In this section, I explain the ethical procedures outlined in my ethical application, and reflect on some of the ethical dilemmas I encountered that are pertinent to conducting participatory research with children.

3.5.1 Informed consent

For the participants of any research study it is important that they are fully informed of the aims of the study and understand that their participation is voluntary and what it will involve (Wellington, 2015). They should also know that they have the right to

withdraw at any point, be given guidance on how to withdraw and know that they do not need to explain why (BERA, 2018). All of the adult participants were sent information sheets and consent forms (appendix 18 & 19) prior to the study starting and I met with them to explain the aims of the project and what their participation would involve. Cohen et al. (2011, p.55) warn that researchers should guard against participants feeling coerced or obliged into participating in a study. I was conscious that the staff may have felt unable to refuse to participate, in case they were the only one to decline, or because they may have perceived it was expected of them by the headteacher. I explained that, should they chose not to participate, their decision would not be known to other staff. I would still interact with them, but avoid observing them and would not record anything about them in my fieldnotes. All of the staff chose to participate and a new teacher who joined the school in the September also agreed to participate. Although I had given the participants information about how to withdraw from the study, I was conscious that they may feel uncomfortable to approach me or the gatekeeper about this. Therefore, I endeavoured to gain on-going consent through informal means. For example, at each visit, I checked that it was still okay for me to observe and after each school holiday, I checked with the gatekeeper that she had not been notified of anyone wanting to drop out.

Consent for the children to take part in the research was more complex. I gained consent at the start of the study from the headteacher who was the primary gatekeeper. The information for parents and the consent forms were sent out through him, so that parents knew that the school had approved the research (Cohen et al. 2011). Two separate information sheets and consent forms were devised, one for all children (appendices 17 & 18) and one for the focus children (appendices 19 & 20). This was because all of the children would be involved in the study through the classroom observations, but the focus group children would be the focus for the child-chats.

The consent form for all children was designed as an 'opt out' form, at the request of the school, this being their usual practice for gaining consent from a whole class within a short time frame (appendix 21). The information sheet and consent form for the focus children were more detailed, explaining the reason for the focus group and the nature of the child-chats (appendices 22 & 23). It was also made clear that no child would be excluded if they wanted to join in with the child-chat activities. If I did not

have consent for a child to participate, they would not be ignored or excluded, but their data would not be included in the study. If a child with consent was interacting with a child who was not in the study, I was prepared for having to omit some data if necessary, but I was not unduly concerned about this because I knew I would have ample opportunities to collect data and I also had the focus group of children who would engage in child-chats without other children.

I wanted to ensure that parents were fully informed about the research (BERA, 2018) so I arranged a couple of drop-in sessions for parents to meet me and ask questions. No parents attended, but I frequently chatted to them informally when they dropped off their children. Initially, one parent did not consent for her child to take part in the study, but it transpired that she had misunderstood the 'opt out' part of the letter and thought she had given consent.

3.5.2 Reflection: Can young children really give *informed* consent?

Fraser, Flewitt and Hammersley (2014) point out that participatory research with children brings with it new ethical dilemmas. A principal dilemma for me was to do with gaining children's *informed* consent.

The new sociology of childhood (James and Prout, 1997) has facilitated a shift in perspective pertaining to the position of the social child in relation to adults. Although children have less life experience and knowledge than adults, I believe they have equal capacity for making choices and decisions about their needs and communicating these to us (Scott, 2000). This does not equate to them being able to always make wise choices, since their limited life experience and knowledge are likely to mean that they are not fully informed, or yet able to comprehend the full implications of their decisions. Therefore, I moved from a position of seeking informed *consent* to that of facilitating children's on-going *assent* (Kellett, 2005; BERA, 2018). My responsibility was to ensure that I gave the children sufficient information in a way that was comprehensible to them, in accordance with their developmental stages of social and cognitive development (Appendix 3). I also needed to ensure that I facilitated opportunities for the children to exercise *dissent* (Kellett, 2005) should they wish to withdraw.

I drew on Fine and Sandstrom's (1988) advice (cited in Cohen et al. 2011) regarding what to do if a child did indicate that they did not wish to participate. They advise that the child:

Should not be questioned, their actions should not be recorded and they should not be included in a book or article (even under a pseudonym). Where they form part of a group, they may be included as part of a collectivity (Cohen et al. 2011, p.79).

This advice was consistent with the BERA (2018) ethical guidelines in which the researcher is advised to consider whether the observation is of the group collectively or of individuals within the group. My observations of carpet time were of the group collectively, but if I wanted to report on individual children in that context, it would be only those children for whom I had consent.

Although I had informed the children of their right to not participate and to withdraw at any stage, I knew it was unlikely that they would have the confidence to voice their dissent (Alderson, 2004). It felt like a tokenistic gesture on my part. I tried to address this by consistently gaining assent from the children and by looking for signals which may indicate their reluctance to be involved (Flewitt, 2005). For example, I always greeted them after registration and asked if it was okay for me to join them again. I invited all children to join in any of the child-chats and respected their choices whenever they declined my invitation. Two children were originally selected as focus children, but always declined my invitations to join the child-chats. After several visits I stopped asking them and did no more observations of them during their free playtimes, as I read their lack of engagement as a sign of their wish to withdraw.

3.5.3 Anonymity

To protect the participants' identities and respect confidentiality, I used pseudonyms for reporting on the study and will continue to do so in any publications pertaining to the research (Wellington, 2015). The school has also not been identified because it would be possible to identify the individual participants according to their work titles.

I had planned to video some carpet time sessions and then analyse these with the teachers and the children. It was not possible to anonymise the children in the video as their names were used by the teacher but the videos were used solely for the

purpose of analysis by the participants themselves and were not be shared with anyone else. I then deleted the videos as soon as the analysis had been completed.

3.5.4 Confidentiality and trust

I undertook my fieldwork in 2017, prior to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR, 2018) being updated. It is a requirement of the BERA (2018) ethical guidelines that researchers keep up to date with changes in data use regulation and adhere to new legislation. Therefore, I ensured that all data were securely stored on my password protected laptop in an encrypted file and backed up in accordance with the ICT policy of the university where I work. For storage of the two carpet time videos, I set up a separate encrypted file on my laptop and deleted it after the analysis had taken place. My fieldnotes were hand written in a notebook which was kept in my locked filing cabinet when not in use. One of the requirements of the GDPR (2018) is that the participants should know 'how and why their personal data is being stored, to what use it is put and to whom it may be made available' (cited in BERA, 2018, p.48). This information had already been conveyed to them in the participant information sheets.

I was mindful that issues of confidentiality and trust could potentially be an area of concern for the staff. Hammersley and Atkinson (2019, p. 55) highlight the difficulties that may arise when the researcher is seen as an 'expert' or 'critic' in the field they are researching. Some of the staff knew I had worked as an early years consultant and may have felt worried that I would judge the quality of their provision and discuss this with the headteacher. I tried to reassure them that I was not there to judge the quality of provision and that my fieldwork notes were only to be reported in the findings of the study. I explained that I had already reflected upon my position (Berger, 2013) and relationship with the school and felt well prepared to be able to respect the boundaries of confidentiality. I also made it clear though, that in the case of a safeguarding concern, I would follow the school's policy in reporting my concern to the designated safeguarding lead.

However, I realised that giving a verbal assurance to the participants did not guarantee that they would feel protected. I became aware of this on several occasions when observing in the classrooms. One teacher had asked her teaching assistant to take the maths session on the carpet in her absence. The teacher assured me that it was

fine for me to observe and that the teaching assistant had agreed to it. I checked this with the teaching assistant who said she was happy for me to stay, but admitted she was feeling nervous. I felt empathy towards her, but I also believed that she genuinely wanted me to observe. At the end of the day I thanked her again for the observation and she commented that she had spent all week preparing for the session and the other teaching assistant had also helped her in preparing resources. This highlighted for me how my presence impacted the dynamics of the classroom (Bae, 2005). I felt sad that I had caused her anxiety, but I also felt pleased that I had observed her session, because she had taken such pride in preparing for it and was pleased that it had gone well. It also gave her the opportunity to become more involved in the study.

3.5.5 Protecting participants from harm

In my ethical application I acknowledged the potential for emotional stress for the participants from being observed in their classrooms and being invited to reflect on their practice, which could potentially cause them to question and doubt their pedagogical beliefs. I had planned procedures to support me to manage this, including the participants' right to withdraw and sharing the fieldnotes and interview transcripts with the participants. Although these procedures were helpful, I found the practice of dealing with ethically sensitive issues was challenging and never straightforward, as the following example illustrates.

Despite there being a collegiate ethos among the staff, I became aware of tensions between the nursery teacher and the rest of the team in relation to their pedagogical beliefs. The nursery teacher was new to early years and had always taught older children. She favoured a formal, didactic approach, but the rest of the team were all experienced early years practitioners and favoured a more child-centred, play based pedagogy. She was also the deputy headteacher and had been placed in the EYFS to support its improvement. She spoke openly about this in her interview and the other staff alluded to it in their conversations with me. Being party to such knowledge and observing how these tensions played out in practice was interesting to me from a theoretical perspective, but placed me in a difficult position in relation to what and how to report the findings of my study. I had a duty to protect the participants from distress and also to report to them on the findings of my study (BERA, 2018). I did not want to upset anyone, but I also did not want to omit findings from the study that I deemed to

be important. Similarly, I encountered situations in which my interpretation of events was challenged by the staff who viewed them differently, perhaps because they had more familiarity with the context in which they took place. Bea (2005) encountered similar dilemmas in her research and questioned:

Was it ethically defensible to present descriptions/interpretations which fitted my theoretical interests, but which made uncomfortable reading for the people involved? Was I misusing my researcher powers of definition in creating a text highlighting interesting theoretical differences but blurring contextual nuances? (Bea, 2005, p. 298)

I found that continuously reporting back to the participants was helpful in building up trust between us. It also allowed them to contextualise situations for me, supporting me to see things from a different perspective (Bea, 2005). By being open with the staff about the limitations of my analysis and by providing feedback on the findings of the study, I felt I had not compromised my relationship with them or my position as a researcher. I exercised a reflexive approach (Buscatto, 2016) and drew on the procedures that I had outlined in my ethical application.

3.6 Trustworthiness and limitations

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested four criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These were designed as parallel criteria to the established quantitative assessment criteria of validity and reliability, which are problematic when applied to naturalistic studies (Krefting, 1991). In this section I will explain how my study meets these four assessment criteria.

3.6.1 Credibility

Credibility, (parallel to internal validity) is concerned with the extent to which the researcher demonstrates, 'that a true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny is being presented' (Shenton, 2004, p.63). From an interpretivist point of view, I do not believe there is one single truth to be presented, but many interpretations of the same phenomenon, which are examined and represented through my biographical lens. In striving for credibility I have sought to represent, 'those multiple realities revealed by informants as adequately as possible' (Krefting, 1990, p.215).

This entailed spending an extended period of time with the participants, getting to know them firstly, through a familiarisation period (Barley and Bath, 2014), then developing a relationship with them, gaining their trust and developing greater understanding of their social practices (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007). I was mindful to attend the setting on different days of the week so that I could see the participants in different situations and observe all aspects of their classroom experiences. By carrying out in-depth observations, over a prolonged period of seven months, I was able to follow up salient issues that I noticed during my fieldwork (Lincoln and Guba, 1986) giving me a closer view of their experiences of carpet time.

Triangulation, the cross checking of data through examining a range of sources and using different methods (Lincoln and Guba, 1986), is commonly used in research as a strategy for minimising researcher bias and thus, supporting credibility. I chose to use instead, a crystallization strategy as this would support a more detailed exploration of the participants' experiences through using a range of data collection methods and a combination of two different analytic frameworks. Furthermore, as proposed by Tracy (2010), the purpose of researchers using crystallization is, 'not to provide researchers with a more valid singular truth, but to open up a more complex, in-depth, but still thoroughly partial, understanding of the issue,' (p.844).

I also endeavoured to support a closer examination of the lived experiences of the participants and the meanings they attributed to them through the use of peer debriefing and member checking (Lincoln and Guba, 1986). Shenton (2004) advises that:

Opportunities for scrutiny of the project by colleagues, peers and academics should be welcomed, as should feedback offered to the researcher at any presentations (e.g. at conferences) that are made over the duration of the project (Shenton, 2004, p.67).

I took the opportunity to present at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA) conference in which I shared my experiences of trying to elicit children's voices through the use of child-chats (McEvoy, 2018). The preparation and the feedback I received supported me to develop my understanding of the notion of children's voice in research, as outlined earlier in this chapter.

I sent the teachers their interview transcripts for accuracy checking, but I was not comfortable with the term, 'member checks,' as this implies there is a definitive reality

to be tested. I therefore, adopted Tracy's (2010) term, 'member reflections', as being more applicable to my auto/biographical ethnographic design. 'As such, member reflections are less a test of research findings as they are an opportunity for collaboration and reflexive elaboration', (Tracy, 2010, p.844). I chatted informally with the staff during lunchtimes and at the end of the day and shared my thoughts with them about my understanding of situations that I was observing. I knew I had no control over how they might react to my interpretation of the research. We did not always agree in our understanding of events and situations, but I felt confident that, by providing them with the opportunity to reflect and share their responses, I was also opening up the opportunity for 'additional data and elaboration that will enhance the credibility of the emerging analysis' (Tracy, 2010, p.844).

3.6.2 Transferability

Transferability (parallel to external validity/generalisability) is concerned with there being sufficient detail of the fieldwork context for the reader to decide whether the findings can be reasonably applied to another setting (Shenton, 2004). I carried out extensive fieldwork. My descriptions were thick and detailed (Lincoln and Guba, 1986) and I added information for the reader regarding the particular context of the setting, the characteristics of the participants, the methods used and the processes for data analysis (Shenton, 2004). I was also clear in my declaration of the epistemological stance of this study, which is founded on the premise that it is impossible to fully represent the lived experiences of others and apply them to a general population. I view the perceptions of individuals and the contexts of their social practices as fluid, dynamic and unique and I concur with Shenton (2004) who suggests:

It should thus be questioned whether the notion of producing truly transferable results from a single study is a realistic aim or whether it disregards the importance of context which forms such a key factor in qualitative research (p.71).

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability (parallel to reliability) is concerned with striving to enable a future investigator to be able to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004), but not with the intention of guaranteeing the same findings, as might be expected in quantitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that it is likely that the researcher will already have

demonstrated dependability if they have met the criteria for credibility. Nevertheless, Shenton (2004) suggests that:

In order to address the dependability issue more directly, the processes within the study should be reported in detail, thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results (p.71).

I have described and justified the design of my study and provided detailed information about the methods used and the data they generated. It would be unlikely that this study would be replicated in a different setting, but by evaluating the study and reflecting upon its strengths and limitations, I have supported others to be able to consider using some of the different elements of it in their own research.

3.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability (parallel to objectivity) is concerned with the researcher attempting to 'ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher.' (Shenton, 2004, p.72). In my study the findings were a result of both the participants' and my own perceptions since my study is auto/biographical and I openly declared the inclusion of my own interpretation. Two strategies that support researchers to meet this criterion are the use of reflexivity and a clear audit trail (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Krefting (1990) notes:

Research situations are dynamic, and the researcher is a participant, not merely an observer. The investigator, then, must analyze himself or herself in the context of the research. On entering a new culture, the researcher must continuously reflect on his or her own characteristics and examine how they influence data gathering and analysis (p.218).

In exercising reflexivity, I drew on Babcock's (1980) definition of turning back towards myself in an attempt to view my perceptions from the outside, as others see them and to view the perceptions of others from the inside, as they view them. This has helped me to reflect critically on my findings and remain open to different interpretations.

In terms of an audit trail, Shenton (2004) advised that this is presented in a diagrammatic form, illustrating to the reader the steps taken in analysing the data and reaching a final conclusion about the findings. I carried out a thorough and detailed

analysis of all three data-sets and provided a 'route map' to illustrate how the different emerging or subordinate themes were conceptualised into the final four overarching themes. I also included examples of the detailed analysis within the appendix (appendices 15 & 16) of the thesis to support external auditing and evaluation (Lincoln and Guba, 1986).

3.6.5 Sincerity

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four assessment criteria were helpful in evaluating the quality of my research, in terms of parallels to the quantitative measures of validity and reliability, but I also took into consideration the eight quality markers of qualitative research designed by Tracy (2010):

(a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence. (p. 837)

Tracy (2010) defines the quality of the research in terms of it being a worthy topic that is carried out with sincerity and makes a significant contribution to knowledge. I became interested in the topic of carpet time from my own positive and negative experiences of it. I had a sincere desire to find out what it feels like for the children to sit and engage in the lessons on the carpet and to support teachers to make the best out of it. I was aware of my biases, which were my concern for the children who found it difficult to sit still and concentrate, and also my own singular ideas of what makes a great carpet time session. I believed it to be a worthy topic, since little is known about children's and teachers' lived experiences of carpet time and it is a practice that is likely to increase in frequency, as teachers are feeling pressured to teach more formally, in preparation for key stage one (Roberts-Holmes, 2014). My hope was to be able to contribute to supporting future teachers to make decisions about their own carpet time practices, so that they can tailor them to be as beneficial as possible for each child.

3.6.6 Limitations of the methodology

Carrying out an ethnographic study in only one school meant that the findings of my study were limited to one particular context with a smaller number of participants. Had I chosen to undertake a comparative study across several settings I could have generated a wider range of perspectives, which may have revealed significant

differences and further enhanced my knowledge and understanding of carpet time. Nevertheless, even within the smaller context, the amount of data generated was far more than I had anticipated, which may also be viewed as a limitation, as I was not able to fully interrogate all of it. Having three different data-sets generated rich findings, but limited the depth of analysis that I was able to carry out for each set. Each data-set on its own generated sufficient data for a full research study. I could also have limited the participants to just the reception class and perhaps have gained an even greater insight into their experiences. I found that I engaged less with the nursery focus children than I did with the reception class. Due to their younger age (3-4 years) these children were less inclined to engage in child-chats and I was more reliant on classroom observations for this group.

As this was my first experience of carrying out ethnographic research, my lack of experience may also have acted as a limitation. I began the fieldwork with a different understanding of the notion of children's voice in research, with the intention of eliciting children's voices. This may have impacted on the earlier phase of the study in which I was too controlling in my attempts to elicit children's voices and in searching for data that validated or disputed my hypotheses. I may have missed something significant in these early days that would have further contributed to the findings of the study.

3.7 Summary of chapter three

In this chapter I have described and explained the methodology for my study. I declared my philosophical assumptions and explained my interpretative stance that guided the way in which I designed and conducted the study.

I shared my fundamental values and explained how these influenced my decision to frame the research within a children's rights and participation agenda. I gave an account of my understanding of what it means for children to be active participants in research and provided a commentary on the notion of children's voice in research. I justified why I concluded that it was not possible for me to elicit children's voices, but preferable to provide space and time for them to build a relationship with me, in which they were free to communicate their thoughts and ideas.

I discussed how I conducted the study, including a rationale for my choice of crystallization as a strategy for data collection and the ethical considerations I addressed. I explained that my use of IPA for analysing the teacher interviews and child-chats was likely to provide a deeper analysis of their perceptions and support a more nuanced understanding of less visible influences that may contribute to their interpretations. I illustrated, in a detailed and thorough way, my methods for generating and analysing data, so that the reader can evaluate the credibility of my study and understand the context of the findings. Finally, I have discussed the limitations and trustworthiness of my methodological approach, evaluating it against two sets of criteria for trustworthiness and quality.

CHAPTER 4: Findings

4.0 Introduction

Four key findings emerged from my thematic analysis of the data that were generated from my classroom observations, teacher interviews and child-chats:

1. Carpet time can facilitate community building and a sense of belonging
2. Carpet time can be a place where identities are formed and constrained
3. Carpet time can be a place of control
4. Carpet time can be a place where pedagogical issues are exposed

In this chapter I will report on each of these findings in turn. For each of the four findings I will include data from all three data-sets; classroom observations, teacher interviews and child-chats.

4.1 Carpet time can facilitate community building and a sense of belonging

4.1.1 Community and belonging - classroom observations and child-chats

There were five aspects of carpet time which I felt were significant in supporting community and belonging. These were: classroom rituals, sharing of news, carpet rules, teacher-child relationships and celebrations.

Classroom rituals

Each class used carpet time for similar purposes, for example, registration, managing transitions throughout the day and teaching academic skills. However, each class had their own classroom rituals which appeared to support a sense of community and belonging. My understanding of the term 'ritual' in this context is based on my experience as a primary school teacher. A classroom ritual is a way of doing something in the same way, every time that we do it. For example, the way in which we greet each other when we enter the classroom, or the way in which we get ready for hometime. Classroom rituals create routines and predictability, which can promote feelings of security, because we know what to expect and how to conduct ourselves within the class. Knowing how to behave in the group can help us to feel we belong because we know how to fit in. I noticed that the nursery and reception classes did

many things in similar ways, for example, registration, but I also observed that they had their own particular classroom rituals that were unique to their class. For example, the nursery children enjoyed the ritual of guessing what colour their battery-operated candle would be when it was turned off (Appendix 10). In the reception class they chose a child each day to sit on the 'comfy cushion', a place of honour next to the teacher (Appendix 10). The children knew that eventually everyone would have a turn, but the ritual of sitting up straight, straining to be noticed and the teacher's decision making, never failed to capture their interest. The children talked about the ritual of the comfy cushion in several of the child-chats and Vincent spontaneously included it in his small world play.

The daily ritual of taking the register, when each child was personally acknowledged, was very important to the children. In all of the 23 video 'films' of carpet time that the children made, they role played taking the register. In many cases they listed almost all of their classmates' names.

Equally appealing to the children was the opportunity to bring in something from home and show it to the class. When playing with the small world resources in one of our child-chats, Amy described in detail the ritual for showing things:

25. *'Right, you put your hand up... and erm, the teacher says, 'Yes, Danny', or someone*
26. *Em, and then, and then, you say, 'Please can I show something?'* and then you go and
27. *get it out of your tray ... (acts this out with small figure) ...*
28. *Then you bring it back and show it'*
(Pause, carries on playing with the small world resources).
29. *Oh and oh, I'll go and put it back (acts it out with the small world figure), back in my tray,*
30. *come back, sit down.'* (Child-chat: Amy)

When I asked Amy how it felt when someone was showing the class something, she thought for a while and then answered:

38. *'Erm... it's just like... it's just like, (sighs) being resting, it's like resting, it's nice.'*

I associate the feeling of 'being resting', with being comfortable and feeling at home. The object from home is a connection between home and school. Maybe, having this recognised, accepted and celebrated by the class is communicating to her that *she* is recognised, accepted and belongs.

Sharing news

Sharing news featured in several of the carpet time ‘films’ that the children made and was mentioned in the child-chats, as one of the best things about carpet time. I frequently observed children’s enthusiasm and attentiveness when someone was sharing their news on the carpet:

	Fieldnotes (17/07/17) Reception Class News
1	The teacher is absent and the children capitalise on this and coerce the teaching
2	assistant into allowing a slot of ‘news telling’. Dylan takes the lead. It is a long and
3	elaborate story that involves him staying at a hotel for four days and swimming hundreds
4	of miles with a humped back whale. The children are listening and looking at him. Three
5	hands go up, the two Polish children have their own quiet conversation in Polish. Jack
6	has his fingers on his lips, one hand up, eager to be noticed. Two girls have their arms
7	round each other, swaying side to side. There is a sense of togetherness and belonging.

Sharing news on the carpet provided a forum in which children and adults could get to know each other well. The carpet was the place where the children really got to know and understand their teacher (Appendix 6) and that included understanding her expectations for acceptable behaviour.

Carpet rules

The teachers had a clear set of ‘carpet rules,’ which were couched in positive language, ‘good looking, good sitting, good listening’. These rules were displayed on the walls around the carpet area in form of visual prompts and I frequently observed the teachers reminding the children of the rules. In one of the child-chats I asked the children to tell me what the carpet rules were and I was surprised to find that the children had their own ideas of what the carpet rules were and these were couched in negative terms:

- 27. R: *So, what are the carpet rules then?*
- 28. A: *Don't em pick things up off the floor*
- 29. J: *Yeah, don't mess and don't pick things up of the floor*
- 30. E: *Don't be silly*
- 31. A: *Don't be silly, don't em, pull funny faces at the teacher*
- 32. R: *Right*
- 33. V: *Don't do... silly faces*

34. A: *Or don't push*
 35. V: *No..*
 36. A: *Or hurt*
 37. V: *No ... er punching ... or smacking.... or throwing*
 (Child-chat: Amy, Joe, Evie and Vincent)

The children focused on the things you should *not* do on the carpet. They appeared to understand that they were expected to control their behaviour, but at the forefront of the children's minds were the things they anticipated they would 'get told off for'. I sensed that the transgressions such as punching, smacking and throwing are the things that were important to children and made sense to them. Maybe this indicated their need to feel that they were in a safe space, given that they were crowded together on the carpet with very little room to move.

Teacher-child relationships

In both classes I observed that the carpet was the place where the teachers formed a relationship with the children and acknowledged them as members of the class community (Appendix 5). The carpet was where they prayed for each other's sick relatives, mourned the death of a pet, noted achievements, sorted out quarrels and celebrated events. In one of my classroom observations I felt moved by Katie, a child in foster care, who appeared to be really enjoying the experience of belonging to the class community.

	Fieldnotes (19/07/17) Retirement Song
19	The nursery and reception children are all together on the nursery carpet. The children
20	are preparing for the teaching assistant's retirement assembly with a song, 'Here
21	Comes the Sun'. The children sing, rock, sway and look round to each other smiling,
22	some doing the actions, raising their arms in circular movements. Katie is at the front,
23	singing all the words and looking round, smiling at the others. She looks like she is
24	really enjoying herself and appears to exude excitement and pride in what they are
25	doing.

Katie was always the first to sit on the carpet and always sat at the front nearest the teacher. It was great to see her enjoying being part of the group. I wondered if carpet time was a place where she experienced a feeling of belonging. Her drawing of carpet

time, which she drew when she moved up to the reception class, also appeared to illustrate her feelings of being connected to her teacher in a special way:



Figure 1: Katie's drawing of carpet time.

Katie has drawn herself and the teacher on the carpet. The teacher is central on the picture and she is on the right. At the top of the picture (cropped to maintain anonymity), she has drawn a row of yellow boxes to represent the other children. She has written her name above her picture in a blank box and her friends' names in the other ones. Katie appeared to really enjoy carpet times and would always sit as close to the teacher as she could. Her drawing suggested to me that carpet time is a special time for her where she feels she has the attention of her teacher.

In my classroom observations I noted that all of the teachers had a warm and responsive relationship with the children. One teacher was particularly relaxed with the children and often shared her own experiences with them (appendix 25). The children were always very attentive when she shared her personal tales with them and got to know her well.

In contrast, another teacher appeared to be equally as warm in her relationship with the children, but a little more distanced and formal. Her carpet time sessions were not used for chatting informally with the children, she only occasionally shared personal experiences with them and was more focussed on using the time on the carpet for teaching academic skills. However, I noted in one observation that the children appeared to know her so well that they could decipher her social cues, knowing when more informal behaviour would be acceptable:

	Fieldnotes (16/05/17) The Teacher's Birthday
41	It is the teacher's birthday and the day ends with prayers, then birthday candles to blow
42	out. There is a homely atmosphere, a happening that the children are familiar with and
43	they enjoy the celebration. They act more informally with the teacher in this carpet time
44	session. For example, she thanks them for the card and one child answers, 'No

45	problem', causing them all to laugh along with her. They are given sweets as they
46	leave. One boy goes to leave, then turns around and returns and kisses a boy on the
47	head, he is laughing and hugs his friend, then leaves.

It was unusual, in this class, for a child to speak so informally to the teacher. Her laughter was the cue for children to know that she was feeling relaxed and that informality was acceptable in this situation. It was notable that this was the only time I ever saw the children hugging goodbye as they left each other.

Celebrations

In the reception class the teacher assistant had been planning her wedding. It was frequently talked about on the carpet (Appendix 24). The teacher used this as a learning opportunity, so the class had a mock wedding on the carpet and enjoyed party food for the wedding celebration.

	Fieldnotes (17/07/17) The Hen Do
36	The teaching assistant is leaving early to go on her 'hen do'. The children know about
37	this. They are gathered on the nursery carpet and treated to left over sandwiches from
38	the 'wedding' party. As the teaching assistant is leaving, she looks back and shouts,
39	"Bye, bye" and the children wave to her, one child shouting out, "Popadoodle do...,"
40	smiling and waving and Dylan completing the sentence with, "I love you!" They then
41	settle down to watch CBBees on the interactive whiteboard. Silence now, no
42	communication and no wriggling.
43	This observation reminds me of a vignette of family life. It is reminiscent of eating
44	together, lounging in front of the TV. There is the ritual of saying goodbye to a family
45	member, with a common language that belongs only to them.

This carpet time session was not planned, it was an impromptu response to need. The teacher was absent that day and the teaching assistant (TA) was leaving early, so it was arranged the other TA would supervise the children for the last 15 minutes of the day. Yet, this carpet time appeared to contribute to community building and afforded children the opportunity to experience a feeling of belonging.

4.1.2 Community and belonging - teacher interviews

In three of the teacher interviews, the theme of 'community and belonging' was highlighted as being integral to the purpose and value of carpet time. The teachers talked about the importance of: teacher-child relationships, togetherness, belonging and being acknowledged.

Louise, the reception class teacher, explained that spending time on the carpet with the children was when she was most able to get to know the children and develop her relationship with them. She described feelings of 'togetherness,' and being 'close', like belonging to a, 'tight knit family':

*20. I think it just brings us tighter together, the more we sit and talk in that kind of scenario,
21. when it isn't direct teaching it just feels like family time to me, or, if anybody's worried
22. about anything or anybody's upset, it gives you the chance to, and also, to share their
23. accomplishments. (Teacher interview: Louise)*

She recognised that carpet time was a time when she could listen to what the children had to say. This was more difficult to do when children were engaged in their own play activities in the areas of continuous provision in the busy classroom time. She described carpet time as,

*27. a controlled, but safe environment for them, knowing that somebody will listen because
28. there aren't the other distractions (Teacher interview: Louise).*

As well as being a place where children's voices could be heard, Louise noted the therapeutic effect of carpet time in helping children to relax, feel calm and stop for a while:

*13. I think for some of them as well it ... it's just a time to be.... You can see that some of
14. them when they've been outside, they just need that five minutes to ... collect
15. themselves a little bit and I think carpet time gives them that opportunityyeah, just to
16. stop. (Teacher interview: Louise)*

Louise viewed carpet time as a place of belonging and calm, a place where children are able to pause for a while and 'just be'.

The nursery teacher, Maria, also acknowledged that carpet time supported the children to develop their relationship with the teacher. She described how Lucy would sometimes catch her eye at carpet time and wink at her. Maria interpreted this small gesture as an indication of Lucy's feeling of connection with her. This made me think that three year old Lucy must feel really important to her teacher. Her wink suggests

that she has her own unique relationship and special bond with Maria. Lucy is confident that she means as much to Maria as Maria does to her.

Emily, a newly qualified reception class teacher, explained how registration at carpet time gave her the chance to acknowledge each child:

8. *Just to say, like just literally saying good morning to every single one of them that*
9. *makes them feel.... Are you happy, settled, are you ready to work, are you ready to learn?*
10. *It just makes them feel acknowledged Like they're here, they're happy, they're settled.*
(Teacher interview: Emily)

She explained that she viewed this as an important part of the day because when she and the children were in the continuous provision areas she may not have the opportunity to interact with some of the children during the course of the day.

For these three teachers there was a shared recognition that group gathering times on the carpet, regardless of the focus, provided opportunities for them to build up their class community and acknowledge individual children.

4.2 Carpet time can be a place where identities are formed and constrained

4.2.1 Identity - classroom observations

Throughout the fieldwork I observed many incidents on the carpet which influenced the children's developing sense of self. The following two examples illustrate this:

	Fieldnotes (19/07/17) Cool Hairdo
38	After story time the teacher dismisses the children. She says, "I'm going to choose
39	someone with a cool hairdo," and she sends Jack to look in the mirror at his hair. Jack's
40	hair is sweaty and pushed back, sticking up. He looks at his reflection and laughs,
41	Stanley also laughs and then, others join in too. Jack turns round to the class, looking
42	embarrassed and shouts angrily, "It's not funny!" but the teacher responds, "It is a bit
43	funny". Jack laughs and the teacher then explains how, when they're listening to the
44	story on the carpet and they're tired, they all do different things, like pushing their
45	fingers through their hair and she points out that Dylan sometimes sucks his thumb
46	when they are having a story. Dylan laughs. He appears to enjoy the joke with the
47	rest of the class.

In this situation the teacher shared a joke with Jack. Jack saw the funny side of the joke until his classmates started to laugh and he felt threatened. The teacher successfully diffused the situation by shifting the focus of attention away from Jack. As she did so, she was supporting Jack’s emerging sense of self-identity by fostering self- awareness and self- acceptance.

In contrast, however, the following incident illustrates how some teacher-child interactions that take place on the carpet may leave children with a lingering sense of frustration and doubt about themselves. This involved Tom, who has curly hair.

	Fieldnotes (16/06/17) I Don’t Want Curly Hair
22	At the end of the carpet time session the teacher says, “Stand up if you have ginger
23	hair, you can go out now. Stand up if you have blonde hair, off you go. Stand up if you
24	have curly hair...” Tom stands up, pulling at his hair and says, “But I don’t want curly
25	hair.” The teacher tells him she loves his curly hair and reminds him how he has tried
26	in the past to make it straight by using hair gel and having it cut, but it never works and
27	is still curly. She finishes by saying, “Anyway, God just wants it to be curly,” and tells
28	him to go out to play.

I felt concerned for the teacher, as well as the child, in this situation. It was clearly a sensitive issue. I was aware that she may have felt self- conscious as I was observing. I wondered why she ended the conversation so abruptly. Was it because she was unsure of how to help the child to accept his curly hair? Was she feeling self-conscious in my presence? Or, was she aware of the other children waiting for their turn to be dismissed? Whatever the teacher’s reason was to shut down the conversation with Tom, the consequence was that his understanding of his identity was influenced and possibly constrained by this interaction with his teacher on the carpet. The definitive answer, ‘God just wants it to be curly’, is a difficult concept for the child to accept. It may imply to him that he has no control over his developing identity, or, that the God he is encouraged to worship does not have his best interests at heart.

Children could also feel exposed when engaging in whole group carpet time. In one example, Harry’s under-developed speech made it difficult for the teacher to understand what he wanted. He asked to take off his jumper but the teacher could not understand him and she responded by saying, ‘*Big boy’s voice, please*’ (fieldnotes,

3/05/17:48). When he tried again, she corrected his manners saying, ‘*Can I take my jumper off, please*’ (fieldnotes, 3/05/17:49). Harry appeared to be embarrassed and looked round at the other children, as if checking to see if they had noticed (Appendix 11).

In the other class, the teacher reminded Joe of how she expected him to behave when they went into the hall. She made a reference to the previous day when he had been sent to sit on the teaching assistant’s knee during the school concert. She asked him why this had happened. He did not answer and started to blush. Joe appeared to feel embarrassed, as the humiliation he had experienced on the previous day was exposed in front of the class. (Appendix 14).

The children could also feel exposed if they were unsure of how to behave. Sometimes the expected codes of behaviour for carpet time could be confusing.

	Fieldnotes: (18/04/17) Confusion (nursery)
11	The morning ritual of prayers, candle, count down and guessing the colour of the
12	candle has just finished and the teacher is about to start the story. Alfie shouts out, ‘I’m
13	hot,’ and the teacher responds with a question, ‘So, what do you need to do?’ Alfie
14	mumbles his reply, ‘I need to take my jumper away,’ and the teacher replies, ‘What did
15	you say? I can’t hear you?’ Alfie repeats his answer, ‘I need to take my jumper away,’
16	in a clear voice this time, and the teacher responds, ‘No, you need to stay on the carpet
17	when we are here. Take your jumper off and keep it on your knee’.

It was difficult for Alfie to know how best to handle the situation of feeling too hot on the carpet. He wanted to take off his jumper but he thought that this would mean putting his jumper away in his tray and this would involve leaving the carpet. Alfie appeared to be unsure of whether this was the right answer, so he mumbled his response, maybe he was wary of the teacher’s reaction. However, his mumbling caused to the teacher to react by asking, ‘*What did you say? I can’t hear you?*’ This then left him with no option other than to state clearly what he thought he needed to do, but he was then exposed as being unable to give the correct answer. There were, however, also many more positive interactions that promoted children’s sense of self-esteem and confidence in their developing identities:

	Fieldnotes (28/06/17) Megan Takes the Register (reception)
1	The children gather on the carpet before the teacher joins them. They are chatting to
2	each other and to me. Megan sits on the teacher's chair and pretends to take the
3	register. The children are giggling. The teacher arrives but she lets Megan continue,
4	saying, "Ok, so Megan is the teacher today". Megan has a speech impairment, but
5	confidently continues to call out the names, "Dud mornin, Dorge..." The children
6	understand her and they respond respectfully when she calls their name, saying, "Good
7	morning, Miss".

The ordinary events and happenings during carpet time have potential to influence children's self-awareness and self-esteem. However, a less obvious feature of carpet time was the impact of the teacher's identity and emotions on her interactions with the children.

The classroom observations revealed that the adults' identities and emotions were sometimes exposed during carpet time and impacted on children's experiences (Appendix 26). I wrote the fieldnotes below on the morning after the terrorist bomb attack in Manchester, in which one of the school's pupils was injured. It reveals the teacher's struggle to maintain her composure, a central component of her teacher identity, at the time when she was feeling vulnerable and upset.

	Fieldnotes (23/05/17) The Manchester Bombing
	8.30 am:
12	The feeling of shock is tangible. There are parents and children outside, crying. The
13	staff are quickly organising a school assembly. There is a tense atmosphere; a strange
14	combination of chaos, yet calmness. The staff discuss whether the early years children
15	should attend assembly or not. It is decided that the nursery teacher should attend, as
16	she has taught the injured child and knows the family well. I stay behind and supervise
17	the children with the reception class teacher.
	Snack time, after the assembly:
22	The teacher's eyes are red and puffy. The snack session follows its normal routine
23	with songs and stories, but the children are shouting the refrains too loudly. One child
24	sits with her hands over her ears and the teacher is frequently saying, "Shh, shh," and

25	reminding children to, “use your quiet voices,” “say excuse me,” and, “just wait...” A
26	child makes a contribution, “If my gingerbread man was real I wouldn’t eat him, I’d look
27	after him,” but the comment goes unnoticed and another states, “I have a spinner at
28	home”, which causes a flurry of excitement among the children who all start talking
29	about spinners. The teacher says, “I don’t like them,” then, “Shh, shh. Which story
30	shall we have next?” bringing the group back under control and into the regular routine.
31	I sense this teacher is in turmoil. A child she has taught and cared for is injured and
32	the circumstances are shocking. She is surrounded by three and four year olds. They
33	need her to keep them safe and they are all craving her attention. She is still in shock.
34	The children need her to be their teacher, but maybe she feels like a vulnerable child
35	herself, reeling with emotion, fearful of the terror Manchester endured last night. Is she
36	trying to keep her class under control to feel a sense of security again, for herself and
37	for her children? Is the safety of the routine her haven to cling on to in this moment?

This teacher showed enormous courage as she tried to preserve the children’s sense of continuity and routine that morning. She focussed on the tangible elements of her role, as a teacher, at a time when she was emotionally overwhelmed.

In another classroom I observed how that the teachers’ feelings and moods could have an impact on children’s developing sense of self. In the autumn term, a newly qualified teacher was appointed as the reception class teacher. It was almost half-term, she was feeling unwell and had lost her voice, so she was team teaching with her teaching assistant (TA1):

	Fieldnotes (16/10/17) Trying to be Heard (nursery children, now in reception class).
44	The teacher introduces a story map for the book, ‘The Hungry Caterpillar’. The children
45	are restless. Katie moves to the front, directly in front of the teacher. The teacher asks,
46	“What happened next?” Katie shouts out, “Hungry”, the teacher responds, “Quiet, quiet
47	hands means quiet”. Katie looks down at the carpet and picks at a loose thread then
48	starts picking her nose. The lesson continues. The children appear to zone in and out,
49	looking at the carpet, swaying, yawning and stretching arms up. Ten minutes later
50	there is much more movement on the carpet. The teacher is saying, “Shh, shh, quiet
51	hand up. We need to practise that”. Katie stands up, “Miss, miss”, the teacher
52	responds, “Sit down on your bottom, Katie”. Katie sits down and rests her head on her
53	knees, looking down at the carpet. The teacher leaves to get a different resource and

54	the TA takes over. Katie shouts out, “Mrs Newman, Mrs Newman” (TA1), but gets no
55	response. Mrs Newman is trying to re-engage the children by reminding them of
56	something that happened earlier. She then introduces the activity and shows them
57	some ‘ <i>special brown paper</i> ’ that they are to use. Katie shouts out, “What about if we
58	want to make our leaves green?” She gets no response. The TA does a quick re-cap
59	of the story to remind the children of the sequence. Katie is sitting with her head resting
60	on her knees, looking at the floor.
61	I felt upset to see Katie trying to get her voice heard and not being able to. I wonder
62	what she was thinking and feeling when she had her head on her knees and when she
63	was told to sit down on her bottom. What lessons was she learning from this? I wonder
64	if the instruction, to use the brown paper, worried her. She wanted the leaves to be
65	green because that is the way she sees them. She likes things to be consistent and in
66	order. Is this important for her sense of security? Her question was important to her,
67	as she was not sure how she could make the leaves green if the paper was brown.

4.2.2 Identity - child-chats

Spending time together on the carpet, as a whole class, enabled the children to get to know each other. They demonstrated an awareness of each other’s personalities and position within the social make-up of the class. This was illustrated in one of the child-chats when watching themselves on the video:

82. V: *Arthur is the expert. He knows everything about writing, he knows about dehydrating*
83. *too*

84. D: *He knows nothing. People sometimes shout out, so he knows the answer*

85. E: *Look at Joe, he’s not sitting properly*

86. A: *We wiggle our bottoms to get comfy*

87. J: *I go at the back cos I’m a bit big, so small people go at the front*

When playing with the small world resources, during our child-chats, the children characterised the figures as children in their class. These characterisations closely corresponded with my own observations. For example, they placed Dylan (Appendix 4) by the teacher so that he would behave himself, they said that Arthur had his hand up because he always wanted to be first to answer the questions and they portrayed Joe rolling on the floor as he so often did.



Figure 2: Small world carpet time film (Vincent, Amy + Evie)

This group had included the dining hall (bottom left of picture) in their film and acted out being dismissed from the carpet and running into the hall, then being brought back to sit on the carpet as a punishment for running out of the classroom. The child sitting next to the teacher was placed there because he was rolling around on the carpet at the back of the class. This is something that often happened to Joe, one of the focus children

The children's understanding of their teacher's personality was equally perceptive. For example, when watching the video of their carpet time they mocked the teacher when she said, 'Excuse me':

(Teacher on video says, 'Excuse me')

38. A: *Excuse me... excooose me (mimics in a posh voice)*

39. E: *(laughing) Excuse me*

40. R: *Why is she saying that?*

41. V: *Excooose meee (mimicking and laughing)*

42. E: *Because we started talking*

43. R: *Ah, right, are you not supposed to be talking?*

44. All: *No*

(Child-chat: Amy, Evie, Vincent)

I later analysed the video with the staff who were surprised to see how Vincent experienced carpet time. Vincent was the only non-white child in the reception class, he was British, of Indian heritage and spoke English. Vincent was a quiet and reserved boy, who would often play alone when outside. He was chatty in the child chats, but usually appeared tired on the carpet and distracted. During the video he is seen trying to engage the child next to him as his talk partner. The child turns away and chooses a different talk partner. Vincent then tries to engage the child on his other side, but the same thing happens, so he turns around looking for another child behind him. By this time all of the children have found a talk partner and are busy discussing the topic, as instructed by the teacher. Vincent sits still, looking blankly ahead.

When the staff watched the video, Vincent's experience generated a lot of questions from them. They wondered why the two children turned away from Vincent, wondering if it was because his skin colour was different to the others in the class, or if it was because he was a quiet child and might not speak to them. I wondered what Vincent was learning about his place in the class. Although Vincent usually played alone, he was very chatty and quietly confident when he spoke to adults. I wondered if he had experienced other times of feeling left out, as he had been in this carpet time session.

When I was chatting with Vincent on his own, playing with the small world resources, he told me he doesn't like people sitting next to him on the carpet and that when they follow him he just '*jumps away*' (child-chat, Vincent: 32). I asked:

11. R: *Where do you like to sit best of all?*
12. V: *There*
13. R: *Oh, right at the edge of the carpet, there*
14. R: *So, who do you like to sit next to?*
15. V: *(Pause) ... No one*
(Child-chat: Vincent)

His small world play focussed upon children who are the centre of attention on the carpet, children who the teacher talks about, children who push, get time out and end up on the thunder cloud:

17. V: *Erm, er, when Miss says come on the carpet and she says, 'We got some sad news*
18. *or happy news or good news or bad news, then, then and it's about someone, well, not*
19. *me,*
20. R: *Mm*
21. V: *Or other people, not me*
22. R: *Why is it not you?*
23. V: *Because some... I don't do anything outside, I'm just tired outside.*
(Child-chat: Vincent)

Vincent's repeated use of the phrase, '*...well, not me*', appeared to resonate with his sense of self and his perception of his position in the class. He portrays himself as being less prominent than other children, and maybe he feels he is also less important.

4.2.3 Identity - teacher interviews

Louise's interview showed that she had awareness of the potential of carpet time to impact children's sense of identity. The school used an online communication tool (Tapestry) enabling two-way communication between teachers and parents. Louise made use of the information she received from parents about their children, to focus

the attention on individual children during the carpet time sessions. She often shared a child's news with the rest of the class:

322. *I can stoke the fire for them, because you know there are children sometimes who must*
323. *be bursting to tell you something but they won't because they're just that little bit too*
324. *shy, whereas that's giving us a nice way to just get in to have a chat with them....that*
325. *we provide them with an opportunity to feel part of a larger group.*
(Teacher interview: Louise)

For Louise, developing the children's self-esteem and confidence was one of the main purposes of carpet time:

130. *And often when they, they'll bring in some writing, say from home and they'll be very*
132. *very proud of it and they want the praise from, not just from us, but from their peer*
133. *group as well.* (Teacher interview: Louise)

For a child to receive affirmation from their teacher in this way must feel very satisfying and generate self-esteem, but I think that getting recognition from their peers may be so much more empowering, particularly at this young age when they are just developing their sense of individual identity.

In summary, the nature of teacher-child relationships and the interactions that take place in the context of carpet time, can potentially influence children's perceptions of themselves. The children's experiences of carpet time involved both positive and negative experiences. On many occasions the teachers actively supported children's self-awareness and boosted their self-esteem, but they were also able to inadvertently constrain children's identities. This was more acutely apparent when the teachers' own identities were compromised by the underlying influence of their personal circumstances and emotions.

4.3 Carpet time can be a place of control

4.3.1 Control - child-chats

The children were very aware that carpet time was the time when the teacher had control over the class:

42. *R: Are you allowed to talk to each other?*
43. *J: Yeah, when the teacher says talk*
44. *E: If you wanna ask the grown up something, you've gotta put your hand up*

45. E: *If you wanna go the toilet and you're on the carpet you gotta put your hand up*

46. J: *Yeah, and sit when she says, 'Sit down.'*

(Child-chat: Joe and Evie)

The children frequently talked about the carpet rules and the behaviour chart that was displayed in the carpet area. The chart consisted of pictures of a sunshine (appropriate behaviour), a thinking cloud (first offence) and a thunder cloud (unwanted behaviour). Children's names were placed onto the symbols in response to their behaviour throughout the day. The children were very aware of who was in the thunder cloud:

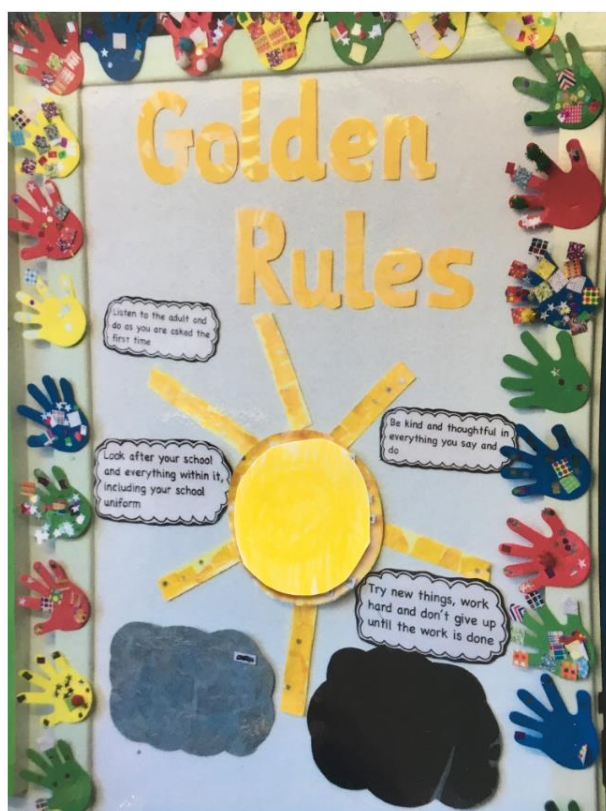


Figure 3: Display showing the thunder cloud.

The children frequently talked about the thunder cloud and worried about having their name placed within it. The sunshine has all of the children's names on it (covered in the image). The grey cloud is the 'thinking cloud' and the black one is the 'thunder cloud'. If a child misbehaved they would have their name removed from the sunshine and put onto the thinking cloud. If they misbehaved again, they would have it placed onto the thunder cloud. Being in the thunder cloud carried the consequence of not having a treat on the Friday. In the image, Dylan's name (obscured in the image) is in the thinking cloud. It was frequently there, but was always returned to the sunshine at the start of a new day

The video 'films' that the children made of carpet time sometimes involved a child being put onto the thunder cloud. Vincent's small world play included role playing a child pushing another child, going onto the thunder cloud and then missing out on treats:

55. V: *Well, so them two are in the thunder cloud*

56. R: *Are they? Why? What have they done?*

57. V: *They they, they pushed me over*

58. R: *Yeah*

59: V: *And they pushed her over and her*
 60: R: *Oh, so they're in the thunder cloud now are they?*
 61: V: *Yeah, so they're not having treats so that moves there*
 62: R: *What are they having for their treats?*
 63: V: *Nothing... They're having time out time*
 64: R: *Are they?*
 65: V: *Yeah... we have a comfy cushion and can you see like there?*
 66: R: *Yeah, is that a comfy cushion?*
 67: V: *No, that's not a comfy cushion, but it's comfy, but it's for some time out and they're the*
 68: *thunder cloud where the ... and these are in the thinking cloud*
 69: R: *So, these are having treats?*
 70: V: *Yeah, but except these*
 (Child-chat: Vincent)

In one of the child-chats with Joe, we were watching the video of carpet time together. I noticed that, in the video, he was tracing his finger on the floor and occasionally looking up towards the teacher. He explained to me that he was secretly drawing power rangers on the carpet, but the teacher didn't know:

49. R: *What are you doing now?*
 50. J: *No that was a secret I drew. I... I ...I always draw on the floor to make a power*
 51. *ranger sign, like this shhh shhh shhh shhh (actions drawing lines on carpet)*
 52. R: *So you draw power ranger signs on the carpet?*
 53. J: *Yes but the teachers don't see me do it*
 54. R: *Oh, what would the teachers say if they saw you?*
 55. J: *Whispers (inaudible)*
 56. R: *are you allowed to do that?*
 57. J: *No*
 58. R: *Ahhh (laughing)*
 59. J: *Nobody ever sees me, or not, they never see me when I draw on the carpet*
 60. R: *Is that what you always do?*
 61. J: *No, sometimes I don't draw on the carpet*
 62. R: *Oh, sometimes you don't, so what are you doing now then?*
 63. J: *I don't draw with a pencil, I just draw with my finger*
 64. R: *Yeah I know, I know that, but why do you do that then?*
 65. J: *Cos I like it*
 66. R: *Do you like drawing while you're thinking about things?*
 67. J: *No, I like(inaudible) I like drawing the best*
 (Child-chat: Joe)

Joe seemed to gain satisfaction in managing to re-assert a feeling of control in this subtle way without his teacher knowing.

4.3.2 Control - classroom observations

In several of the classroom observations I noticed that, like Joe, other children liked to hold onto a sense of control:

In year one the handwriting lesson involved children sitting on the carpet in rows and tracing a letter on the back of the child in front of them. They enjoyed this and giggled as they traced the letters on each other's backs:

	Fieldnotes (8/11/17) A Sneaky Flick! (year one)
1	The teacher models how to write the letter, 'q' and says the rhyme, "Round the queen's
2	head, down her long hair.... and a flick". The children join in the rhyme, but are shouting
3	the words loudly and end by raucously chanting the word, 'flick'. The teacher tells
4	them, "That was silly behaviour," and warns them that they have to be sensible. "Ok,
5	now do it on your partner's back, but if we're being silly, we can't do it." The children
6	trace the letter on their partners' backs. They recite the rhyme in a sensible manner,
7	but just cannot resist ending it with a sneakily loud, 'Flick!' They look round at each
8	other, smiling, with a sense of achievement and there is an unspoken
9	acknowledgement of having got away with this minor challenge to the teacher's
10	authority. There is a real sense of connectedness among this group of children and I
11	sense the teacher sees this too, as she smiles along with them.

In the nursery class, Lucy would always go to the sink when a transition to the carpet was signalled to take place (for example, from tidy up time to the carpet, from outdoor play to the carpet) (Appendix 8). She would play in the water, washing her hands until the transition was completed. Once the children were settled, she would either come to the carpet voluntarily, or wait until the teacher called her. Lucy had established her own routine for managing this transition; she would wash her hands, play in the water and then step over the children carefully to take her place at the front of the class nearest to the interactive whiteboard. It was interesting to see the replication of this same routine in the outdoor play area. Lucy was always the last child to join the line and was usually playing in the water outside when called to join them. She did not like to conform and found her own way of asserting her independence.

There were other occasions when the children challenged the teacher's authority and on some occasions the teachers and teaching assistants struggled to maintain control of the class:

	Fieldwork (16/10/17) Phonics (nursery children now in reception class)
--	--

18	The session starts chaotically. Katie is told by the teacher to stop shouting out. A
19	reminder is given for 'quiet hands'. The teacher introduces the letter 'u' and shows the
20	class some objects in a bag beginning with 'u'. She holds up a pair of underpants and
21	the children are unable to contain their laughter, some rolling over on top of each other.
22	The teacher tries to re-engage the class by promising a shiny sticker for anyone who
23	can write the letter 'u' this afternoon. Thea and her friend are giggling and pointing to
24	the back of Bobby, whose underpants are showing. The teacher stops the lesson and
25	asks them what they are giggling about. Thea gets moved to the side of the group and
26	blushes. Alfie is looking round, holding his foot and picking his nose, one child has his
27	back to the board and another child shouts out that Lucy has a pom-pom in her hand.
28	The teacher ends the session by giving the children a card with a word on it. When
29	they blend the phonemes together to read the word, they are allowed to post their card
30	in the box and leave the carpet. Alfie shouts out twice, "Miss, I haven't got a card".
31	After the third shout out he is given a card and quickly sounds out his word, posts the
32	card in the box and runs to line up for lunch.
33	Sometimes, carpet time can appear to be like a parallel universe. The teacher is
34	teaching phonics, but the children have their own issues to attend to: Thea, laughing
35	at Bobby's underpants; Lucy, trying to conceal the pom- pom in her hand; another child
36	trying to tell Miss that Lucy is breaking the carpet rules; Alfie, desperate to get his card
37	– his pass – his escape from the carpet.

There was a marked difference in the behaviour of the children at times when they were on the carpet without the supervision of a teacher. On these occasions, carpet rules were forgotten and the space became the children's territory; a social place, full of chatter, movement and noise (Appendix 9).

4.3.3 Control - teacher interviews

The teachers indicated that they valued carpet time as the time when they could take control of the class. Maria liked to have tight control over the class during carpet time. In her interview she talked about the first time she taught the nursery class, having previously taught in key stage 2 (7-11 year olds):

*48. When I first went in it was like herding sheep and I didn't really know what to do, or how
49. to do anything, but, what I did like about the first bit of carpet time ... after they'd been in,
50. in continuous provision, it was almost like a bit of down time ... and that little bit of*

51. *structure, because I did feel like it was a little bit like, 'AAAH, ahhhh, ahhh', they were all*
52. *just going everywhere and I just didn't know what to do.'*

(Teacher interview: Maria)

She described carpet time being important for:

34. *Getting them to sit down, getting them quiet* (Teacher interview: Maria).

She explained how she used to have a 'carpet spot' (small mat) for some children to get them to sit on the carpet without moving round all the time and that once she knew they could sit still she felt she could then teach them:

96. *X, X and X had a special spot to sit on and, erm, that took a while, but after all that, but I*

97. *think, well, if you can come down and you can sit on the carpet you can pretty much*

98. *follow instructions and you're fairly conformist and I... I know what I can do with you*

99. *(laughs)* (Teacher interview: Maria)

When we discussed the carpet rules, Maria stated that they had been, '*drummed in from the beginning*', explaining that she and her teaching assistant had to model to the children how to cross their legs on the carpet by sitting on the floor with them at the start of the year:

139. *That has been drummed in from the beginning and it even started like, me and S would*

140. *sit at the front cross legged and say show me good sitting because otherwise, they'd look*

141. *at you and they'd try and do their legs like you're sitting on a chair (laughs).*

(Teacher interview: Maria)

In contrast to Maria, Louise had a more relaxed approach with the children and was less controlling. In her interview she acknowledged that it was necessary to have some carpet rules at the start of the year because if felt like she was, '*herding cats*' when she was trying to get the children to sit and listen to her. However, she compared this to her carpet time sessions towards the end of the year and pointed out the difference:

453. *At the beginning of a year it's like it feels like, like you're herding cats sometimes, the*

454. *fun is not there, because it's all about a little bit of trying to control what's going on, but*

455. *now, you see when we get off the carpet we've had some fun, you can have a joke with*

456. *them, a good laugh with them, everybody's falling about laughing and you know it's not*

457. *going to explode because it's like October and they all can't, they all seem to learn...not*

458. *the rules, I mean you have to have some carpet rules don't you?'*

(Teacher interview: Louise)

The other two teachers, Emily and Laura did not speak directly about the topic of control on the carpet, but both acknowledged the difficulties of trying to keep children’s attention when teaching on the carpet.

4.4 Carpet time can be a place where pedagogical issues are exposed

4.4.1 Pedagogy - teacher interviews and classroom observations

All of the teachers used carpet time for whole class teaching of academic subjects such as literacy, phonics and mathematics, but they differed in their opinions about the extent to which whole class teaching on the carpet supported all children to learn. The interviews with the teachers, about their understandings of the purpose and value of carpet time, provided an insight into their individual values and pedagogical practice. The interviews also highlighted that some teachers sometimes struggled to reconcile their pedagogical beliefs with their carpet time practice.

4.4.1.1 Louise

Louise was the reception class teacher and EYFS leader. She was the most experienced EYFS teacher in the team. In her teaching, both the academic and affective domains of education were closely integrated. Louise’s pedagogical style was child-centred and interactive. It was not unusual for Louise to conduct unplanned carpet times and deviate from the academic domain of learning, if an opportunity arose to support the children’s social and emotional development. She would often call the children to the carpet to discuss something with them or to support each other with problems they were encountering:

	Fieldnotes (18/04/17) Impromptu Carpet Time
83	The teacher calls the class together, “Can you all help me, please? Come here and sit
84	down a minute”. She sits on the carpet with the children, with her arm round Kaleb.
85	He is smiling. She explains to the children that she has been asking Kaleb about his
86	holidays and he said he stayed in all the time and did nothing. The teacher says, “Ok,
87	so he stayed at home the whole two weeks, but, did he just sit on the floor in his house
88	like this, for two weeks and do nothing? Do you think this could be true?” The children
89	laugh and shout out, “No”. Kaleb laughs and puts his hands over his mouth. The

90	teacher then asks them if they can help him remember what he did, by telling him what
91	sort things they did in their holidays. Many hands go up and they tell her about visiting
92	relatives, going to the park, the caravan and playing in the garden. Much later in the
93	day, Kaleb approached me, smiling. He leaned in and murmured to me, "I played
94	football outside". We had a brief conversation about this and then he wandered off to
95	play on the slide. I was impressed by the shift in Kaleb's confidence from the start of
96	the day when he could not retrieve and articulate a memory to share with his teacher.
97	Through the support of his teacher and his peers he was able to remember what he
98	did in the holidays and was proud to share this with me.

In her interview, Louise described taking a flexible approach in her teaching, adapting how she used carpet time according to what she wanted to achieve. For example, she said that she differentiated her teaching on the carpet by teaching children in smaller numbers, grouped by ability, as this supports the teaching of academic skills, but also, helps children who may need more attention, due to their emotional or behavioural needs. When speaking about one child, she said:

*63. I think sometimes he struggles with being in a big group because he does want a lot of
64. attention ... even though he's in the middle to top for ability, in terms of his behaviour
65. management he's better off in a smaller group and with me.'*
(Teacher interview: Louise)

Louise explained that she positions the children on the carpet in different ways depending upon the purpose of the session. For example, facing the interactive whiteboard for instructional teaching of academic skills, in a circle for discussions and in friendship groups for snack times. She tailored the length of her carpet time sessions to accommodate the children's levels of concentration, starting with short ten-minute blocks at the start of the year and slowly extending these to longer sessions.

Louise started every carpet time session with a 'chat', regardless of what the intended focus of the session was. She believed that this use of carpet time supported children's social and emotional development and she directed her support to those children who lacked confidence to speak within the group:

*210. At the beginning of the year when they were getting to know me and each other, you
211. got ... you know, like 25 hands go up, so you ask the other five, because you're trying
212. to draw them into the group.*

(Teacher interview: Louise)

Louise also valued carpet time for teaching academic skills:

216. *In terms of learning, I think they need some carpet time to be directed, this is how we*
217. *do this, to model, and particularly in writing in the morning in literacy, where at the*
218. *moment, every day we are modelling sentence writing, you know like the spacing, the*
219. *full stops, the capital letters ... I think they need to be exposed to that, and... we're all*
220. *learning at the same time...*

(Teacher interview: Louise)

She used carpet time as an opportunity for teacher assessment and to act quickly if children need help:

264. *It's part of assessment. And particularly for, understanding, so in terms of the*
265. *questions that I ask or the questions that they'll ask, you'll think, actually you've not*
266. *understood that, so we'll have to go over that again later, or tomorrow, or in provision.*

(Teacher interview: Louise)

Louise valued the opportunities that carpet time provided for assessing children's personal, social and emotional development (PSED):

280. *To see who the confident children are... and who.. is reluctant and...who needs a bit*
281. *more reassurance with maybe their speaking or... so in terms of the PSED I think it's a*
282. *useful way of assessing that particularly at the beginning of the year, to see which*
283. *children need a little bit of support with listening and attention.*

(Teacher interview: Louise)

Louise's descriptions of her teaching on the carpet were consistent with a child-centred pedagogy, which is attentive to the individual needs of children and uses observational assessment as the starting point for teaching. She shared an example of how she responded to a conversation with a child, that took place at carpet time. She described how a whole topic on airports stemmed from a spontaneous conversation with Vincent about one of his trips to India:

353. *He said, just out of the blue on the carpet, I don't know what we were talking about, it*
354. *was nothing to do with this... 'You know when I went to India?' So I said, 'Yes,' and all*
355. *the other children were listening to him and he said, 'I went on a bus and then on an*
356. *aeroplane and when I got off I didn't know I was in India'. So I said, 'Well, how did you*
357. *not know?' So, he said, 'Well, I just didn't know because it looked the same as when I*
358. *got on the plane', which it would to him, wouldn't it? because it's just an airport. I said,*
359. *'And when did you realise you were in India?' He said, 'Well, when we got to, I think it*
360. *was Grandma's house,' he said, 'it was really hot and the clothes were different.'*
361. *'So, then they were talking about, 'I've been to the airport and, 'I've been to the airport'.*
362. *So, today just before dinner we found a clip on Youtube of a take-off from the window of*
363. *a plane, so we all pretended we were going off on an aeroplane and it just sparked lots*
364. *of talk, loads of conversations.*

(Teacher interview: Louise)

Vincent's telling of his experience must have taken up at least five minutes of carpet time, but Louise believed that it was important for him and allowed him to explain his thoughts. By doing this she was able to better understand his initial comment, '*I didn't know I was in India*', and responded to the children's interests. If she had not given Vincent the time and launched straight into the lesson she had planned, Vincent may not have been able to switch his attention fully onto the lesson and she would have missed an opportunity for later engaging children in learning through a topic that interested them.

Louise was thoughtful and intentional in how she used her time with the children on the carpet. She took time to get to know the children well, tuned into their interests and learning needs and responded 'in the moment', by taking a flexible approach to how she used carpet time. Her interview highlighted how carpet time can be used to support a child-centred pedagogy. The context of carpet time provided opportunities for supporting children's cognitive, social and emotional development.

4.4.1.2 Maria

In contrast to Louise, Maria had no prior experience of teaching in the EYFS and it was her second year as the nursery class teacher. From my classroom observations, I deduced that Maria favoured an instructional pedagogy. She often used didactic teaching methods that involved children learning through repetition, rote learning, listening and watching.

I observed that Maria was warm and nurturing towards the children, she would often praise them as a class, '*Children, you are the best children in the world*' (Appendix 12: 35). They appeared to be relaxed and comfortable with her. Away from the carpet, she would play with them, extending their learning through questions and suggestions to develop their thinking. In the outdoor play area, she led a game of pirates, balancing along a row of crates with a long line of children behind her, all chanting, "*Walk the plank!*" (Appendix 13: 85) but, during carpet time sessions, her primary focus was on the academic domain of learning.

There were three carpet time sessions for the nursery class. The first and the last sessions were used for registration, prayers and literacy and the middle one was for

snack time. In this session, the children sat in groups on the edge of square mats, eating and drinking and watching the interactive whiteboard that showed songs and rhymes for teaching phonics and numbers. Having the children sit in groups around the mats had the practical purpose of protecting the carpet from spilt milk and food. I asked her what she thought the children gained from watching the interactive whiteboard during snack times:

*202. Eh, erm, that they get it, I know there's still children in year one who are still struggling
203. to count one to ten and numeral recognition whereas they're seeing it everyday and
204. they're doing it every single day and it's going in, it is, it's going in.... I think because
205. it's just repetitive, repetitive, repetitive.*

(Teacher interview: Maria)

Maria exercised tight control of the class when on the carpet, with frequent reminders to be quiet, "Shh, shh". There were not many opportunities for children to spontaneously contribute ideas or initiate conversations, apart from singing and joining in with actions to the stories. At the end of a story Maria would often ask, "Hands up if you?" She would then ask a succession of these 'hand up' questions. For example, after reading the story of 'Owl Babies', she asked, "*Hands up if you love your mummy? Hands up if you love your daddy? Hands up if you love Fr. Stefan? Hands up if you love Mrs. T?*" (Appendix 12: 33). On some occasions, the children did offer contributions. However, these were few in number and were interspersed with reminders to not shout out and to put up a 'quiet hand'.

During my interview with Maria, I felt she was struggling to reconcile her instructional pedagogy, which focussed on academic outcomes, with the child-centred pedagogy, advocated by the EYFS leader. For Maria, the carpet was the place for instructional teaching of academic skills and the continuous provision was where the child-initiated and interactive learning took place. She explained that she '*loved*' the structure of carpet time and would like to do much more of it:

67. I love it, yeah for that structure and for knowing that I can be doing an in-put
(Teacher interview: Maria)

Maria commented that she had engaged in '*heated debates*' with her teaching assistant about the balance of time that should be allocated to teacher-directed and

child-initiated activities. Maria was of the opinion that the children could do much more teacher-directed learning on the carpet:

144. *M: I love it, I wish I could do a bit more*
145. *R: Do you, you wish you could do more, yeah?*
146. *L: (Laughs) I would do more...*
147. *R: So, what's stopping you then?*
148. *M: Erm, because me and Tess (teaching assistant) disagree about it (laughs)...*
(Teacher interview: Maria)

From my observations, I had noted that they had a warm and friendly relationship. They appeared to be comfortable in each other's company and worked closely together. Maria talked openly and with humour about their different approaches:

153. *Me and Tess are very, very different. I'm like, 'They're like sponges, they're like sponges,*
154. *you just give it them and they take it and she'll say like, 'Well, they should have access*
155. *to an EYFS curriculum where it's child- initiated' ... but, they get that and they need...*
156. *they need in-put ...*(Teacher interview: Maria)
672. *Yeah ...and I'm like, 'He can't even hold a pencil' and she's like, 'He's not ready,' and*
673. *I'm like, 'Well, I'll make him ready...' You know and all this kind of stuff.*
(Teacher interview: Maria)

Several times during the interview, Maria returned to the dispute between her and Tess about their different pedagogical beliefs. I felt that she had struggled with this conflict all year and was feeling compromised and frustrated:

369. *M: If I did more... I would like to do now, you know even though their needs are*
370. *different, I would like to do now some proper full on phonics*
371. *R: Yeah?*
372. *M: Like teacher led, phonics sessions, erm, with them... erm ... and I'd also like to do*
373. *some modelling sessions you know, like letter formation rather than just sitting with*
374. *them one to one when it's dead, dead noisy and you're in continuous provision and*
375. *you're trying to like, 'Go over the dots, do it again, now do it like that'. I would really like*
376. *to do some proper modelling of me like doing handwriting and them seeing it and I*
377. *reckon even some of them would be able to have a go with a whiteboard*
(Teacher interview: Maria)

Maria described how, earlier that day, she had wanted to extend the carpet time session because the children were responding enthusiastically to a story about pirates. However, rather than letting the carpet time session continue, she had abandoned it because it was time for outdoor play:

88. *And Liam is like, 'I've got a pirate costume' and they were like, 'Shall we walk the*
89. *plank?' on pirate day ... and I hadn't planned for that, but we ended up just having a*
90. *really big debate and I was like (Laughing) 'We've got to get outside, so we had to stop*
91. *it. (Teacher interview: Maria)*

Maria was reticent to challenge the agreed pedagogy of the early years team and include more teacher-directed carpet time, even though she believed it was right for her pupils. She pointed out that she was new to early years and had no training or experience of the EYFS. This must have been difficult for Maria, who was also the deputy headteacher. Maria had been moved into the nursery class to raise standards, but was struggling to articulate and justify her pedagogical stance to an experienced EYFS team. Her pedagogical struggles were exposed during carpet time and could potentially have jeopardised her relationship with Tess and the rest of the team:

658. R: So, you think that you can possibly get a lot more out of your carpet time than you're
659. doing at the moment?

660. M: Yeah, but I don't want to fall out with Tess about it and I'm leaving in a couple of

661. weeks anyway so I think let's just end on a happy medium because it's, it's taken, you

662. know, we have had a lot of heated discussions

(Teacher interview)

4.4.1.3 Emily

Emily was a newly qualified teacher who joined the school in the autumn term and became the reception class teacher. Like Maria, Emily viewed the teaching of academic skills as the primary purpose of carpet time. In her interview she made a distinction between carpet time sessions that were, '*Actually taught sessions*' (phonics, mathematics and literacy) and the other times, such as transitions within the day:

5. E: Well... I'd say we have about five... actually taught sessions I'd say we have four a

6. day, two in the morning and two in the afternoon and then we have it when we come in

7. after dinner and before we go home, but they're not taught sessions they're just when we

8. sit and talk together

9. R: So, you'd see the carpet time as for two different things then? One is for teaching and

10. what's the other for?

11. E: Yeah, the other one is for just where you meet all the children in one place then, for

12. the register or before going home and things like that. I think when they come in after

13. dinner, that's mainly treated like as a settling down period, I think, because if they came

14. in and just went into the areas, they'd have no direction or anything like that, it's a time

15. for them to settle down after dinner, err, and then we remind them of what's in the areas

16. and things like that, or we go into our taught sessions if we're not altogether er,

(Teacher interview: Emily)

Emily appeared to place less importance on the transition times, when she said, '*But they're not taught sessions, they're just when we sit and talk together*'. Emily's

repeated use of the word, *'just'*, suggested to me that she did not value these sessions as much as the ones she planned for teaching academic skills.

Emily explained that she viewed carpet time as a time when she could carry out direct teaching and assess children's learning. She acknowledged that she could also assess children when they were playing in the continuous provision areas, but that carpet time opened up opportunities to assess the learning of the whole class. It was, *25. the only opportunity you get to do it all at the same time* (Interview, Emily).

She talked about being able to, *'target children'*, which was helpful for her, as a teacher, but she worried if all children gained from the taught sessions on the carpet. She explained that she thought it was mainly the *'higher achieving'* children who were able to benefit from direct teaching on the carpet and she felt concerned for the *'lower achieving'* children who seemed to lose concentration during instructional teaching on the carpet:

*34. I think they do benefit but then, for me, I think it's the highers who benefit, because they
35. obviously do want to learn, but, they take things in easier. I think with, for the lowers, it is
36. questionable actually for me, whether they learn, whether they would learn perhaps just
37. as well in provision. They all would learn just as well in provision, but I think the highers
38. do benefit from that taught session as well, but then again with the lowers, would they
39. learn better if you just targeted them children in provision?*
(Teacher interview: Emily)

Emily explained that the children who were still developing their listening and attention skills found it difficult to sit still and listen on the carpet:

*43. They could be very high with their maths but if they're low with their listening and
44. attention, they're wandering a bit, yeah.*
(Teacher interview: Emily)

She described how she tries to compensate for the children who are still developing listening and attention skills, by making the carpet time sessions interactive and having physical activities for them to join in with. She explained that she targets the children who find it hard to pay attention and actively seeks to engage them by asking questions.

In her interview, Emily talked about how she struggled to keep the children's attention and to meet the different learning needs of all the children in the class:

57. E: *But that's the hardest part, that's the hardest part ...*
58. R: *Trying to meet all their needs?*
59. E: *Yeah, especially in phonics when it's... you really want to try and push them because*
60. *I think with the phonics at the moment, they progress at such different rates, when*
61. *there's only two of us in like the big group of 24, it's just so hard to push, push people on*
62. *and then help the other ones at the other side because you need you need like ten*
63. *groups, (laughter), you can't physically do it*
64. R: *I know*
65. E: *But you do (laughing) it's a nightmare, but yeah...*
(Teacher interview: Emily)

She repeated, '*Its' hard, it's just so hard,*' and sighed, when saying '*it's hard (sighs)*', for a third time. The pressure to 'push' children to achieve targets appeared to be a source of anxiety. Her pedagogical struggles and the anxiety they generated were reflected in her statement, '*It's a nightmare*'.

4.4.1.4 Laura

Laura was the year one teacher. She explained that she always taught the main part of each lesson to the whole class on the carpet. I observed Laura also using carpet time for prayers and registration at the start of the day, after lunch and again at the end of the day, but she did not mention these times in her interview. I think that this was because these transitional times were not acknowledged by Laura as times of learning.

In my classroom observations I observed that Laura used didactic teaching strategies, which were similar to those used by Maria; modelling, rote learning and knowledge checking through the use of questions. In her interview she explained:

23. *I use carpet time to model a lot of things as well, you know model our handwriting model*
24. *how we spell words, how we write numbers.*
(Teacher interview: Laura)

However, like Emily, Laura also said that she found it difficult to keep the children's attention and focus on the lesson. She explained that she managed keep the children's attention only for the first ten or fifteen minutes:

61. *Ten, fifteen minutes max. After fifteen minutes you've lost them.*
(Teacher interview: Laura)

From my classroom observations, across all classes, I recorded that children started to wriggle and move after the first five minutes of the carpet time sessions that had an academic focus and required them to listen to the teacher. These movements

suggested, to me, that the children found it difficult to sit still for more than five minutes when the focus of the session was on academic content. In contrast, when the focus was on telling their news, or just chatting with the teacher, there was less movement. In my fieldnotes I recorded how striking the stillness and silence was, in comparison to the fidgeting and wriggling I had observed during other sessions:

	Fieldnotes 19/07/17
8	Teacher: 'Right, register time, get comfy'. Humour and children telling their news.
9	Class praised for 'how nice' they all are, lots of children smiling and high attention level
10	throughout. Giggles as the teacher relays a couple of stories about herself (slipping in
11	toilets last year and the children didn't notice and just stepped over her). The lack of
12	movement and silence when she tells her stories is striking. Child S is focussed on her
13	intently and looks from the TA to the teacher as they jointly recount the story.

Laura described how she knew when she had lost the children's attention:

63. L: *They start fussing*

64. R: *(Laughs), give me an example*

65. L: *You know, needing the toilet or talking to the person next to them or yawning,*

66. R: *Yeah*

67. L: *Putting their hand up, they need a drink, so you just know then, right..*

68. R: *It's enough?*

69. L: *Yeah, yeah*

70. R: *They've lost concentration?*

71. L: *Yeah definitely*

(Teacher interview: Laura)

Laura spoke about how much easier she found it working with small groups, sitting at tables and wondered if the children would benefit more in year one, from being taught at their tables, than sitting on the carpet.

106. *I think at the minute, even though I'm teaching them on the carpet, I think they get more*

107. *from when they're working as a group on the table ... there's less children in the group*

108. *and we can get through their opinions more.*

(Teacher interview: Laura)

I sensed Laura experienced feelings of frustration when she described how hard she worked to try to keep the children's attention on the carpet:

121. L: *There's certain children who just sit back and you ask, you could ask them a*

122. *question and they've not tuned in to what you've said at all,*

123. R: Right
124. L: So, I think for the majority of the children, yeah, they're learning, but I think for some
125. children, they just switch off
126. R: Yeah, yeah
127. L: Some children do, they do switch off
128. R: And do you know who they are?
129. L: Yeah
130.R: What do you do to kind of keep them?
131. L: Ask them questions all the time, get them to talk with their talk partner, making sure
132. that when they're working with their talk partner I'm targeting them to get them to join in
(Teacher interview: Laura.)

When Laura said, '*They just switch off*', she repeated the sentence, as if to make sure that I had understood it and its importance to her:

127. *Some children do, they do switch off* (Laura)

Laura made great efforts to keep the children's attention and help them to learn. This was emphasised when she said she asks them questions, '*all the time*'. I sensed Laura's frustration and disappointment that her efforts to sustain children's attention were not as successful as she would have liked.

The pedagogical issues that are highlighted in these interviews and observations of carpet time are messy, nuanced, sometimes implied, and often, subtle. They involve tensions between academic versus intellectual pedagogies; instructional versus interactive teaching; teacher-directed versus child-initiated learning; child-centred or goal-oriented outcomes. My observations and the teacher interviews highlighted how these tensions were played out in the lived experiences of the children and teachers. The choices the teachers made about how to use carpet time and the way in which they interacted with the children in that space exposed their pedagogical beliefs and their individual values.

4.4.2 Pedagogy - child-chats

From the child-chat data there were two superordinate themes that related to pedagogy. These were; 'learning' and 'struggling to concentrate':

Learning:

When I carried out the first child-chat with the reception class children, using photographs of the classroom and outdoors, none of the children chose the carpet

area as their favourite place. In the group interviews, with the same children, I asked them what carpet time was for:

3. R: *So, why do you have carpet time in school? What's it for?*
4. E: *So, so, we know what to do*
5. V: *Yeah, Miss tells us what to do*
6. A: *We have register and prayers and we do learning*
7. R: *Learning? What sort of learning do you do?*
8. A: *Well, we read books sometimes*
9. R: *And do you like it, learning on the carpet?*
10. E: *It's boring*
11. A: *When I'm bored I just stare... yeah, I'm just like this, uhhhhhh*
12. V: *Yeah and I'm just like ... errrrr... I'm bored*
13. R: *(laughing) Oh dear, so is there nothing good about it?*
14. G: *I liked it when Miss brought some fruit in and we was eating it*
15. R: *Oooh, that sounds good, tell me about the fruit*
16. G: *She put the fruit on a big plate in the middle and we got to guess, choose one to eat*

When I was transcribing this particular child-chat, I could hear a voice in the background, which was barely audible. I turned up the volume and could hear Vincent, sighing and talking quietly in the background, '*I hate it*' and he repeated the phrase, '*I hate it*' and then again later, is heard in the background saying, '*Oohhh, I hate it*' (group interview: 13, 17). Further on in this child-chat, I asked the children what they did not like about carpet time. Vincent again referred to feeling bored, '*When it's just, 'blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah'*' (group interview: 21). In the child-chat where the children discussed the video footage of themselves engaging in carpet time, Amy commented about having to put up her hand to answer a question:

23. *I don't like putting my hand up because when the teacher doesn't answer I have*
24. *to keep it up for a long time and my arm aches, so I don't do it now. (group interview).*

The children associated the carpet as the place where learning takes place, but for many of them, they also associated this with being bored and having to wait their turn to be able to contribute, whilst knowing that they may not even get to have a turn. In one of the video films that the children made of carpet time, the narrative was about escaping from the carpet. They filmed the small world characters finding a secret door behind the teacher through which they all escaped to play.:



Figure 4: Small world carpet time film (group 3)

The children set up the small world resources themselves. They were given a zip wallet with the small world figures, the cloth and the blocks in. This group made up a story about discovering a secret door in the wall behind the teacher, through which they can escape. They role play the teacher leaving the room and the small world figures smashing the blocks down and running through.

Another group had a similar theme, showing the children being dismissed from the carpet and all cheering as they were allowed to go, one child tossed the small world characters in the air and another enacted them rolling round and play fighting.

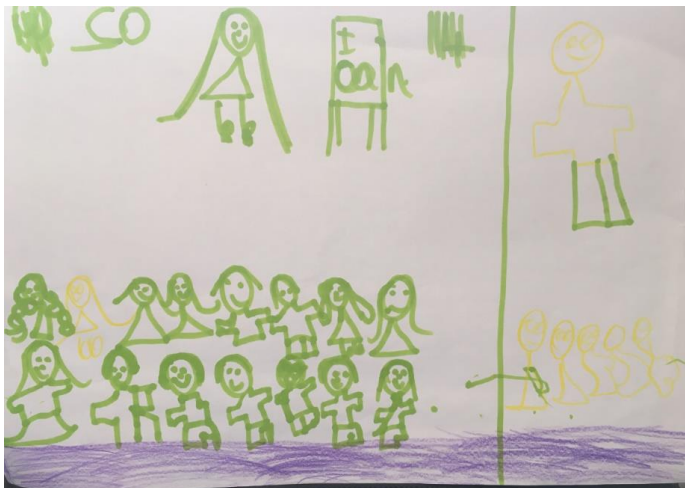
Struggling to concentrate

In the teacher interviews, the teachers stated that children often find it difficult to concentrate on the carpet. The child-chats also revealed that this was the case. In addition to children reporting that they sometimes felt bored, as explained in the previous paragraph, the video footage of the reception class during carpet time showed that children started to move, wriggle, stretch and yawn after the first few minutes of the lesson. When I watched the video footage back with the children they were quick to notice this:

5. E: *(laughing)* You (Amy) was just like moving side to side and staring weren't you, Amy?
(Laughter)
6. R: *You're wriggling a lot, Vincent*
7. V: *Yeah, because, because I was struggling with my eyes*
8. R: *Oh, were you struggling with your eyes?*
9. V: *Yeah*
10. R: *What was the matter with your eyes?*
11. 1V: *My eyes are hurting*
12. R: *Ah, your eyes were hurting?*
13. V: *Yeah*
14. R: *Was that when you were watching?*
15. V: *Yeah*
16. A: *The board was over there*
17. R: *Hmm*
18. A: *So, we were all looking at it*
19. R: *What's everyone doing now?*

20. E: They're putting their hands up because they want to tell
 21. A: I'm not (laughs)
 22. V: Mmm, me neither
 23. R: Why?
 24. A: Cos I don't like it erm sometimes (inaudible)
 25. V: I'm bored at school... sometimes
 (Group interview watching video footage of carpet time)

The final child-chat of the project consisted of children drawing what carpet time is like in their new class. Their pictures helped to illustrate their perceptions of the value and purpose of carpet time. I believe the pedagogical issues that the teachers were grappling with were also impacting the children's experiences and perceptions:



Amy has drawn two pictures, one in yellow showing her class in reception and one in green showing her class now in Year one. In both pictures the teacher is placed at the top of the page and the children below on the purple carpet. In the Year one picture, there is an easel with the words 'I can' on it. This refers to the learning objective of the lesson.

Figure 5: Amy's drawing of carpet time.

Amy viewed carpet time as the place for learning, her drawing illustrates a difference in pedagogy between her reception class and year one. In the reception drawing, there is just the teacher and the children. In contrast, in the year one drawing, there is the teacher, the learning objective on the easel and the children are seated in rows in their allocated spots. Amy knew exactly where each child sat and named each child as she drew them.

Vincent's drawing also provides an insight into his perceptions of carpet time:

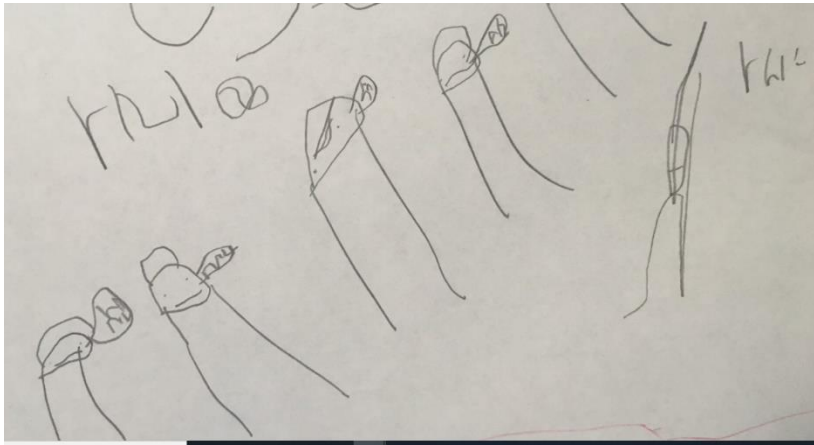


Vincent has drawn the teacher taking the register and indicated that there are 17 children present. To the right side of the picture (cut out of the image) he has listed some of the children's names and placed a tick by their name. He has drawn himself in the middle of the picture with a space between him and the children beside him. This was a theme throughout his chats with me, that he did not like children to sit near him.

Figure 6: Vincent's drawing of carpet time.

In all of my chats with Vincent he consistently said that he did not like carpet time, found it boring and struggled to keep his eyes open. He was preoccupied with the notion of children being naughty, pushing him, trying to sit close to him on the carpet and being put onto the thunder cloud (p.134). On the left side of his picture he has written the word, 'poo' with an exclamation mark. Vincent appears to have used his drawing to express his feelings about carpet time. He has drawn himself with a big smile on his face and with plenty of space between himself and the other children. I wonder if his smile indicates his satisfaction with being able to control his space on the carpet.

Billy was the youngest child in the project. His picture depicts a row of children in front of the teacher, all speaking at the same time. This was typical of the nursery carpet times. The children were encouraged to join in refrains, prayers, songs and actions, altogether, with fewer opportunities to speak individually:



Billy was the youngest of the focus children and the youngest in the project. He was the only child to draw the children being actively engaged on the carpet. He has drawn speech bubbles for each character with 'words' being spoken.

Figure 7: Billy's drawing of carpet time.

Joe's picture depicts him at the back of the class, his favourite place to sit, as he told me in his small world child-chat. Like Vincent, he had drawn a smile on his face, perhaps because he is satisfied that in this picture he can stay in the place where he is most comfortable.



Joe was usually restless on the carpet. In the reception class he used to sit at the back and was usually brought to the front by the teacher. In the small world play he positioned himself at the back and in this drawing, he has chosen to draw himself at the back of the class (*). This is despite the fact that the Year one teacher has given them all a set place on the carpet and his is directly in front of her chair. He has also clearly separated the teacher on her chair from the children on the carpet.

Figure 8: Joe's drawing of carpet time.

All of the focus group children's drawings provided insight into the pedagogical practices that influenced their perceptions of the purpose and value of carpet time. For Amy, carpet time was a place for learning and the transition to year one was marked with more structured lessons. For Vincent, the carpet was an uncomfortable place

where he struggled to keep his eyes open and felt hemmed in. For Billy, it was a place where you joined in with words or rhymes. For Joe, it was a place of surveillance.

4.5 Summary of chapter 4

In this chapter I have shared my interpretations of the data gathered from my classroom observations, child-chats and teacher interviews. I presented these as four key findings.

First, the ordinary events that took place on the carpet appeared to support children and teachers to build up a class community and develop a sense belonging. By frequently gathering together on the carpet, the children and teachers got to know each other well. They developed their own classroom rituals, shared their news, celebrated special occasions and understood the accepted codes of behaviour. Carpet time provided the space for teachers to acknowledge each child and for the children to feel personally connected to their teacher.

Second, the teacher-child interactions that took place during the carpet time could be especially significant for the individual child because they took place in front of the whole class. I sensed that they could have both positive and negative effects on the young children's developing sense of identity. Teachers' own emotions and personal circumstances, for example; their wellbeing, anxieties and stresses, appeared to impact the quality of the interactions, in ways that they may not have been aware of. This was sometimes difficult for me, as the observer, to make sense of because of my own emotional responses to each situation.

Third, I observed that, although the carpet times seemed to be controlled by the teachers, the children often found ways of challenging that control and sometimes they were successful. At times, the teachers and children appeared to be inhabiting parallel universes, as the teacher took the lesson, but the children were absorbed by their own concerns, communications with each other and imaginary games.

Fourth, both the classroom observations and the teacher interviews highlighted that the choices the teachers made about how to use carpet time and the way in which they interacted with the children in that space exposed their pedagogical beliefs and their individual values.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

The primary aim of my study was to explore the children's and teachers' perceptions and lived experiences of carpet time, and the secondary aim was to use the findings from the study to support understanding and development of pedagogical approaches to carpet time.

At the start of my study I planned four research questions to guide my fieldwork:

1. What are the features of carpet time in the Early Years Foundation Stage in one primary school in Greater Manchester?
2. What are children's and teachers' understandings of the purpose and value of carpet time?
3. How do children's and teachers' lived experiences of carpet time support and enhance extant ideas about its purpose and value?
4. What implications do the findings of this study have for the understanding and development of pedagogical approaches to carpet time?

In this chapter I will discuss the research questions in relation to my findings and the literature, from an auto/biographical position.

5.1: What are the features of carpet time in the Early Years Foundation Stage in one primary school in Greater Manchester?

The findings from my study in relation to the features of carpet time are broadly consistent with the findings from the two empirical studies of carpet time conducted by Pichon (2012) and Kirby (2019). In common with Pichon and Kirby, I identified that some children find carpet time to be physically uncomfortable, that there is a culture of control and compliance, and that carpet time practices can potentially impact children's developing sense of self and identity. However, in contrast to Pichon and Kirby, who described mainly the negative features of carpet time, my findings were more nuanced and I identified some positive features that were not apparent in their studies. These were, the potential for carpet time to help foster positive teacher-child

relationships and develop, for children, a sense of belonging to a community. I also identified that carpet time practices can support children to develop a positive sense of self, if the teacher-child interactions are personalised, sensitive and responsive.

5.1.1 The physical context of carpet time

My study identified that sitting on the carpet can be an uncomfortable experience for children and may, therefore, not be conducive to supporting their motivation for learning. Evie shared, on several occasions, that she felt physically uncomfortable on the carpet. This signifies that children have informed opinions about their classroom environment and therefore, they ought to be consulted about which aspects of the environment present barriers and supports to their learning (Georgeson, Porter, Daniels and Feiler, 2014).

Both Pichon (2012) and Kirby (2019) highlighted that having to sit on the carpet can be a barrier to learning. They reported that children were physically uncomfortable sitting on the carpet and that they often felt bored. In Kirby's (2019) study, the physical context of carpet time was presented as a harsh, controlling environment in which children are required to sit still for extended periods of time, listening to their teachers. Perhaps if the children were able to stretch out, move and reposition themselves for comfort, they may be better supported to listen and concentrate and more motivated to learn. Instead, I observed that they were often reminded to sit still, cross their legs, stop fidgeting and sit up straight. In the teacher interviews, the nursery class teacher described how she and the teaching assistant had to sit on the carpet themselves to model to the children how to sit with their legs crossed. The fact that this practice needed to be demonstrated to them by the adults, suggested to me that this physical position was not naturally comfortable for all children to sit in. Kirby (2019, p.3) noted that it demanded 'extreme body discipline', for children to remain seated in a static position for any length of time. Goddard-Blythe (2017) highlighted the need to take heed of children's neuro-physical development, explaining that younger children lack the physical maturity to be able to cope with the demands of sitting still for so long.

MacIntyre (2014, p.23) presents compelling evidence to explain why younger children may struggle to sit still on the carpet. She highlighted that, at six years of age, the human brain experiences a surge of myelin which insulates the neural pathways. This leads to movements becoming smoother and more controlled, meaning that children

are better able to control their posture and maintain a physical position for a period of time. The children in the nursery and reception classes that I observed were all under the age of six, aged three to five years, and were often moving on the carpet, frequently wriggling and shifting their positions. Through their movements they were communicating to their teachers that it was difficult to sit still for more than five minutes at a time, yet they were regularly required to do so. These findings raise questions about whether carpet time provides conducive conditions for engaging in learning activities, and what changes might need to be made for young children.

5.1.1.1 Listening to children's voices

Murray and Cousens (2019) warned that not attending to children's voices can have a detrimental effect on their developing autonomy and self-regulation, leading to a reduction in motivation for learning. The teachers in my study were committed to the principles of the EYFS (DfE, 2017) and endeavoured to provide a safe and stimulating environment in which children were motivated to learn. They were, therefore, shocked when they watched the video footage of the carpet time in the reception class. It lasted for 20 minutes. The children were observed sitting fairly still for the first four minutes and then they started wriggling, moving, yawning, and the children on outer edges of the carpet became distracted, leaning on furniture, moving further away and looking around the classroom.

I had not been conscious of how much movement there was when I had observed the lesson as it took place. I felt uncomfortable watching the video with the staff, as I could sense their disappointment. I felt I was exposing an aspect of their practice that was taken for granted, but nevertheless, appeared to be detrimental to children's learning and well-being. Flutter (2007) advocated that consulting with children provides the 'power to unlock the shackles of habit that so often bind teachers to their familiar routines of practice and thought' (p.352). The video footage convinced me that it is neither necessary, nor appropriate for children to sit still, or to remain seated in a set position on the carpet for so long. Yet, it also led me to reflect on my own experiences as an early years teacher, when I, too, had insisted that the children sit still on the carpet. At the time, I had not questioned this practice, as it was the norm and I was not aware of scientific evidence to suggest that it may be physically challenging for young children to sit still like this. Had I consulted with children, or tuned into what they

were communicating to me through their body language, I might have been freed up to think and act differently. These findings and my experience as an early years teacher, highlight a need for teachers to consult with children about the physical context of the learning environments and to be supported to continually interrogate 'taken for granted' classroom practices, since they may no longer be fit for purpose.

5.1.2 The influence of policy on carpet time practices

Turner-Bissett (2003) reported that it was not uncommon for educational practices to change over time, whilst the context for teaching remains the same, and warned that this often results in tensions between pedagogical principles and actual practices. This may be the case in EYFS classrooms today. Educational policy has shifted towards a culture of performativity in which teachers are pressured to ensure children meet academic goals through teacher instruction (Bradbury, 2019). The new EYFS (DfE, 2021) and the current primary national curriculum (DfE, 2013) favour a traditional approach to education in which teachers are required to 'deliver' a knowledge-rich curriculum to classes of children who are grouped by age. Children are assessed on the attainment outcomes for their age group and schools are benchmarked against national performance indicators. For EYFS teachers in primary schools, these policies create pressure for them to ensure children meet the ELGs by the end of the reception year (Roberts-Holmes, 2019) so that they are ready for the start of the National Curriculum in Year 1 (Clark, 2017). The teaching of the academic content of the ELGs, such as phonics, literacy and mathematics, typically requires whole class teaching using rote learning, modelling, repetition, retrieval practice and knowledge checking. These teaching strategies are the preferred methods which are currently promoted by the government in the statutory Core Content Framework for ITT (DfE, 2020). In EYFS classrooms, the place where children can all be taught together and exposed to the same knowledge at the same time, is on the carpet, since these classrooms are often set up as play-based environments without designated seats at tables for each child.

Thus, carpet time has evolved from being used as an intimate gathering space for children and teachers in the late 1960s, to becoming the context for whole class teaching of academic content required for achieving the ELGs of the 2020s. The current rhetoric of school readiness within the outcomes-driven policy context of the

EYFS appears to have influenced this shift of focus for carpet time for the children and teachers in my study. The findings from my study highlighted opportunities for carpet time to facilitate a sense of community and belonging in which children were empowered to participate and were listened to (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005). However, these opportunities may be at risk of being missed, by teachers, if the current rhetoric of school readiness continues to influence their pedagogical practices, placing pressure upon them to dedicate their carpet time sessions predominantly to the teaching of academic content.

5.1.3 Carpet time control and compliance

From my classroom observations and child-chat data, I deduced that the culture of control that typifies carpet time practices can prevent some children from having their voices heard. Spyrou (2011) urges researchers to access the different 'layers of children's voices' (p.6). He posits that tuning into the different ways that children communicate, may not necessarily lead to a more authentic understanding of their perceptions, but can provide more detailed insights.

Kirby (2019) argued that the controlling nature of carpet time created a culture of compliance, which led to children feeling bodily controlled and emotionally vulnerable. My findings were consistent with Kirby's argument that carpet time, as a place of control, can negatively impact children's emotions, but in my study, I found that the children appeared to be less compliant. I interpreted the children's lack of compliance to be their way of communicating, in subtle ways, their opinions about their lived experiences of carpet time. Rinaldi's (2006) pedagogy of listening promotes the importance of allowing children to communicate their opinions and needs in many different forms. The children in my study were not always able to have their voices heard on the carpet but they communicated their needs and opinions in other ways. I observed Joe tracing pictures on the carpet with his finger; Lucy managing her transitions to the carpet by playing in the water; the boys putting their coats on and sitting on the outer edge of the carpet to signal they wanted to get out to play; and on occasions, it appeared as if the whole class was working together to challenge the teacher's control (see chapter four, para: 4.3). I interpreted these examples, of children trying to take control, as a sign that they were trying to have their voices heard.

However, for some children, the culture of control on the carpet prevented them from being heard.

When I was transcribing my child-chat with Evie's group, I noticed there were two, barely audible, comments in the background. After turning up the volume I was able to hear Vincent speaking at the same as Evie and myself. His comments were, '*I hate it [carpet time]*' and then, later, '*Ooh, I hate it*'. His comments were uttered so quietly that I wondered if he had intentionally not wanted me to hear them, but just could not help voicing them. This was an indication to me, not only of his intense dislike of carpet time, but also that carpet time practices, which are controlled by adults, can impinge on children's rights to have a voice and have their opinions heard (UNCRC, 1989, article 12).

Murray (2019) argued that children having their voices heard promotes in them a sense of belonging, wellbeing and identity. I consistently observed that Vincent appeared uncomfortable, was often yawning and looked as if he felt bored during carpet time sessions. In the video, Vincent was observed being marginalised by his peers and eventually giving up trying to engage. In my child-chats with him, I deduced that Vincent viewed himself as less significant, as a member of the class, in comparison to his peers (p.133). Other children also struggled to be heard. I found it upsetting to watch Katie's attempts to have her voice heard on the carpet and eventually giving up and sitting with her head on her knees and looking down to the floor (p.130). Hargreaves' (2017) research into classroom practices with older children (9-11 years), concluded that children learn to accept that their voices and opinions about their education are not heard or taken seriously by adults. From my observations of carpet time and my child-chats with the children, I deduced that this perception may begin to be developed by children when they are in the early years. There was consensus in the child-chats that carpet time could be boring, but you had to take part, or the teacher may '*shout at you*', (Child-chat Evie, Amy and Jack). Although I never witnessed teachers ever shouting at the children, these comments illuminated for me the children's perceptions of carpet time being a place of control where your voice may not be heard.

I acknowledge that I have been in a privileged position to be able to closely observe and note in detail the dynamics of carpet time that may go unnoticed in a busy

classroom. Teachers may not be aware of the impact of their actions and interactions on children when teaching on the carpet. This may be because children do not always communicate through their voices, but often they communicate through their actions, as was noted in my study. Having reflected on my observations of carpet time, I feel there is a need to support trainee teachers to become more attuned to the different ways in which children may communicate their needs and emotions during carpet times.

5.1.4 Carpet time can impact children's developing sense of self

Carpet time is a public forum in which the interactions that take place between the teacher and each child are seen and heard by all the children and staff. The teacher-child interactions that took place at carpet time, in my study, sometimes resulted in children feeling proud and self-confident, but could also lead to them feeling embarrassed and humiliated, depending on the type of interaction that took place. Teacher-child interactions, in a public space such as carpet time, can also result in some children gaining a reputation in the class for being a problem and recognised as such by their peers (MacLure et al. 2012). This can have consequences for children in the long term, as it may make it more difficult for them to be accepted by their peers and to form friendships.

In the literature on early childhood pedagogy, research evidence suggests that positive and nurturing teacher-child relationships are at the heart of quality early childhood education (Howes et al. 2008; Mashburn et al. 2008), and that interactions which are sensitively responsive to children's individual needs can have a significant influence on children's social and emotional development (Early, Maxwell, Ponder and Pan, 2017). Many researchers agree that positive relationships between teachers and young children support children's future social and academic performance in school (Blair and Raver, 2015; McClelland., Tominey., Schmitt and Duncan, 2017; Sylva., Melhuish., Sammons., Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2004). One teacher, Louise, actively capitalised on carpet times to boost children's self-esteem. This was achieved through her developing a positive relationship with her class in which her interactions with the children were intentional, humorous and personalised. Being intentional in her interactions involved having a genuine purpose and interest in the interaction with the children, for example, talking about experiences that were meaningful to them. The

children were completely attentive when she chatted with them like this and they were eager to share their experiences too. In her interview, Louise explained how she valued carpet time as the time when she could get to know the children and they could get to know her. She purposefully targeted individual children to interact with, in front of the class, knowing that she had an opportunity to enhance their self-esteem, 'I can stoke the fire for them', and 'it's a time for them to come to the front and get a bit of the glory' (Teacher interview: Louise, p.9: 28). She described carpet time as a, 'family time' and that the children were using that time, 'as the time that I [the child] can talk and be heard by everybody' (p.4: 23).

All of the teachers stated that they valued carpet time because they had each child there in front of them and could interact with individual children as needed. However, they saw this as an opportunity for assessing children's academic knowledge and skills and, apart from Louise, they did not mention this also being an opportunity to develop their relationship with the children. The principle of 'positive relationships' underpins the statutory framework for the EYFS (DfE, 2017) and is also included in the new version, to be implemented in 2021. From my classroom observations, I could sense that positive teacher-child relationships in all classes were enhanced through carpet time, regardless of whether the teachers were consciously using carpet time for this purpose or not. The children got to know their teachers well. They appeared able to interpret their body language and moods and knew how to react accordingly. However, Louise's practice of proactively using carpet time to develop her relationship with the children suggested to me that carpet time is not only influential in supporting the academic skills of the children, but also in promoting their social and emotional development. I believe this aspect of carpet time, the opportunity to develop teacher-child relationships, may not be recognised by all teachers and may be under-utilised.

5.1.4.1 Grouping by ability

This may be due to the pressure teachers feel to meet academic outcomes. Emily and Laura both spoke about feeling under pressure to 'push children on', and Emily described the pressure as a 'nightmare':

61: *...It's just so hard to push, push people on*

62: *and then help the other ones at the other side because you need, you need like ten*

63: *groups, (laughter) it's a nightmare.*

(Teacher interview: Emily).

The literature on classroom organisation and groupings discussed in chapter two, highlighted concerns that the focus on academic targets, such as the ELGs at the end of the reception year, is causing teachers to resort more frequently to teaching children in ability groups for phonics, mathematics and literacy (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017; Clark, 2017). Yet, research evidence suggests that ability grouping has little, or no, positive impact on children's attainment (Taylor et al. 2017, p. 2). Moreover, grouping by ability can be detrimental to children's self-esteem and belief in their academic ability (Ireson and Hallam, 2001; Marks, 2013, 2016).

In her interview, the newly qualified teacher, Emily referred to children in her class as 'the highers' and 'the lowers', as she grouped them by ability for teaching on the carpet. This was a common carpet time practice in the reception and year one classes. Emily appeared downhearted and frustrated when she pondered whether her 'lowers' gained anything from carpet time, but, as reported by the teachers in Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes' (2017) study, she felt powerless to change her practice due to the pressure for children to meet the ELGs at the end of the EYFS.

Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes (2017) pointed out that grouping children may be a 'necessary evil' due the pressure for children to pass the phonics screening test in year one. Furthermore, Bradbury (2018) argued that grouping by ability was a form of segregation and exclusion. The literature highlighted that children who are most negatively affected by ability grouping are those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and summer born children, leading Jackson and Povey to conclude that grouping by ability is a 'social injustice' (2016, p.1), because of the long-term negative consequences it has on children in terms of social mobility and self-esteem. The summer born child in the reception class in my study struggled to maintain attention during carpet time sessions. He was part of the 'lower attaining' group who were often taught on the nursery carpet in the afternoon when there was no nursery class there. I wondered how he felt about being taught in the nursery classroom for maths, what message this conveyed to him and the rest of his group, and what impact may this potentially have on him as he progresses through school?

5.1.5 Summary of section 5.1

The research question, 'What are the features of carpet time in one school in Greater Manchester?' has highlighted that the physical context of carpet time can negatively influence children's motivation to learn. Teachers feel compromised, recognising that some children struggle to learn in this context. Yet, they feel powerless to change their classroom practices, due to current educational policies which place pressure on them to ensure that children meet the ELGs in preparation for more formal learning in year one. Carpet time has become the context, in EYFS classrooms, where the formal teaching of academic content takes place. The teaching of academic content typically requires teachers to adopt instructional teaching strategies, which has led to carpet time becoming a place of control and compliance, in which children's voices may not be heard. The consequences of not having their voices heard can have long-term negative effects on children's self-esteem and sense of belonging. However, this research question has also exposed the potential for carpet time to support positive teacher-child relationships, which are a hallmark of quality ECE. Teachers who respond sensitively to children's interactions and actively seek opportunities to single out children for recognition during carpet time can support children to have their voices heard, and also support their developing sense of identity.

5.2 What are children's and teachers' understandings of the purpose and value of carpet time? How do their lived experiences enhance or support extant ideas about its purpose and value?

In this section I will discuss the second and third research questions together, informed by my findings and the literature review. Firstly, I will focus on the children and discuss my interpretation of their understandings of the purpose and value of carpet time, as reported in our child-chats. I will incorporate my interpretation of my classroom observations, as this will help to inform how their lived experiences enhanced or supported ideas about the purpose and value of carpet time. Secondly, I will discuss my interpretation of the teachers' understandings, informed by the teacher interviews and also my observations of them.

5.2.1 Children's understandings and lived experiences of carpet time.

In the child-chats the children explained the purpose of carpet time as being predominantly for learning, but also for registration and prayers. They understood it to be a place where they had to conform to the teacher's expectations, or there would be negative consequences, such as having your name displayed in the thunder cloud and missing out on the Friday treat. They knew that there were carpet time rules that had to be obeyed, but these rules appeared to be meaningless to them and they had their own unspoken code of conduct which involved protecting their personal space, feeling safe and showing respect to the teacher.

From my classroom observations and observations of the children's small world play, I gained insight into the children's lived experiences of carpet time. I interpreted that they valued spending time together on the carpet as a class community, getting to know their teacher and sharing their news with each other. I also observed that they valued listening to stories, as they appeared to be more relaxed, physically still and attentive during these times. However, I was concerned to find that the children also experienced struggles during carpet time that appeared to go unnoticed by their teachers.

5.2.1.1 Learning and funds of knowledge

For some children, learning through carpet time could be a positive experience. Some children enjoyed the topics being taught, could answer the teacher's questions, and were singled out for praise in front of their peers. For others, however, the lived experiences of learning on the carpet were less positive. Some children struggled to interpret the teacher's expectations, could not sit still and pay attention, or found the topics irrelevant and were bored. I was intrigued by Vincent, who consistently expressed his dislike of carpet time and was frequently observed yawning and wriggling on the carpet. The only occasions when I observed him engaging in carpet time were when he was invited to share his knowledge of India. Based on his Indian heritage and experiences of visiting his grandparents in India, Vincent had a fund of knowledge that was personal to him and this was celebrated by his teacher, during carpet times, by inviting him to share his knowledge with his peers.

In the literature review, it was reported that the focus of carpet time has changed over time. In the 1970s it was used to promote children's personal, social and emotional development, but its purpose now leans more towards promoting school readiness, measured by the achievement of the ELGs in the EYFS framework (DfE, 2017). Chesworth (2019) warned that the current policy focus on academic outcomes in the EYFS may lead to some children not having a personalised curriculum tailored to build upon their existing funds of knowledge. The new statutory framework for the EYFS (DfE, 2021) promotes a personalised curriculum as every child's entitlement, promising, 'a secure foundation through planning for the learning and development of each individual child' (p.5). Vincent was fortunate to have a teacher whose carpet time practices prioritised teacher-child relationships, which supported Vincent to feel empowered to be able to share his home life experiences with his peers. Having a chance to have his voice heard in this way may have supported Vincent to develop a sense of belonging, as his identity was celebrated and accepted by his peers, which may enhance his well-being and mental health in the long-term (Murray, 2019).

However, this teacher was atypical in my study, and although the teachers all appeared to have positive relationships with the children, they rarely deviated from teaching standardised forms of knowledge that were dictated by their school curriculum for the achievement of academic goals. In these instances, there were many children who struggled to maintain attention and engage in carpet time. Equally, many children struggled to conform to the teachers' expectations for behaviour during carpet time and were fearful of the sanctions that were imposed for misbehaving on the carpet.

5.2.1.2 The thunder cloud

A recurring theme in children's play and in the child-chats, was the threat of having their name displayed in the 'thunder cloud'. I was upset when I observed the effect that this consequence had on one of the younger children. The child was crying on the carpet because her name had been put onto the thinking cloud for not lining up quietly. When she was allowed to leave the carpet and re-join the line, I observed her friend put her arm around her shoulder and say quietly, 'It's okay, you didn't get on the thunder cloud yet'. I felt sad watching this, as the consequences for the child of being

reprimanded in this way had an emotional impact on her and there was only the support of her four-year-old friend to help her to make sense of it.

I believe that children's names, displayed in writing, are significant and personal. They are usually the first word that children recognise and the first word they write (Bloodgood, 1999). The written name is a representation of the child's identity that the child recognises. It saddened me to see the child looking at her name on the thinking cloud and it worried me to imagine the message it conveyed to her about her personal identity.

Studies conducted by Denham et al. (2003; 2012) have demonstrated the importance of children developing a positive sense of self for their future wellbeing. A key message of these studies has been for caregivers, outside of the home, to be proactive in supporting children to develop self-esteem, self-regulation and resilience. The sanction of having their name on the thunder cloud appeared to have the opposite effect. There were also other occasions during my study when I perceived some teacher-child interactions to have a detrimental effect on children's self-esteem. I found these incidents upsetting to witness. For example, Katie trying to get her voice heard and then giving up, Vincent, trying to find a talk partner and being rejected, Jack and Harry, both feeling humiliated in front of their peers and Tom, struggling to accept his curly hair.

The carpet time literature predominantly highlighted the potential for carpet time practices to impact negatively on children's self-esteem (Kirby, 2019) and invade children's rights to privacy (Hanafin et al. 2009). However, the literature on circle time was generally conclusive that circle time is successful in promoting children's self-esteem, social and emotional development (Kelly, 1999; Mary, 2014; Mosely, 1996). Collins (2013) viewed circle time as a means of empowering children to exercise their right to have their voices heard, for the purpose of supporting them to develop self-regulation, autonomy and understanding of their identity. The children in my study did not experience circle time, but, through the ordinary events of carpet time, such as register, prayers, telling their news, chatting with their teachers and listening to stories, they experienced opportunities to learn about their emotions and their place within the class community. These times on the carpet were valued by the children and I believe they helped to build up children's self-esteem. Although, the children's lived

experiences of carpet time were not always positive, they illustrated that carpet time practices can impact children's emotional wellbeing and their developing sense of self.

5.2.1.3 Summary of children's understandings and lived experiences

In summary, I interpreted that the children understood carpet time to be a place for learning, register and prayers, but, for many children, the context of carpet time was not conducive to learning. Their teachers' pedagogical approaches were compromised by the EYFS policy discourse which emphasises children's achievement of the academic content of the ELGs, more than their entitlement to a personalised curriculum, based on their existing funds of knowledge, as stipulated in the EYFS (DfE, 2017, para: 1.6; DfE, 2020, para: 1.11).

From my observations, I deduced that carpet time can impact children's self-esteem and the formation of their sense of self. Some taken-for-granted carpet time practices, such as the thunder cloud behaviour sanction could be damaging to children's self-esteem. However, other everyday practices, such as registration, prayers, story times and news telling could have a positive impact. Through these carpet time practices, the children developed a sense of community in which they got to know themselves well, could develop a positive sense of self and exercise their right to have their voices heard. Being able to have their voices heard and developing a sense of belonging, were what I perceived to be most valued by the children and I think this is something that can easily be promoted by teachers through carpet time.

I viewed these insights into children's lived experiences as significant because they revealed the struggles that children encounter in the classroom that may not always be visible to the teachers. They also suggested to me that there may be other classroom practices that we simply take for granted without understanding their impact on children's learning, development or wellbeing. The children were mostly compliant and accepting of the adults' authority and power, as was the case in Kirby's study (2019). They did not think to question why we do things in the way we do, and I wonder if this is because, as adults, we do not think to ask them how they experience our taken-for-granted classroom practices (Hargreaves, 2017).

5.2.2 Teachers' understandings and lived experiences of carpet time.

In their interviews, the teachers suggested that the purpose of carpet time was for organisational and teaching purposes. The teachers all valued carpet time as the context for them to teach the academic content of the curriculum, such as phonics, mathematics and literacy, to meet the policy expectations of the EYFS (DfE, 2017), and Ofsted (2017). They believed the teaching of academic knowledge required whole class, teacher-instruction, and therefore, the carpet area was the only place where this could take place, due to the physical layout of the EYFS classrooms, in which the carpet area was the only place where the whole class could gather together in one space.

For three of the teachers, Emily, Laura and Maria, teaching academic content appeared to be the sole purpose of carpet time. However, in their interviews they all alluded to emotional struggles and pedagogical tensions, which appeared to be associated with the external pressures placed upon them, by educational policy, for children to be made ready for school and the more formal learning of Key Stage one.

5.2.2.1 Emotional struggles and pedagogical tensions

Emily, the newly qualified teacher, expressed feelings of frustration and pressure associated with the use of carpet time for teaching the academic content of the ELGs. I felt sympathy for Emily struggling with these issues that carpet time presented. It saddened me to see that, after only a few weeks of teaching, she was exhausted and experiencing an inner conflict between her professional values and having to conform to the pedagogical expectations of the school and the EYFS policy framework. As a teacher, new to the profession, she was already one of the many EYFS teachers struggling to, 'navigate policy, practice, and their own beliefs and aspirations' (Wood and Chesworth, 2018, p.28).

Laura, the year one teacher questioned whether the expectations placed upon children to learn through listening to their teachers on the carpet was developmentally appropriate for the younger children. She was unsure whether the carpet was the best context for whole class teaching because she found that the children struggled to sit still and pay attention. Like Pichon (2012), she wondered if it would be better for the

children if they were seated at tables in smaller groups so that they would feel more comfortable and able to concentrate.

Laura explained to me that she struggled to maintain the children's attention on the carpet and commented that, after about ten minutes, 'You've lost them' (Interview: Laura). I felt that Laura's choice of the word, '*lost*', was significant. She had tended to speak quickly throughout the interview, but at this point, she paused, as if deep in thought. I interpreted this as representing her emotions, experiencing feelings of loss and helplessness in not being able to sustain the children's attention and develop their learning.

I noticed Maria, also, appeared to find carpet time a struggle in terms of her emotions and pedagogy. She had trained and worked mainly in key stage two and was the deputy headteacher. She had no prior experience of the EYFS and had not received any early years training. I felt that this caused Maria to feel vulnerable within this team of experienced EYFS practitioners. Maria favoured a pedagogical stance that utilised teacher-instruction. This was consistent with the approach she was accustomed to in key stage two and she understood carpet time to be the context for teaching in this way. She explained that she wanted to do more carpet time, but felt she could not, because it would be viewed as inappropriate by the rest of the early years team. She was hesitant and uncertain when trying to explain and justify her pedagogical stance.

It was through interviewing Maria that I began to think that teachers, like children, also experienced struggles and emotions during carpet times. Maria was living out her identity as the deputy headteacher who had been brought in to raise academic standards in the EYFS. Yet, underneath the surface of her professional identity, I felt she was feeling personally vulnerable within the EYFS team and was unsure of her identity as an early years teacher. She described having 'heated debates' with her teaching assistant about early years pedagogy and eventually she chose to compromise her pedagogical values in order to protect her personal relationship with her teaching assistant. Having worked within early years teams in different contexts, I could empathise with Maria, struggling to establish her role within the team and wanting to hold onto the pedagogical stance that she believed was in the children's best interests. I thought it must have been difficult for her to know how to adapt to

teaching younger children, with no professional development to support that transition of knowledge and skills.

Louise, however, did not appear to feel compromised by external pressures to meet academic outcomes. She appeared to comfortably incorporate her child-centred pedagogy into her carpet time practice. Like the other teachers, she perceived the purpose of carpet time to be for whole class teaching of academic skills. However, she also valued carpet time as a context for supporting children's social and emotional development through positive teacher-child interactions

5.2.2.2 Teacher-child interactions

Louise used carpet time flexibly. She would adapt the content of her lessons to respond to children's interests, for example, responding to Vincent's tale of his trip to India. She would also respond to situations in the classroom with unplanned carpet time sessions, and the immediacy and personal relevance of the unplanned topics captured children's interest and motivated them to engage. Her pedagogy aligned to the statutory guidance of the EYFS, 'Practitioners must respond to each child's emerging needs and interests, guiding their development through warm, positive interactions' (DfE, 2017, p.9).

In the literature review, I discussed the type of teacher-child interactions that have been found to be most influential in supporting children's learning. Sustained shared thinking (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2002), can be problematic for practitioners to master (Allen and Whalley, 2010), and is less likely to be facilitated through carpet time, due to time constraints and the high ratio of children to one teacher. I did not observe any episodes of sustained shared thinking during carpet times. However, Louise's practice highlighted that carpet time provides frequent opportunities for teachers and children to interact with each other through simple dialogic approaches (Carr, 2011), which impact positively on children's academic achievement, and also their social and emotional development (Early, Maxwell, Ponder and Pan, 2017). Louise's frequent conversations with children, in which she listened and responded to their contributions during carpet time, supported her to tune into their concerns and interests, revealing more meaningful and personalised topics through which to teach. The literature on effective early childhood pedagogy found that children are more likely to retain knowledge when the topic is meaningful and relevant to them, than when the topic is

abstract and not building on their existing knowledge and experience (Jarvis and Whitebread, 2018, p.14).

Louise's understanding of the purpose and value of carpet time was atypical in relation to the other teachers in my study. Her child-centred pedagogy was aligned to my own stance, so it was not surprising that I favoured her approach to carpet time and noticed more acutely the negative impact on children that the other teachers' choices of pedagogy could have on the children. However, having grappled throughout my career with policy/pedagogy tensions in ECE, I was able to empathise with the other teachers and could understand the pressures that may have impacted their pedagogical decisions.

5.2.2.3 Impact of school readiness agenda on teachers' pedagogical choices

In Kirby's (2019) study of carpet time the teachers were not interviewed, yet their methods were implicitly critiqued, on the basis of the impact they had on children's experiences of carpet time. The children's experiences were described as being harsh and uncomfortable, both physically and emotionally, but Kirby (2019) did not seek to ascertain what drove the teachers to act in the way they did. I hope that my study will support understanding of the EYFS policy context within which teachers are working. In particular, I hope it will highlight the impact that the discourse of school readiness is having on teachers' pedagogical choices, but also, the impact it can have on their emotions, as they struggle to be true to their professional values in striving to support the best interests of their children.

The teacher interviews exposed the challenges the teachers faced in trying to reconcile their pedagogical values with the expectations of a policy context which positions early childhood education as a phase of preparation and getting ready for formal learning in school (Kay, 2018). Clark (2017) described a deep conceptual divide between a school readiness policy aimed at narrowing the gap in outcomes for children through the teaching of standardised forms of knowledge, and an EYFS framework that positions children as unique individuals, who learn and develop in different ways and at different rates, thus, requiring a personalised curriculum. The teachers in my study struggled to reconcile these two extreme concepts through their pedagogical practices and felt compromised. I was alerted to the pedagogical struggles they encountered through carpet time, their struggles to understand their

identities and their emotional toil when making decisions on the carpet, whilst attending to the needs of many children and maintaining their relationships with each other. I felt privileged to be given an insight into their perceptions, and acknowledge that my interpretations cannot truly represent their lived experiences, since they are presented through my auto/biographical lens.

5.2.2.4 Summary of teachers' understandings and lived experiences

In summary, the teachers all understood the purpose of carpet time to be for whole class teaching and organisational purposes. The expectations of the EYFS and Ofsted policy context placed pressure upon the teachers to prioritise carpet time for the teaching of academic content, which resulted in them feeling compromised in their pedagogical decisions. The discourse of school readiness was influential in how teachers understood the purpose of carpet time, as most of them resorted to using carpet time for the teaching of phonics, literacy and mathematics and used ability grouping to support the attainment of academic outcomes. One teacher, however, was atypical and understood the purpose of carpet time to be twofold. She viewed carpet time as a context for whole class teaching of academic content, but also, for being a place where she could support children's social and emotional development through responsive teacher-child interactions. She supported children's social and emotional development and boosted their self-esteem through developing a sense of community and belonging in which she responded sensitively to children's voices.

I sensed that the teachers invested a lot of emotional energy into carpet time and could feel vulnerable and compromised. Their decisions impacted children's wellbeing, learning and development and, at times, their decisions had negative consequences for children. I believe that teachers can potentially be portrayed in a negative light because of their pedagogical decisions and interactions with children during carpet time, without due regard for the problematic policy context within which they are working. There were many decisions that teachers had to make when teaching through carpet time and these were not all pedagogical ones. Sometimes the decisions were associated with their values, their professional identities and their personal relationships.

5.3 What implications do the findings of this study have for the understanding and development of pedagogical approaches to carpet time?

The findings of this study have indicated that carpet time is a contested space in which children's voices can be silenced and teachers' pedagogical values can be compromised. In my fieldnotes I wrote about a 'parallel universe' in which the teachers and children were absorbed with their own concerns. The teachers were concerned with how to teach lessons, in which every child made progress, whilst also managing to maintain control and keep the children's attention. The children, however, were concerned with not wanting to get into trouble, finding ways of entertaining themselves when it became too difficult to concentrate, and seeking to have their voices heard.

5.3.1 A contested space for children's voices to be heard

There is a wealth of research to support children's rights to have their voices heard (Pascal and Bertram, 2009; Waller and Bitou, 2011) and Murray (2019) reports on the benefits of this to their learning, development and wellbeing. In addition, there is compelling evidence that positive teacher-child relationships in which adults engage in sensitive, responsive interactions with children (Melhuish et al. 2015), are indicators of quality ECE. My study has found that carpet time can be an ideal context for promoting teacher- child relationships and enabling children's voices to be heard. However, there were many occasions when these opportunities for children's voices to be heard were compromised by the competing demand for teachers to cover curriculum content designed to ensure that children meet academic targets.

From the data, it was found that children valued carpet time as a place where they could interact with each other and their teacher. They relished opportunities to share their news and they showed high levels of engagement when the teachers chatted informally with them and when the topic of carpet time was based on their prior knowledge and experience.

The parallel universe, I described in chapter four, was one in which children were trying to have their voices heard through the multiple ways in which they communicated, verbally and non-verbally. However, the teachers were not always able to 'hear' and respond to children's voices because of the pressures placed upon them by EYFS policy (DfE, 2017) and Ofsted (2017), to teach literacy, phonics and mathematics, in

order for the children to meet the academic content of the ELGs. The pressure placed upon teachers to meet short-term academic targets, such as the ELGs, may lead to increased amounts of time being given to carpet time being used for whole class teaching of academic content and less time dedicated to teaching children about their emotions to support self-regulation, autonomy and self-esteem. Yet, research shows that the most powerful way of supporting children's long-term wellbeing and success at school is not through an early introduction to academic content, but through their development of self-regulation, autonomy and executive functioning skills (Whitebread and Bingham, 2011).

The nature of carpet time is one in which the teacher is in control and the children are expected to be compliant. My findings identified that the culture of control and compliance had potential to silence children's voices. Yet, there were many examples of how a more relaxed approach to carpet time could have the opposite effect and facilitate opportunities for children to have their voices heard. One teacher achieved this very well by using a conversational approach (Carr, 2011) when interacting with children on the carpet. She was skilled at tuning into the children's interests and following their leads. Although, like the other teachers, she felt under pressure to prepare children for the more formal teaching of key stage one, she purposefully used carpet time to develop a relationship with each child and made time to interact with them individually. Blair and Raver's (2015) review of the school readiness literature highlighted that these types of teacher-child interactions that are sensitively responsive to children's needs and interests have a positive impact on children's readiness for school, promoting both their academic outcomes and positive dispositions to learning. Additionally, there was a consensus of research from the review of the impact of ECE on children's development and outcomes (Melhuish et al. 2015), that responsive teaching used alongside teacher-directed instructional support was found to support children's emotional and relational needs and enhance their cognitive outcomes.

For teachers, however, there may be challenges in combining sufficient opportunities for responsive teaching alongside teacher-directed instructional support. As noted in my findings, teachers reported feeling under pressure to meet the prescribed outcomes of the EYFS. Despite their beliefs in the benefits of responsive teaching, they mostly adopted instructional, direct-teaching, during carpet time. These findings

suggest that teachers may be caught between the prescriptive policy discourses of the EYFS and Ofsted's 'good practice' reviews, and the research on early childhood pedagogy. The context of carpet time lends itself to whole class teaching of academic content, but there are also opportunities for teachers to support children's emotional and relational needs, which I feel can be overlooked or missed because of the pressure felt by teachers to meet the prescribed outcomes of the EYFS.

Perryman et al. (2018) acknowledged the powerful influence that Ofsted has on how schools enact their curriculum and pedagogy. I noted in my study that two of the teachers felt constrained in how they could teach on the carpet. They valued child-centred pedagogies, but felt unable to fully enact their pedagogical preferences because of the expectations of their school for children to be ready for formal learning in year one. It can be difficult for EYFS teachers to make changes to their practice when feeling under pressure to meet academic targets. I wondered if the teachers in my study may have felt more empowered to do so, if they were more informed about current research on school readiness (Blair and Raver, 2015) and the impact of different pedagogical approaches on children's emotional and cognitive outcomes (Melhuish et al. 2015). However, it may be difficult for teachers to become better informed by research on pedagogy, when much of the professional development that currently takes place in primary schools is based on policy priorities such as raising achievement and improving school readiness. Many teachers will not have access to research evidence as the professional learning that is available to them may be limited to that which supports the priorities of their individual schools and academy trusts.

5.3.2 A contested space for teachers to enact their pedagogical values

The literature reviewed in chapter two identified that the culture of performativity and discourse of school readiness is influencing early years practitioners' pedagogical choices, as they strive to achieve short-term academic gains (Roberts-Holmes, 2014; Wood, 2014). Wood and Chesworth (2018) highlighted the difficulties practitioners encounter in trying to make sense of the different demands of policy, practice and their own values and beliefs. In my study, I found that carpet time can be a place where the pedagogical choices and dilemmas encountered by the teachers can become exposed. The teachers discussed feeling compromised in their pedagogical choices because of the demands of the targets imposed upon them for children to reach the

'good level of development' (GLD) by the end of the EYFS, or to be prepared for the phonics screening check in year one. There were many examples, reported in the findings chapter, that illustrated the emotional energy that teachers invested into carpet time as they struggled to reconcile their pedagogical values with the demands of their school curriculum. The newly qualified reception class teacher questioned whether carpet time was the best context for all children to learn, as she noticed that many children struggled to concentrate and pay attention. The year one teacher expressed similar concerns, stating that after five minutes she had 'lost' them, meaning the children were no longer paying attention.

In all of the classes, except the nursery, the children were often grouped by attainment for the teaching of phonics and mathematics on the carpet. The teachers explained that they grouped children by attainment to allow them to teach discrete lessons and support the groups to make progress towards meeting their academic targets. There was also evidence in the data from this study, that children were acutely aware of ability grouping and who the higher or lower attaining children were. Frazier Norbury et al. (2016) warned that the longer-term impact of being in the lower attaining group in primary school can be quite devastating, leading to children experiencing low self-esteem and high levels of stress. Yet, it has been noted that grouping by ability has become common practice in primary schools (Marks, 2013), due to the policy drivers that exert pressure on teachers to ensure that children meet academic targets (Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017).

These findings concerning the impact of contemporary policy initiatives on EYFS practice are consistent with the findings of Roberts-Holmes (2017), who reported that teachers were resorting to using didactic teaching strategies and teaching in ability groups, despite not believing that this was in the children's best interests. Similarly, Clark (2017) reported that the discourse of school readiness that positions young children as assets for future economic success, rather than focusing on their development and wellbeing in the present, can lead to teachers adopting inappropriate pedagogies in the EYFS. All of the teachers in my study expressed some frustration and unease about their choice of teaching strategies when teaching through carpet time. They felt compelled to teach in ability groups and to dedicate most of their carpet times to teaching academic content, in order to meet the demands of the school

curriculum and attainment targets. However, the new EYFS (DfE, 2021) clearly states that:

Practitioners must stimulate children's interests, responding to each child's emerging needs and guiding their development through warm, positive interactions coupled with secure routines for play and learning (p.16).

The teachers in my study had the best interests of their children at the heart of their practice, but carpet time was a place where they mostly struggled to have the courage of their convictions to teach what they felt was most needed for their children and in the way which they felt best suited their needs. The two reception class teachers had trained to be early years teachers and they valued child-centred pedagogical approaches, but they felt constrained by the amount of carpet time needed to cover the curriculum content for the achievement of the ELGs. The other two teachers, nursery and year one, had trained as key stage one and key stage two teachers and they favoured more formal, instructional pedagogies. Yet, they also felt constrained when teaching on the carpet. They struggled to maintain the children's attention when teaching academic skills and the year one teacher wondered if the children really benefitted from whole class teaching on the carpet, or would be better taught in smaller ability groups seated round a table, to aid their concentration. The nursery teacher also struggled, but in a different way to the others. She agreed with the rhetoric of school readiness which focused on the attainment of academic goals in preparation for the knowledge-based curriculum in key stage one. She wanted to do more carpet time sessions with her nursery children, but felt constrained by her EYFS colleagues who all believed that children needed more time and opportunities for child-initiated learning, through a play-based environment.

Whatever their pedagogical stance or values, each of the teachers in my study experienced struggles with carpet time when trying to reconcile their beliefs and values with the way in which their school leaders interpreted EYFS policy and their school's expectations for children to be made ready for formal learning in school.

5.3.3 Summary of section 5.3

In summary, the findings from my study have indicated that carpet time is a contested area of practice, due to the competing demands of children trying to have their voices heard and teachers trying to navigate the myriad of directives for EYFS practice, based

on policy, their school curriculum and their own values and beliefs. The discourse of school readiness and pressure placed upon teachers to meet academic goals, impacted their pedagogical choices. Sometimes their choices could prevent children from having their voices heard and negatively impact children's self-esteem and wellbeing. At other times, their choices had a positive effect on children, enabling them to develop positive relationships and facilitating time and space for them to have their voices heard. All of the teachers struggled to reconcile their personal beliefs and values with their EYFS practice and often felt compromised in the decisions they made. Carpet time was a place where these pedagogical challenges were mostly exposed. The impact they had on the children was significant and therefore, this suggests that teachers could be better supported to make autonomous pedagogical decisions, based on the research evidence for school readiness and quality ECE.

5.4 Conclusion to chapter five

In this chapter I discussed the four research questions in relation to my findings and the literature review. I discussed the features of carpet time in my study and the children's and teachers' lived experiences and perceptions of its purpose and value. The limited literature available on carpet time generally focused on reporting its negative aspects. There was consensus among researchers that children disliked carpet time and it could be a harsh and controlling environment, which could erode children's rights to privacy and autonomy. In my study I found some similarities with the literature about the negative aspects of carpet time, but I also identified some positive aspects. I found the carpet time is a complex area of practice. The children's and teachers' lived experiences and perceptions of it are not straightforward, or able to be described as a collective entity. They are nuanced and personalised, and context-dependent, in relation to wider education policies and expectations.

From my findings and the literature, I concluded that carpet time can be a contested area of practice which has both negative and positive connotations. Both children and teachers could experience struggles during carpet time. The children struggled to have their voices heard. They could experience feelings of humiliation, confusion and frustration, or conversely, feelings of self-confidence, importance and status among their peers. The emotions they experienced could impact their sense of self and their

sense of worth. Teachers too, experienced struggles and these could be of an emotional and pedagogical nature. The expectations placed upon teachers to meet academic outcomes in the EYFS caused them to feel pressurised to teach in ways that are not consistent with their pedagogical values. They struggled to reconcile their pedagogical values with their carpet time practices and also experienced tensions among their colleagues when their pedagogical stance was different to the rest of the team. I concluded that teachers invested much emotional energy into their carpet time practices, as they struggled with aspects of their professional identities, their pedagogical values, their longing to provide the best for their children and their personal relationships.

However, I also noted that carpet time has potential to positively impact children's learning, development and well-being. As a context for teaching, carpet time offered teachers the time and space to teach academic content. As a context for learning, it supported teachers to develop nurturing relationships with their children, which boosted their self-esteem and supported the development of positive dispositions to learning. I concluded that carpet time offered opportunities for children to experience positive emotions, such as feelings of importance, humour, acceptance and belonging. I believe these opportunities are influential in supporting children to develop their sense of identity and self-acceptance. This led me to conclude that carpet time can be a valuable resource for children and teachers, and that there is still much to learn and understand about it.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

My study has explored children's and teachers' perceptions and lived experiences of carpet time in the EYFS in one school in Greater Manchester. I chose to situate the study within a children's rights and empowerment framework and included the children as research participants, taking on the role of expert informants. I decided to include my biography in the research, as I have personal experience of teaching and advising in the early years sector, and currently work as a teacher-educator for primary and early years teachers.

In this chapter, I will explain the research outcomes concerning children's voices in relation to the study's framework of children's rights and empowerment, and share my thoughts about implications for policy and practice based on my findings from the four research questions. Finally, I will share the limitations of the study, my plans for disseminating the research and my reflections on the conduct of the study and impact on my personal and professional development.

6.1 Children's voices, rights and empowerment

I took note of children's voices through the many different ways in which they communicated (Rinaldi, 2006). I interpreted their voices through my observations of how they engaged in carpet time, listening to what they verbally told me in the child-chats, and through my observations of their play with the small world resources. From my interpretations, I highlighted that carpet time can be a place of control and compliance, which can have the negative consequence of silencing children's voices. The children were aware that carpet time was a place where their voices may not be heard. They explained that they should not speak unless the teacher asked them to and were fearful of the sanctions for deviating from the expected codes of behaviour on the carpet. Yet, their desire to have their voices heard was communicated through their bodily movements, telling their news, and their efforts to interact with each other and their teacher.

I also deduced that carpet time may not be a suitable context for learning for all children in the EYFS, due to children's individual stages of neuro-physical and cognitive development. Some children do not have the bodily control to sit still and

pay attention to the teacher, or may not learn through abstract concepts that are typically the focus of carpet time (for example, phonics and mathematics). Children struggled to engage in the carpet time sessions when the topic was not related to their experiences, for example, when being taught academic content such as phonics or mathematics. In these instances, they were observed disengaging after the first five minutes, struggling to sit still and finding different ways of keeping their minds occupied. However, I noted a stark difference in their sustained attention when the content of the session was within the realms of their experiences, or, of personal interest to them. For example, children showed sustained attention for longer periods of time when sharing their news and listening to stories, or when the teachers facilitated opportunities for children to share their personal funds of knowledge. In these instances, children appeared to be fully engaged in the session, there was very little movement and there was silence, apart from the person speaking.

Although carpet time had potential to silence children's voices, I also noted that it can empower children to develop a positive sense of self and enhance their self-esteem. I frequently observed that carpet time provided opportunities for teachers to forge positive relationships with the children and create a sense of community. One teacher capitalised on these opportunities and reported that using carpet time for sharing children's news, or to single them out for positive recognition, enabled her to boost children's self-esteem, thus supporting them to develop a positive sense of self. The potential for carpet time to promote positive relationships was not noted in the literature. I believe that this relational aspect of carpet time is under-utilised by teachers, due to the discourse of school readiness in the EYFS (DfE, 2017), which emphasises the achievement of academic goals at the end of the EYFS as a pre-requisite for the start of the national curriculum in key stage 1 (Wood, 2020).

6.1.1. Impact of EYFS policy on carpet time practices

The EYFS (DfE, 2017; DfE, 2021) promotes the principle of the unique child, recognising that children learn and develop in different ways and at different rates (DfE, 2017). It supports children's entitlement to a personalised curriculum (DfE, 2017, para: 1.6). Yet, it also mandates that children are assessed against a set of

prescribed learning outcomes at the end of the EYFS. I think that the challenges to children's voices being heard through carpet time and their entitlement to a personalised curriculum, may be indicative of the impact of current EYFS policy on teachers' classroom practices (Roberts-Holmes, 2015; Bradbury and Roberts-Holmes, 2017). The teachers in my study all had the best interests of the children at the forefront of their practice, yet, their carpet time practices sometimes undermined children's self-esteem and could prevent children from having their voices heard.

Although teachers recognised that carpet time can have a negative impact on children's motivation to learn, they felt powerless to change their practice. They struggled to reconcile their pedagogical values with the policy context of the EYFS and the contemporary discourse of school readiness (Clark, 2017). The teachers felt pressured to conform to Ofsted's recommendations for children to be taught academic skills through instructional teaching methods, in preparation for the more formal primary curriculum in year one (Ofsted, 2017). To achieve these aims, they predominantly used carpet time for teaching phonics, mathematics and literacy to the whole class and to children in ability groups, using didactic teaching strategies. The teachers acknowledged feeling compromised in their pedagogical approaches to carpet time, feeling pressured by the constraints of their school curriculum and school targets for a high percentage of children to achieve the ELGs by the end of the EYFS.

I felt concerned that the teachers who favoured a child-centred pedagogy resorted to using instructional teaching through carpet time, despite them noticing that all children did not benefit from these approaches. Wood (2020, p.330) provides a possible explanation for why teachers may adopt formal teaching strategies in the EYFS. She proposes that,

the directive/transmissive approach is considered more effective as a means of ensuring school readiness because the EYFS constructs pedagogic progression as the transition from informal play to formal learning during the Reception year (ages 4–5) (Wood, 2020, p.330).

The teachers in my study used carpet times as the means to ensuring they covered the academic content of the ELGs in order to prepare children for the start of the

national curriculum in key stage 1. They adhered to the construct of pedagogic progression promoted through the EYFS statutory guidance, in which it is stated that:

As children grow older, and as their development allows, it is expected that the balance will gradually shift towards more activities led by adults, to help children prepare for more formal learning, ready for Year 1.

The positioning of the reception year as the transition to more formal learning in year one is given greater credence in the new EYFS (2021). Despite the claim that there is 'no prescribed teaching approach' in the EYFS (DfE, 2021, p.16), the language in the new statutory framework (2021) regarding pedagogic progression, is subtly changed from the 2017 statement, to state that:

As children grow older and move into the reception year, there should be a greater focus on teaching the essential skills and knowledge in the specific areas of learning. This will help children prepare for year1 (DfE, 2021, para: 1.14).

The teachers in my study were all unanimous that carpet time was the only context in which they could ensure the transmission of knowledge to all children in their class. I think it is likely, with the introduction of the new EYFS (2021), that reception classes will increase the length and frequency of their carpet time sessions and that this may result in increased numbers of children losing interest and feeling less motivated to learn.

6.1.2 Impact of pedagogical tensions on children's entitlement to a personalised curriculum

The pedagogical tensions that teachers grappled with were exposed through the context of carpet time and impacted children's rights to have their voices heard and their entitlement to a personalised EYFS curriculum. The literature highlighted the positive influence of sensitively responsive teacher-child interactions on children's social, emotional and cognitive outcomes (Garbacz et al. 2014; Melhuish et al. 2015; Early et al. 2017). Carpet time facilitated interactions between the teacher and the whole class and between the teacher and some individuals. I experienced a range of emotions, both positive and negative, when I witnessed the effect that the interactions between teachers and children could have on children's self-esteem and developing sense of self. Depending on the nature of the interaction, a child could feel affirmed and proud, or conversely, they could feel embarrassed and humiliated. This was because the interactions during carpet time were seen and heard by the whole class.

Due to the public nature of carpet time, these interactions could have negative, long term implications for a child, impacting on his/her ability to make friendships and succeed in school (MacLure et al. 2012).

The negative interactions between the teacher and the children contradicted the child-centred values of ECE that are promoted through the principles of the EYFS (DfE, 2017). However, they were not intended by teachers to undermine children's self-esteem, or silence their voices. I viewed these interactions as a product of the EYFS policy context that teachers were struggling to make sense of. Children have a right to have their voices heard (UNCRC, 1989). In this study children have communicated that carpet time can be an enjoyable experience with positive outcomes, or a negative one with unfavourable consequences. Carpet time can support children to experience being part of a community, to have their voices heard and to develop a positive sense of identity. However, policy claims about pedagogic progression in the reception class (Wood, 2020), within Ofsted's rhetoric of school readiness (Ofsted, 2017) and the pressure placed on teachers to ensure children's achievement of academic goals (DfE, 2017; 2021), may undermine children's voices and their entitlement to a personalised curriculum (DfE, 2021) that builds on their existing funds of knowledge (Chesworth, 2019).

The outcomes, reported here, concerning children's voices, in relation to the study's rights and empowerment framework, have implications for policy and practice. These will be discussed in section 6.3 after a succinct summary of the findings from the four research questions.

6.2 Summary of findings from the research questions

The findings from my research questions support the outcomes concerning children's voices that have been reported in the previous section. I will provide a succinct summary of the findings from all four research questions together, as I have given a more detailed summary of the findings for each individual question in chapter five.

The findings from my study indicated that the physical context of carpet time could have a negative impact on children's motivation to learn and that carpet time may not be a suitable context for learning for all children in the EYFS. The turbulent EYFS

policy context (Wood, 2020) and Ofsted's rhetoric of school readiness (Ofsted, 2017) were significant influencers of how teachers enacted their carpet time practices. Teachers experienced pedagogical struggles at carpet times, as they aspired to promote the statutory child-centred principles of the EYFS, whilst feeling under pressure to teach standardised forms of knowledge in pursuit of achieving prescribed academic outcomes for children at the end of the EYFS. Teachers using an instructional pedagogical approach, coupled with the uncomfortable physical context of carpet time, resulted in children struggling to concentrate, and teachers having to exert tight control. This culture of control and compliance prevented children from having their voices heard, which could have long-term negative effects on children's self-esteem and sense of belonging (Murray, 2019).

A positive feature of carpet time was that it facilitated a sense of community and belonging, by providing an intimate gathering space in which the teacher and children got to know each other well and developed positive relationships. Experiencing a sense of community and belonging, in which they could have their voices heard, was the aspect of carpet time that children appeared to value most. Interactions between the teacher and the children could boost children's self-esteem and instil in them a positive sense of self. Conversely, negative interactions could have the opposite effect, causing children to feel humiliated or embarrassed and could contribute to children developing poor self-esteem and a negative sense of self.

In summary, my findings suggest that carpet time is a taken-for-granted area of practice which merits further investigation and understanding. Children's and teachers' perceptions of the value and purpose of carpet time were complex, nuanced and individual. Their lived experiences of carpet time were influenced by many different factors. Carpet time was found to be a contested area of practice in which the children and the teachers experienced emotional, physical and pedagogical challenges.

6.3 Implications for policy and practice

I did not design my small-scale study with the intention of influencing EYFS policy or Ofsted's recommendations to schools. However, my study findings have highlighted the tensions between EYFS policy and classroom practices and how these tensions

impact children's and teachers' lived experiences of carpet time. My intention was to use and disseminate the findings, in my role as a teacher educator, to consider implications for pedagogical approaches to carpet time. It is difficult for the findings from a small scale study, such as this, to influence national policy, since policy makers are more persuaded by evidence taken from effectiveness studies, and intervention studies with randomised control trials and large sample sizes. It is also difficult to influence policy makers when research findings are critical of policy goals, especially as Ofsted directly intervenes in matters of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices (Wood, 2019). The teachers in my study felt under pressure, by their school policies, to engage in more formal pedagogical practices for carpet times. They were not confident to go against policy messages in their place of employment and found it frustrating, but safer and easier, to compromise their pedagogical values, even though they were aware that their carpet time practices were not always beneficial for children's learning. Wood (2019) argues that Ofsted's recent research reports on effective teaching in ECE (2015; 2017) are an attempt to persuade and coerce teachers into accepting policy directives and ideologies to achieve their intended outcomes. Wood (2019) advises that teachers should be more socially and politically aware of the motives behind educational policies that directly influence their pedagogical practices. My findings may be helpful in supporting teachers to critically evaluate EYFS policy and this is something I can take forward in my role as a teacher-educator.

My study has highlighted the influence that Ofsted (2017) has on how schools enact their curriculum and pedagogy (Perryman et al. 2018). It has exposed the influence that these policy/practice tensions are having on how teachers conduct carpet time in one school in Greater Manchester. The implications of these findings for EYFS policy and for Ofsted are found in the recognition that the discourse of school readiness with its pursuit of academic outcomes for young children can lead to inappropriate pedagogical choices, which can have negative consequences for children's learning, development and wellbeing (Clark, 2017). Although it is generally acknowledged that short term gains in academic outcomes can be achieved through instructivist teaching methods, such as those used at carpet time, in the long term, these outcomes are frequently not sustained (Golbeck, 2001). It is the impact of the teacher-child relationship that appears to be more successful in achieving long term gains. These

relationships can help to support children's development of positive dispositions to learning, which can support children to achieve academic outcomes in the longer term (Whitebread and Bingham, 2015). The findings from my study suggest that carpet time may be an under-utilised resource for teachers to achieve the dual aims of developing children's motivation for learning and academic outcomes in the longer term.

My conclusions have implications for the development of pedagogical practices for carpet time. I would recommend that:

1. Teachers be encouraged to critically reflect on the potential for carpet time to support the development of positive teacher-child relationships and the impact that their interactions with children can have on their long-term holistic development and wellbeing.
2. Teachers be encouraged to critically reflect on how some children can struggle on the carpet, both physically and emotionally, so that they may develop sensitive and intentional pedagogical practices to improve carpet time experiences for children.
3. Teacher educators and school leaders be encouraged to critically reflect on the struggles and challenges encountered by teachers during carpet times, so that they can support trainee and early career teachers to develop secure pedagogical values and the confidence to apply the principles of the EYFS to all aspects of their practice, including carpet time.
4. Carpet time is used flexibly for supporting children's personal, social and emotional development, as well as their academic outcomes.
5. Teacher educators support trainee and early career teachers to engage in critical dialogue about ECE policies and their impact on classroom practices.

6.4 Dissemination of the research

There are strong critiques of EYFS policy and its impact on teachers' practices (Wood, 2019; 2020), and I hope that my thesis will add to this critique. As a teacher educator, I can motivate trainee teachers to engage in critical dialogue about the wider social and political issues that influence their school policies and this may help them in

making decisions about how to respond, in terms of their everyday pedagogical practices. I would also hope it would give them the courage to challenge inappropriate taken-for-granted classroom practices. A starting point for me would be to share the findings from this study in the context of introducing the trainees to the new EYFS (2021).

I have been accepted to disseminate the findings of my study through an oral presentation, as part of a symposium at the EECERA online festival 2021. This will be followed by submitting an academic article for publication in the EECERA 2021 academic journal. To encourage debate among practising teachers and teacher educators, I will consider submitting an article to the professional journal, 'Impact' edited by the Chartered College of Teachers, as I have identified a gap in content specifically for Early Years teachers. My longer term aim is to publish in an academic journal of ECE, for example, 'The European Early Childhood Education Research Journal' or 'Early Education'.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of my study is that it is a small scale study in only one school, meaning its findings are not nationally representative of all schools. The school chosen was a Roman Catholic primary school, so the use and dynamics of carpet times were influenced by the school's mission statement and faith ethos. This may be viewed as a limitation because it is representative of a minority group of primary schools. Being an auto-biographical study limits the findings to my interpretation of the data. Although the children were included as co-participants and contributed as expert informants, the findings of the study and the conclusions are constructed through my autobiographical lens. The volume of data collected could be viewed as a limitation because it meant that I gained a broader view of the dynamics of carpet time, but had less time for deeper interrogation and could not include all aspects of the data in the findings chapter.

6.6 Reflection

I began my study with a desire to find out more about carpet time. In particular, I wanted to gain insight into the children's and teachers' perceptions of the value and

purpose of carpet time. I already had a broad knowledge of what carpet time is and how it is used in schools, as I had experienced it in so many guises; as a former early years teacher, an early years consultant and as a teacher educator. My feelings towards carpet time were predominantly ones of frustration. I had observed many carpet time sessions in which children appeared to be physically uncomfortable, bored and wasting their time. I thought there was little value in teaching young children in this way and that, for some, the experience was a hindrance to their learning and development. I was aware of my personal biases and negative assumptions about carpet time and was determined to be open to alternative understandings. I struggled to suppress my positionality and battled with feelings of self-doubt.

The turning point came when my supervisor asked me why my study was not autoethnographic. I remember feeling averse to the idea of sharing anything of my personal biography in a public way, as in my thesis. I imagined having to expose my vulnerability, which would no doubt, lead to later regrets. However, my supervisor encouraged me to research autoethnography and autobiography and I quickly became engrossed reading autoethnographic research studies. I felt genuinely interested, excited and emotionally moved by the autoethnographic studies I was reading. For the first time in my doctoral studies, I experienced a sense of connectedness and a feeling of freedom. The researchers' biographies were integral to their studies, they were part of the data and provided authenticity to the findings. I could see then, that who I am, is an important part of my study and I began to write more freely because this was now an auto/biographical account of my sense-making of an aspect of practice that was important to me. Writing from an auto/biographical perspective has enabled me to write 'from the heart' and embrace my positionality as a vital part of the study. I did not have to *strive* to be open to alternative understandings, which I thought would be the case. Rather, I have learnt to work from and develop my own understandings through my observations, reflections, discussions and the reading about the experience of carpet time. Completing the study over a number of years, whilst working full time and supporting my family has been a difficult and challenging experience. I believe this has had an impact on the quality of my study, as well as my personal life. I have had to prioritise my time, and my family has always come first, followed by work and then the doctoral thesis. Although I do not regret these

decisions, I do feel that the study could have been completed sooner and improved with more time to think and reflect.

One of the main limitations of the study, which may also be viewed as a strength, was the amount of data I collected. I faced a difficult decision about whether to include all three data-sets, the classroom observations, the child-chats and the teacher interviews, knowing that I could justifiably produce the thesis using only one of the data-sets. I decided to use all three, as I felt it was unfair on the participants to not include their contributions which they had given so willingly. However, this meant that, due to the breadth of data, I was limited in what I could report on in the findings and discussion chapters and that the data analysis stage was lengthy and time consuming. I feel proud of the work I did on the thematic analysis of my data, which was rigorous and systematic. I think my decision to draw upon IPA for the analysis of the teacher interviews was the right one for me because it supported an in-depth interrogation of the data and taught me new research skills. It felt like a process of stripping back layers, or digging, slowly revealing what's buried beneath the surface. I felt empathy towards the teachers and privileged to be able to be given an insight into their perceptions of their lived experiences.

On a personal level, I have experienced struggles and growth through completing this study. I have struggled with feelings of self-doubt, tiredness and lack of time, but grown in my confidence as a researcher and developed my skills as a teacher educator. My study has helped me to recognise and question 'taken for granted' classroom practices. It has enabled me to reflect on the teacher I was and the teacher educator I have become. I have gained knowledge to inform my practice and a deeper understanding of who I am and what I have to offer. I thoroughly enjoyed my fieldwork and I feel enthused by my findings. I think there is still much more to learn about carpet time in early years classrooms and I look forward to continuing this journey.

References

- Adams, M. (2006). Hybridising habitus and reflexivity: towards an understanding of contemporary identity? *Sociology*, 40 (3): 511–528.
- Alderson, P. (2004). Ethics. In S. Fraser, V. Lewis, S. Ding, M. Kellett, & C. Robinson (Eds.), *Doing research with children and young people*, pp. 97–112. London: Sage.
- Allen, G. (2011). *Early intervention: the next steps, an independent report to Her Majesty's government by Graham Allen MP*. The Stationery Office.
- Ang, L. (2014). Preschool or prep school? Rethinking the role of early years education. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 15, 185–199.
- Anthony, G., Hunter, R. & Hunter, J. (2016) Whither ability grouping: Changing the object of groupwork. Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia.
- Arksey, H., and O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework. *International journal of social research methodology*, 8 (1), 19-32.
- Atherton, F., and Nutbrown, C. (2016). Schematic pedagogy: supporting one child's learning at home and in a group. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 24 (1), 63-79.
- Atkinson, P. (2017). *Thinking ethnographically*. Sage.
- Babcock, B. (1980). Reflexivity: Definitions and discriminations. *Semiotica*, 30 (1/2), 1-14.
- Bae, B. (2005). Troubling the identity of a researcher: methodological and ethical questions in cooperating with teacher-carers in Norway. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6 (3), 283-291.
- Ball, S. J. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of education policy*, 18 (2), 215-228.
- Barblett, L., Knaus, M., and Barratt-Pugh, C. (2016). The pushes and pulls of pedagogy in the early years: Competing knowledges and the erosion of play-based learning. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 41 (4), 36-43.
- Barley, R., and Bath, C. (2014). The importance of familiarisation when doing research with young children. *Ethnography and Education*, 9 (2), 182-195.
- Bates, A. (2018). In Search of Bold Beginnings: 'Good Early Education, 'Ethics and Moral Responsibility. In *FORUM: for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education*, 60 (3), 279-288.
- Bae, B. (2005). Troubling the identity of a researcher: methodological and ethical questions in cooperating with teacher-carers in Norway. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(3), 283-291.
- Beazley, H., Bessell, S., Ennew, J., and Waterson, R. (2009). The right to be properly researched: Research with children in a messy, real world. *Children's Geographies*, 7 (4), 365-78
- Benhabib, S. (2002). *Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Berger R. (2013). Now I see it, now I don't: researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research* 0 (0) pp.1–16

- Bertram, T. and Pascal, C. (2007). Children Crossing Borders: Enhancing the inclusion of children in pre-school settings. *Children in Europe* 12: 23–5.
- Birks, M. and Mills, J. (2015). *Grounded theory: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Bitou, A. and Waller, T. (2017). Participatory research with very young children. In T. Waller, E. Årlemalm-Hagsér, E. B. H. Sandseter, L. Lee-Hammond, K. Lekies & S. Wyver, (Eds.). In: *The SAGE handbook of outdoor play and learning*. London: Sage. pp. 431- 446.
- Blaikie, N. and Priest, J. (2017). *Social research: Paradigms in action*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Blair, C. and Raver, C. C. (2015). School readiness and self-regulation: A developmental psychobiological approach. *Annual review of psychology*, 66, 711-731.
- Blatchford, P. (2003). *The class size debate: Is small better?* McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Bliss, T., Robinson, G. and Maines, B. (1995) *Developing circle time*. Bristol: Lane Duck Publishing.
- Bloodgood, J. W. (1999). What's in a name? Children's name writing and literacy acquisition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34(3), 342-367.
- Booth, T. and Booth, W. (2003) 'In the Frame: Photovoice and Mothers with Learning Difficulties', *Disability and Society* 18(4): 431–42.
- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. D. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. London: Routledge.
- Bradbury, A. (2018). The impact of the Phonics Screening Check on grouping by ability: A 'necessary evil' amid the policy storm. *British Educational Research Journal*, 44(4), 539-556.
- Bradbury, A. (2019). Datafied at four: the role of data in the 'schoolification' of early childhood education in England. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 44 (1), 7-21.
- Bradbury, A. and Roberts-Holmes, G. (2017). *Grouping in Early Years and Key Stage 1: A Necessary Evil?* London: National Education Union.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101.
- Breathnach, H., Danby, S., & O'Gorman, L. (2018). Becoming a member of the classroom: Supporting children's participation as informants in research. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 26 (3), 393-406.
- British Education Research Association (BERA) (2011). *Ethical guidelines for educational research*. Accessed: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011> on: 20/09/16.
- British Education Research Association (BERA) (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research (4th ed.)* Accessed: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018> on 12/02/19.
- Brocki, J. M. and Wearden, A. J. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and health*, 21(1), 87-108.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2009). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Broström, S. (2006). Children's perspectives on their childhood experiences. *Nordic childhoods and early education: Philosophy, research, policy, and practice in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden*, 223-255.
- Bryce-Clegg, A. (2013). *Continuous Provision in the Early Years*. A&C Black.
- Buchbinder, M., Longhofer, J., Barrett, T., Lawson, P. and Floersch, J. (2006). Ethnographic approaches to child care research: A review of the literature. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 4 (1), 45-63.
- Burchinal, M., Kainz, K., & Cay, Y. (2011). How well do our measures of quality predict child outcomes? A meta-analysis and coordinated analysis of data from large-scale studies of early childhood settings. In M. Zaslow, I. Martinez-Beck, K. Tout & T. Halle (Eds.), *Quality measurement in early childhood settings* pp.11-31. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Buscatto, M. (2016). Practising reflexivity in ethnography. *Qualitative research*, 4, 137-151.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge.
- Cadima, J., Leal, T. and Burchinal, M. (2010). The quality of teacher–student interactions: Associations with first graders' academic and behavioral outcomes. *Journal of School Psychology*, 48, 457–482.
- Camilli, G., Vargas, S., Ryan, S., & Barnett, W. S. (2010). Meta-analysis of the effects of early education interventions on cognitive and social development. *Teachers college record*, 112(3), 579-620.
- Campbell, T. (2013). *In School Ability Grouping and the Month of Birth Effect. Preliminary Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study*. London: Institute of Education, London University.
- Canella, G.S. (1997) *Deconstructing Early Childhood Education. Social Justice and Revolution. Rethinking Childhood 2*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Cannold, L. (2001). Interviewing adults. In G. MacNaughton, S. Rolfe and I. Siraj-Blatchford (eds.). *Doing early childhood research: International perspectives on theory and practice*, pp. 178-192. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Carr, M. (2011). Young children reflecting on their learning: Teachers' conversation strategies. *Early Years*, 31 (3), 257-270.
- Carr, M. and Lee, W. (2012) *Learning Stories constructing identities in early Education*. London: SAGE.
- Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE) (England) (1967). *Children and their Primary Schools: v. 1: Plowden Report*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO).
- Chapman, E. and Smith, J.A. (2002). Interpretative phenomenological analysis and the new genetics. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 7, 125-130.
- Chesworth, L. (2018). Embracing uncertainty in research with young children. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 31 (9), 851-862.
- Chesworth, L. (2019). Theorising young children's interests: making connections and in-the-moment happenings. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 23.
- Christensen, P. and James, A. (2008). Childhood diversity and commonality: Some methodological insights. In *Research with children* (pp. 172-188). Routledge.

- Christensen, P. and James, A. (2017). Introduction: researching children and childhood: cultures of communication. In *Research With Children* (pp. 13-22). Routledge.
- Clark, A. (2005). Listening to and involving young children: A review of research and practice. *Early child development and care*, 175 (6), 489-505.
- Clark, A. and Moss, P. (2001). *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*. London: National Children's Bureau Enterprises Ltd.
- Clark, R. M. (2017). *Exploring the Contexts for Early Learning: Challenging the school readiness agenda*. London: Routledge.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education (6th ed.)* London: Routledge Falmer.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education (8th ed.)* London: Routledge Falmer.
- Collins, B. (2013). Empowerment of children through circle time: myth or reality? *Irish educational studies*, 32 (4), 421-436.
- Conkbayir, M., & Pascal, C. (2015). *Early Childhood Theories and Contemporary Issues: An Introduction*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Corsaro, W. (1996). 'Transitions in early childhood: The promise of comparative, longitudinal ethnography'. In: A. Colby, R. Jessor and R. A. Shweder (eds.) *Ethnography and Human Development: Context and Meaning in Social Inquiry*, pp. 419–57. Chicago. IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Corsaro, W. A. (2011). *The Sociology of Childhood*. London: Sage.
- Corsaro, W. and Molinari, L. (2000). Entering and observing in children's worlds, in: P. Christensen and A. James (eds.). *Research with children: Perspectives and practices*, pp. 179–200. London: Falmer Press.
- Cousin, G. (2010). Positioning positionality: The reflexive turn. In: M. Savin-Badin & C. Howell Major (ed.). *New approaches to qualitative research (pp. 9-18)*. *Wisdom and uncertainty*. London: Routledge.
- Cowley, S. (2019). New framework should consider children's choices. *Early Years Educator*, 20 (12), 14-16.
- Craft, A., McConnon, L., & Matthews, A. (2012). Child-initiated play and professional creativity: Enabling four-year-olds' possibility thinking. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 7 (1), 48-61.
- Cruddas, L. (2007). Engaged voices—dialogic interaction and the construction of shared social meanings. *Educational Action Research*, 15 (3), 479-488.
- Crotty, M. (1989). *The foundations of social research*. London: Sage.
- Curtin, C. (2001). Eliciting children's voices in qualitative research. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 55 (3), 295-302.
- Dahlberg, G. (2003). Pedagogy as a loci of an ethics of an encounter. In: *Governing children, families, and education* (pp. 261-286). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. R. (1999). *Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: Postmodern perspectives*. Psychology Press.

Dalli, C. and Stephenson, A. (2010). Involving children in research in early childhood education settings: Opening up the issues. *Involving children and young people in research in educational settings*, 11-41.

Daniels, K. (2013). Supporting the development of positive dispositions and learner identities: an action research study into the impact and potential of developing photographic learning stories in the Early Years. *Education 3-13*, 41 (3), 300-315.

Darbyshire, P., MacDougall, C. and Schiller, W. (2005). Multiple methods in qualitative research with children: more insight or just more? *Qualitative research*, 5 (4), 417-436.

David, T., Gooch, K., Powell, S. and Abbott, L. (2003). Birth to three matters: A review of the literature. *London: DfES*.

Davis, J. M. (1998). Understanding the meanings of children: A reflexive process. *Children and society*, 12 (5), 325-335.

Davies, B., De Schauwer, E., Claes, L., De Munck, K., Van De Putte, I., & Verstichele, M. (2013). Recognition and difference: a collective biography. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26, 680–691.

Dean, J. (2001). *Organising Learning in the Primary School Classroom* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.

Denham, S. A., Bassett, H. H., & Zinsler, K. (2012). Early childhood teachers as socializers of young children's emotional competence. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 40 (3), 137-143.

Denham, S. A., Blair, K. A., DeMulder, E., Levitas, J., Sawyer, K., Auerbach–Major, S., & Queenan, P. (2003). Preschool emotional competence: Pathway to social competence?. *Child development*, 74 (1), 238-256.

Denzin N. K. (1986). *Interpretive Biography*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (2006). Analytic autoethnography, or déjà vu all over again. *Journal of contemporary ethnography*, 35 (4), 419-428.

Denzin, N. K. (2018). *The qualitative manifesto: A call to arms*. London: Routledge.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, pp 1-32 (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks: CA Sage.

Department for Education/ Department for Health (DfE/DH) (2011) *Supporting families in the foundation years*. London: Department for Education. Accessed: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184868/DFE-01001-2011_supporting_families_in_the_foundation_years.pdf on 21/12/14.

Department for Education (2012). *Phonics screening check and national curriculum assessments at Key Stage 1 in England, 2011/2012*. London: DfE.

Department for Education (2013). *The National Curriculum in England: key stages 1 and 2 framework document*. London: Crown Copyright.

Department for Education (2013). *More great childcare: Raising quality and giving parents more choice*. London: Crown Copyright

Department for Education (2017). *Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage*. Accessed <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework> on 8/01/20.

Department for Education (2017). Blog: The education hub. Education in the media. Accessed <https://dfemedia.blog.gov.uk/2017/12/01/education-in-the-media-friday-1-december-2017/> 09/11/20.

Department for Education (2019). *Early years foundation stage reforms. Government consultation*. Accessed https://consult.education.gov.uk/early-years-quality-outcomes/early-years-foundation-stage-reforms/supporting_documents/EYFS%20reforms%20consultation.pdf on 6/01/20.

Department for Education (2020) *Guidance Reception Baseline Assessment* Accessed <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reception-baseline-assessment> on 08/01/20.

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage. Accessed <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2> on 18/06/21

DfES (2007) *Letters and sounds: Principles and practice of high quality phonics*. London, Department for Education and Skills.

Diamond, A. (2013). Executive functions. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 64: 135-168.

Diamond, A., Barnett, W.S., Thomas, J., and Munro, S. (2007). Pre-school program improves cognitive control. *Science*, 3 (18), 1387-1388.

Dickinson, D. and Brady, J. (2006). Toward effective support for language and literacy through professional development. In M. Zaslow and L. Martinez-Beck (Eds.). *Critical issues in early childhood professional development* (pp. 141-170). Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing.

Dickinson, D. K. and Porche, M. V. (2011). Relation between language experiences in preschool classrooms and children's kindergarten and fourth-grade language and reading abilities. *Child Development*, 82 (3), 870-886.

Dockett, S. and Perry, B. (2003). Children's views and children's voices in starting school. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 28 (1), 12-17.

Dockett, S. and Perry, B. (2011). Researching with young children: Seeking assent. *Child Indicators Research*, 4 (2), 231-247.

Dowling, M. (2014). *Young children's personal, social and emotional development*. Sage.

Dunne, M., Humphreys, S., Dyson, A., Sebba, J., Gallannaugh, F. & Muijs, D. (2011) The teaching and learning of pupils in low-attainment sets, *The Curriculum Journal*, 22(4), 485–513.

Dupree, E., Bertram, T., & Pascal, C. (2001). Listening to Children's Perspectives of Their Early Childhood Settings. Paper presented at the ECEERA, *early childhood narratives*. Alkmaar.

Early, D. M., Maxwell, K. L., Ponder, B. D., & Pan, Y. (2017). Improving teacher-child interactions: A randomized controlled trial of Making the Most of Classroom Interactions and My Teaching Partner professional development models. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 38, 57-70.

Ecclestone, K., & Hayes, D. (2009). Changing the subject: the educational implications of developing emotional well-being. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35 (3), 371-389.

Edwards, C., Gandini, L. and Forman, G. (eds.) (1998). *The hundred languages of children*. (2nd ed.) Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

- Einarsdottir, J., Docket, S. and Perry, B. (2009). Making meaning: children's perspectives expressed through drawings. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179(2), 217–232.
- Eldén, S. (2013). Inviting the messy: Drawing methods and 'children's voices'. *Childhood*, 20 (1), 66-81.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., and Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical Social Research*, 36 (4), 273-290.
- Evangelou, M. Sylva, K. and Kyriacou, M. (2009) Early Years Learning and Development Literature Review. London: DCSF.
- Fielding, N. and Thomas, H. (2008). Qualitative interviewing. In: N. Gilbert (ed.). *Researching social life*. (pp 281-301), (3rd ed.). London: Sage.
- Fine, G. A. and Sandstrom, K. (1988). *Knowing Children: Participant Observation Among Minors*. Sage.
- Fisher, J. (2011). Building on the Early Years Foundation Stage: developing good practice for transition into Key Stage 1, *Early Years: An International Research Journal*, 31(1) 31-42.
- Fisher, J. (2015). *Interacting or interfering? Improving the quality of interactions in the early years*. Maidenhead, McGrawHill: Open University.
- Flewitt, R. (2005). Conducting research with young children: Some ethical considerations. *Early Child Development and Care*, 175 (6), 553–567.
- Foley, D. E. (2002). Critical ethnography: The reflexive turn. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15 (4), 469-490.
- Forde, C., Horgan, D., Martin, S., & Parkes, A. (2018). Learning from children's voice in schools: Experiences from Ireland. *Journal of Educational Change*, 19(4), 489-509.
- Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of The Prison*. London: Penguin.
- Francis, B., Connolly, P., Archer, L., Hodgen, J., Mazenod, A., Pepper, D., ... & Travers, M. C. (2017). Attainment Grouping as self-fulfilling prophesy? A mixed methods exploration of self confidence and set level among Year 7 students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 86, 96-108.
- Fraser, B. (1986). *Classroom Environment*. London: Routledge Kegan & Paul.
- Fraser, S., Flewitt, R. and Hammersley, M. (2014). What is research with children and young people? In: Clark, A., Flewitt, R., Hammersley, M. and Robb, M. (eds.). *Understanding Research with Children and Young People*. London: Sage with the Open University.
- Frazier Norbury, C. Gooch, D. Baird, G. Charman, T. Simonoff, E. Pickles, A. (2016) Younger Children experience lower levels of language competence and academic progress in the first year of school: evidence from a population study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 57. 1. 65-73
- Gallacher, L. A. and Gallagher, M. (2008). Methodological immaturity in childhood research? Thinking through participatory methods. *Childhood*, 15 (4), 499-516.
- Galton, M., Simon, B. and Croll, P. (1980) *Inside the Primary Classroom*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Garbacz, L. L., Zychinski, K. E., Feuer, R. M., Carter, J. S., & Budd, K. S. (2014). Effects of teacher-child interaction training (tcit) on teacher ratings of behavior change. *Psychology in the Schools*, 51 (8), 850-865.
- Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: A theory of multiple intelligences*. London: Fontana.
- Gascoyne, S. (2018). *Messy play in the early years: Supporting learning through material engagements*. London: Routledge.
- Gerhardt, S. (2015). *Why love matters*. Hove: Routledge.
- Gibbons, A. (2013). In the pursuit of unhappiness: The 'measuring up' of early childhood education in a seamless system. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 45 (5), 502-508.
- Gillborn, D. & Youdell, D. (2000). *Rationing education: Policy, practice, reform and equity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Goddard-Blythe, S. (2017). Windows on the brain. In Goddard, S., Beuret, L. J., Blythe, P. & Scaramella-Nowinski, V. *Attention, balance and coordination: The A. B. C. of learning success* (Second ed.). pp.1-28. Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell.
- Golbeck, S. L. (2001). Instructional models for early childhood: In search of a child-regulated/teacher-guided pedagogy. In *Psychological perspectives on early childhood education* (pp. 17-48). Routledge.
- Gopnik, A. (1996). The scientist as child. *Philosophy of science*, 63(4), 485-514.
- Graue, M. E., and Walsh, D.J.(1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Green, J. and Hart, L. (1999) 'The Impact of Context on Data', in R. Barbour and J. Kitzinger (eds) *Developing Focus Group Research: Politics, Theory and Practice*, pp. 23-35. London: Sage.
- Guillemin, M. and Gilliam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and 'ethical important moments' in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10 (2) pp.261-280.
- Gunnarsdottir, B. (2014). From play to school: are core values of ECEC in Iceland being undermined by 'schoolification'? *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22 (3), 242-250.
- Hall, J., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Taggart, B. (2009). The role of pre-school quality in promoting resilience in the cognitive development of young children. *Oxford Review of Education*, 35 (3), 331-352.
- Hallam, S. & Ireson, J. (2007) Secondary school pupils' satisfaction with their ability grouping placements, *British Educational Research Journal*, 33(1), 27-45.
- Hallam, S., & Parsons, S. (2013). Prevalence of streaming in UK primary schools: Evidence from the Millennium Cohort Study. *British Educational Research Journal*, 39(3), 514-544.
- Hammersley, M. (2018). What is ethnography? Can it survive? Should it? *Ethnography and Education*, 13 (1) pp. 1-17.
- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography. Principles in practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. (2019). *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Hamre, B. K. (2014). Teachers' daily interactions with children: An essential ingredient in effective early childhood programs. *Child Development Perspectives*, 8 (4), 223-230.
- Hamre, B. K. and Pianta, R. C. (2007) Learning opportunities in preschool and early elementary classrooms. In R. C. Pianta, M. J. Cox and K. Snow (Eds.), *School readiness and the transition to school* (pp.49–84). Baltimore, MD: Brookes
- Hamre, B. K., Pianta, R. C., Burchinal, M., Field, S., LoCasale-Crouch, J., Downer, J. T. & Scott-Little, C. (2012). A course on effective teacher-child interactions: Effects on teacher beliefs, knowledge, and observed practice. *American Educational Research Journal*, 49 (1), 88-123.
- Hanafin, J., O'Donoghue, T., Flynn, M., Shevlin, M. (2009). The primary school's invasion of the privacy of the child: Unmasking the potential of some current practices. *Educational Studies*, 35, 1-10.
- Harcourt, D. and Conroy, H. (2011). Informed consent: Processes and procedures seeking research partnerships with young children. In *Researching young children's perspectives*, (pp.58-71). Routledge.
- Harcourt, D. and Einarsdóttir, J. (2011). Introducing children's perspectives and participation in research. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19 (3), 301-307.
- Hargreaves, E. (2012). Teachers' classroom feedback: still trying to get it right. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 7 (1), 1-15.
- Hargreaves, E. (2015). 'I think it helps you better when you're not scared': fear and learning in the primary classroom. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 23 (4), 617-638.
- Hargreaves, E. (2017). *Children's experiences of classrooms: Talking about being pupils in the classroom*. Sage.
- Hargreaves, E. and Affouneh, S. (2017). Pupils' fear in the classroom: Portraits from Palestine and England. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 31 (2), 227-239.
- Hargreaves, E., Mahgoub, M., & Elhawary, D. (2016). An investigation into improved primary school English language learning in the traditional classroom: pupils explain what children and teachers can do to make progress. *An Egyptian case study. ELT Research Papers*, 17.
- Hart, C. S., & Brando, N. (2018). A capability approach to children's well-being, agency and participatory rights in education. *European Journal of Education*, 53 (3), 293-309.
- Hart, J., Newman, J., & Ackermann, L. (2004). *Children changing their world: Understanding and evaluating children's participation in development*. Surrey: PLAN International.
- Harter, S. P. (1986). *Online Information Retrieval. Concepts, Principles and Techniques*. San Diego, CA, Academic Press.
- Hedges, H. and Cooper, M. (2018). Relational play-based pedagogy: Theorising a core practice in early childhood education. *Teachers and Teaching*, 24 (4), 369-383.
- Herman, B. (2006). Responsive teaching: early intervention for children with Down syndrome and other disabilities. *Down Syndrome Research and Practice*, 11 (1), 18-28.
- Hill, M., Davis, J., Prout, A., & Tisdall, K. (2004). Moving the participation agenda forward. *Children and Society*, 18, 77–96.
- Hirsh-Pasek, K., Golinkoff, R. M., Berk, L. E., & Singer, D. (2009). *A mandate for playful learning in preschool: Applying the scientific evidence*. Oxford University Press.

- Hofkins, D. and Northen, S. (2009). *Introducing the Cambridge primary review*. Cambridge, England: University of Cambridge.
- Holland, S., Renold, E., Ross, N.J., & Hillman, A. (2010). Power, agency and participatory agendas: A critical exploration of young people's engagement in participative qualitative research. *Childhood: A Global Journal of Child Research*, 7, 360–375.
- Horton, J. and Kraftl, P. (2006). What else? Some more ways of thinking and doing 'Children's Geographies'. *Children's geographies*, 4 (01), pp.69-95.
- Houen, S., Danby, S., Farrell, A., & Thorpe, K. (2016). Creating spaces for children's agency: 'I wonder...' formulations in teacher–child interactions. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 48 (3), 259-276.
- Howes, C., Burchinal, M., Pianta, R., Bryant, D., Early, D., Clifford, R., & Barbarin, O. (2008). Ready to learn? Children's pre-academic achievement in pre-kindergarten programs. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 23 (1), 27-50.
- Huggill, K. (2012). The auto/biographical method and its potential to contribute to nursing research. *Nurse Researcher*, 20 (2), 28.
- Ireson, J. & Hallam, S. (2001). *Ability grouping in education*. London: Sage.
- Jackson, C. & Povey, H. (2016) 'No, it just didn't work': A teacher's reflections on all attainment teaching. Paper presented at CREME 10: 10th Congress for European Research in Mathematics Education, Dublin.
- Jalongo, M. (2008). *Learning to listen, listening to learn*. Washington, DC: National Association for Education of Young Children.
- James, A. (2007). Giving voice to children's voices: Practices and problems, pitfalls and potentials. *American anthropologist*, 109 (2), 261-272.
- James, A., Jenks, C., & Prout, A. (1998). *Theorizing childhood*. New York.
- James, A. and Prout, A. (1997) *Constructing and reconstructing childhood (2nd ed.)*. Falmer Press.
- Jarvis, P. and Whitebread, D. (2018). Wrong beginnings: our response to a bold report. *Early Years Educator*, 19 (12), 14-16.
- Jeffrey, B. and Troman, G. (2004). Time for ethnography. *British educational research journal*, 30 (4), 535-548.
- Jerolmack, C. and Khan, S. R. (2018). Introduction: An analytic approach to ethnography. In C. Jerolmack & S. R. Khan (eds.). *Approaches to ethnography: Analysis and representation in participant observation (pp. 2-15)*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kangas, J., Ojala, M., & Venninen, T. (2015). Children's self-regulation in the context of participatory pedagogy in early childhood education. *Early Education and Development*, 26 (5-6), 847-870.
- Kavkler, M., Tancig, S., Magajna, L., & Aubrey, C. (2000). Getting it right from the start? The influence of early school entry on later achievements in mathematics. *European early childhood education research journal*, 8(1), 75-93.
- Kawulich, B. B. (2005). Participant observation as a data collection method. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6 (2).

- Kay, L. (2018). Bold Beginnings and the Rhetoric of 'School Readiness'. In *FORUM: for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education* (Vol. 60, No. 3, pp. 327-336). Symposium Books. PO Box 204, Didcot, Oxford, OX11 9ZQ, UK.
- Kellett, M. (2011). Empowering children and young people as researchers: Overcoming barriers and building capacity. *Child indicators research*, 4 (2), 205-219.
- Kelly, B. (1999) 'Circle Time', *Educational psychology in practice*, 15 (1), 40-44.
- Keys, T. D., Farkas, G., Burchinal, M. R., Duncan, G. J., Vandell, D. L., Li, W., ... & Howes, C. (2013). Preschool center quality and school readiness: Quality effects and variation by demographic and child characteristics. *Child development*, 84 (4), 1171-1190.
- Kershner, R. and Pointon, P. (2000). Children's views of the primary classroom as an environment for working and learning. *Research in Education*, 64 (1), 64-77.
- Kirby, P. (2019). Marshmallow claps and frozen children: sitting on the carpet in the modern 'on-task' primary classroom. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1-17.
- Kivunja, C. and Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts. *International Journal of higher education*, 6 (5), 26-41.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American journal of occupational therapy*, 45 (3), 214-222.
- Kutnick, P., Blatchford, P. & Baines, E. (2002) Pupil groupings in primary school classrooms: Sites for learning and social pedagogy?, *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(2), 187–206.
- Laible, D., Thompson, R. A. and Froimson, J. (2007). Early socialization. *Handbook of socialization: Theory and research*, 181.
- Lancaster, Y. P. (2006). RAMPS: a framework for listening to children. *London: Daycare Trust*.
- Lang, P. (1998). Getting round to clarity: what do we mean by circle time? *Pastoral Care in Education*, 16 (3), 3-10.
- Langstead, O. (1994). Looking at quality from the child's perspective. In Moss, P. & Pence, A. (eds.) *Valuing quality in early childhood services: new approaches to defining quality*. Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Lather, P. (1986) Research as praxis, *Harvard Educational Review*, 56, 257-277.
- Laws, C. and Davies, B. (2000). Poststructuralist theory in practice: Working with 'behaviourally disturbed' children. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13 (3), 205–221.
- Leach, T. and Lewis, E. (2013). Children's experiences during circle-time: A call for research-informed debate. *Pastoral care in education*, 31 (1), 43-52.
- Le Compte, M. (1999). Researcher Roles. In: Le Compte, M., Schensul, J., Weeks, M. and Singer, M. (eds.). *Researcher roles and research partnerships*, (pp. 1–83). London: Altamira Press.
- Levy, R. and Thompson, P. (2015) *Journal of Early Childhood Research* Vol. 13 (2) 137–149
- Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2010). Children's right to play. An examination of the importance of play in the lives of children worldwide. Working Paper No. 57. The Hague, The Netherlands: Bernard van Leer Foundation.

- Levy, R. (2009). Children's perceptions of reading and the use of reading scheme texts. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 39 (3), 361-377.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*, Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S. and Guba, E. G. (1986). But is it rigorous? Trustworthiness and authenticity in naturalistic evaluation. *New directions for program evaluation*, 1986 (30), 73-84.
- Liu, C., Solis, S., Jensen, H., Hopkins, E., Neale, D., Zosh, J., Hirsh-Pasek, K. and Whitebread, D. (2017). *Neuroscience and learning through play: a review of the evidence*. The LEGO Foundation, DK.
- Longhofer, J. and Floersch, J. (2014). Values in a Science of Social Work: Values-Informed Research and Research-Informed Values. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 24 (5), 527-534.
- Lown, J. (2002) Circle Time: The perceptions of teachers and pupils. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 18:2, 93-102.
- MacKenzie, N. and Knipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in educational research*, 16 (2), 193-205.
- Macintyre, C. (2014). *Understanding children's development in the early years: Questions practitioners frequently ask*. London: Routledge.
- MacLure, M., Jones, L., Holmes, R., & MacRae, C. (2012). Becoming a problem: Behaviour and reputation in the early years classroom. *British Educational Research Journal*, 38 (3), 447-471.
- MacNaughton, G. (2003). Eclipsing voice in research with young children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 28 (1), 36-43.
- MacNaughton, G., Hughes, P. and Smith, K. (2007). Young children's rights and public policy: Practices and possibilities for citizenship in the early years. *Children and Society*, 21(6), 458–469.
- Madden, R. (2010). *Being ethnographic: A guide to the theory and practice of ethnography*. Sage.
- Maggs-Rapport, F. (2000). Combining methodological approaches in research: ethnography and interpretive phenomenology. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 31 (1), 219-225.
- Mannion, G. (2007). Going spatial, going relational: Why 'listening to children' and children's participation needs reframing. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 28 (3), 405–420.
- Mannion, G. and l'Anson, J. (2004). Beyond the Disneyesque: Children's participation, spatiality and adult-child relations. *Childhood*, 11 (3), 303–318.
- Marcon, R.A. (2002). Moving up the grades: Relationship between preschool model and later school success. *Early Childhood Research & Practice*, 4(1).
- Marks, R. (2013, January). The Blue Table Means You Don't Have a Clue': the persistence of fixed-ability thinking and practices in primary mathematics in English schools. In *Forum: For Promoting 3-19 Comprehensive Education* (Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 31-44).
- Martin, G. M. (2019). WASP (Write a Scientific Paper): Ethnography with children: Some considerations. *Early Human Development*, 133, 72-75.

- Mary, L. (2014). Fostering positive peer relations in the primary classroom through circle time and co-operative games. *Education 3-13*, 42 (2), 125-137.
- Mashburn, A. J., Pianta, R. C., Hamre, B. K., Downer, J. T., Barbarin, O. A., Bryant, D., ... & Howes, C. (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills. *Child development*, 79 (3), 732-749.
- Mayall B. (2002). *Towards a Sociology for Childhood: Thinking from Children's Lives*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Maybin, J., and M. Woodhead. (2003). *Childhoods in context*. Buckingham, UK: Wiley and OU Press.
- McClelland, M. M., & Wanless, S. B. (2015). Introduction to the special issue: self-regulation across different cultural contexts. *Early education and development*, 609-614.
- McClelland, M. M., Tominey, S. L., Schmitt, S. A., & Duncan, R. (2017). SEL interventions in early childhood. *The Future of Children*, 33-47.
- McEvoy, J. (2018). Tuning into children's chatter: Using creative approaches to ascertain children's perceptions of classroom practice, (speaker presentation). *European Early Childhood Research Association (EECERA) 28th Annual Conference*. Budapest, Hungary.
- McGuinness, C., Sproule, L., Bojke, C., Trew, K. and Walsh, G. (2014) Impact of play-based curriculum in the first two years of primary school: literacy and numeracy outcomes over seven years. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40 (5), pp.772-795.
- McInnes, K., J. Howard, G. Miles, and K. Crowley. (2009). "Behavioural differences exhibited by children when practising a task under formal and playful conditions." *Educational and child psychology* 26 (2): 31–39.
- McKechnie, L. E. F. (2008). Naturalistic observations. In: L. M. Given (Ed.). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 550-551). Sage publications.
- Melhuish, E., Ereky-Stevens, K., Petrogiannis, K., Ariescu, A., Penderi, E., Rentzou, K., Tawell, A., Slot, P., Broekhuizen, M., Leseman, P. (2015). *A review of research on the effects of early childhood education and care (ECEC) upon child development. CARE project; curriculum quality analysis and impact review of European early childhood education and care (ECEC)*. <http://www.ecec-care.org/resources/publications/>.
- Merewether, J. (2018). Listening to young children outdoors with pedagogical documentation. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 26 (3), 259-277.
- Mitchell, E. (2019). A small-scale exploratory study of educator's perceptions and expectations of summer-born children in the reception classes of three English primary academies and the strategies used to support them. *Education 3-13*, 47(2), 205-216.
- Morgan, A. (2007). Using video-stimulated recall to understand young children's perceptions of learning in classroom settings. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 15 (2), 213-226.
- Morrow, V. (2001). Using Qualitative Methods to Elicit Young People's Perspectives on Their Environments: Some Ideas for Community Health Initiatives, *Health Education Research* 16 (3), 255–68.
- Mosley, J. (1993). *Turn Your School Around: A Circle Time Approach to the Development of Self Esteem and Positive Behaviour in the Primary Classroom*. Cambs: LDA.
- Mosley, J. (1996). *Quality Circle Time in the primary classroom: your essential guide to enhancing self-esteem, self-discipline and positive relationships*. Wisbech: LDA.

- Mosley, J. (2005). *Circle time for young children*. Routledge.
- Moyles, J., Adams, S., & Musgrove, A. (2002). *SPEEL: Study of pedagogical effectiveness in early learning*.
- Moylett, H. (2019). A capital idea? *Nursery World*, 2019 (9), 16-17.
- Muijs, D. (2018). Bold beginnings and the importance of reception. *An interview with*, 38.
- Murray, J. (2017). Welcome in! How the academy can warrant recognition of young children as researchers. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 25(2), 224-242.
- Murray, J. (Ed.). (2018). *Early Childhood Pedagogies: Creating spaces for young children to flourish*. Routledge.
- Murray, J. (2019) Hearing young children's voices, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 27:1, 1-5.
- Murray, J. and Cousens, D. (2020). Primary school children's beliefs associating extra-curricular provision with non-cognitive skills and academic achievement. *Education 3-13*, 48(1), 37-53.
- Neaum, S. (2016) School readiness and pedagogies of competence and performance: theorising the troubled relationship between early years and early years policy. *Early Years*, 24 (3), 239-253.
- Nicolopoulou, A. (2010). The alarming disappearance of play from early childhood education. *Human development*, 53 (1), 1.
- Nitecki, E. and Wasmuth, H. (2017). Global trends in early childhood practice: Working within the limitations of the global education reform movement. *Global Education Review*, 4 (3).
- Noddings, N. (2003). *Happiness and education*. Cambridge University Press.
- O'Donoghue, T. (2018). *Planning your qualitative research thesis and project: An introduction to interpretivist research in education and the social sciences (2nd ed.)*. London: Routledge.
- Ofsted (2015). *Teaching and Play in the Early Years – a balancing act?* Crown Copyright. Ofsted: Manchester.
- Ofsted (2017) *Bold beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools*. Crown Copyright. Ofsted: Manchester.
- Ofsted (2019) *School Inspection Update*. Crown Copyright. Ofsted: Manchester.
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J. and Leech, N. L. (2007). Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron?. *Quality & Quantity*, 41 (2), 233-249.
- O'Reilly, K. (2012). *Ethnographic methods (2nd ed.)*. London: Routledge.
- Page, J. (2014). Developing professional love in early childhood settings. In *Lived spaces of infant-toddler education and care* (pp. 119-130). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Page, J. and Elfer, P. (2013). The emotional complexity of attachment interactions in nursery. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21 (4), 553-567.
- Pahl, K. and Allan, C. (2011). 'I don't know what literacy is': Uncovering hidden literacies in a community library using ecological and participatory research methodologies with children. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 11 (2), 190-213.

Pakarinen, E., Kiuru, N., Lerkkanen, M.-K., Poikkeus, A.-M., Ahonen, T., & Nurmi, J.-E. (2011). Instructional support predicts children's task avoidance in kindergarten. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 26, 376–386.

Pascal, C. and Bertram, T. (2009). Listening to young citizens: the struggle to make real a participatory paradigm in research with young children. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 17, 2, 249–262.

Pascal, C., Bertram, T. and Cole-Alback, A. (2017). The Hundred Review. What research tells us about effective pedagogic practice and children's outcomes in the Reception year. Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC). Accessed: http://earlyexcellence.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/10_100-Review_CREC_March_2017.pdf on 20/01/20.

Pascal, C., Bertram, T. and Rouse, L. (2019). Getting it right in the early years foundation stage: A review of the evidence. *Watford: British Association for Early Childhood Education*. Accessed: <https://www.earlyeducation.org.uk/sites/default/files/Getting%20it%20right%20in%20the%20EYFS%20Literature%20Review.pdf> on 28/05/20.

Payler, J., Wood, E., Georgeson, J., Davis, G., Jarvis, P., Rose, J., Gilbert, L., Hood, P., Mitchell, H. & Chesworth, L. (2017). *BERA-TACTYC Early Childhood Research Review 2003-2017*. BERA: London.

Perryman, J., Maguire, M., Braun, A., & Ball, S. (2018). Surveillance, governmentality and moving the goalposts: The influence of Ofsted on the work of schools in a post-panoptic era. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 66(2), 145-163.

Peters, S. and Kelly, J. (2011). Exploring children's perspectives: Multiple ways of seeing and knowing the child. *Waikato Journal of Education*, 16 (3).

Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, Dreams and Imitation in Childhood*. New York: Norton.

Pianta, R. C. (2001) *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale*, Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc., Odessa, FL.

Pianta, R. C., La Paro, K. M., Hamre, B. K. (2007) *Classroom Assessment Scoring System CLASS*. Baltimore: Brookes.

Pichon, C. (2012) Sitting on the carpet – children's attitudes to the spaces of the classroom. *Journal of Trainee Teacher Education Research*, vol. 4. *University of Cambridge*.

Ponitz, C. C., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Grimm, K. J., & Curby, T. W. (2009). Kindergarten classroom quality, behavioral engagement, and reading achievement. *School Psychology Review*, 38 (1), 102-120.

Punch, S. (2002). Research with children: The same or different from adults? *Childhood*, 9 (3), 321–341.

Pyle, A. and Danniels, E. (2017). A continuum of play-based learning: The role of the teacher in play-based pedagogy and the fear of hijacking play. *Early Education and Development*, 28(3), 274-289.

Qvortrup J. (1994). *Childhood Matters: An Introduction*. In *Childhood Matters: Social Theory, Practice and Politics*. Qvortrup J, Bardy M, Sgritta G, Wintersberger H (eds). Avebury Press: Aldershot.

Rancière, J. 1991. *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Richards, C. (2018). Bold Assertions: A Comment on the Bold Beginnings Debate. In *FORUM: for promoting 3-19 comprehensive education*, 60 (3), 313-316.

- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516–529). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rinaldi, C. (2006). *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning*. Routledge: UK.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2014). Playful and creative ICT pedagogical framing: a nursery school case study. *Early Child Development and Care*, 184 (1), 1-14.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2015) The 'datafication' of early years pedagogy: 'If the teaching is good, the data should be good and if there's bad teaching, there is bad data' *Journal of Education Policy*. 30 (3), 302-315.
- Roberts-Holmes, G. (2019). School readiness, governance and early years ability grouping. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 1-10.
- Rogers, M. (2012). Contextualizing theories and practices of bricolage research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17 (T&L Art. 7), 1-17.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rogoff, B. (2008). Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship. *Pedagogy and practice: Culture and identities*, 58-74.
- Rosiek, J. and Gleason, T. (2017). The philosophy of teacher education research: An onto-ethical turn. In J. Clandinin & J. Husu (Eds.), *The international handbook of research on teacher education* (pp. 29-48). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Roth, W. M. (2005). Auto/biography and auto/ethnography: Finding the generalized other in the self. In: W.M. Roth (Ed.), *Auto/biography and auto/ethnography: Praxis of research method* (pp. 3-16). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Rubinstein Reich, L.R. (1993) 'Circle time in pre-school: An analysis of educational praxis'. Paper presented at *European Conference on Practice-Oriented Research Related to the Quality of Early Childhood Education*.
- Samuelsson, I. P. and Carlsson, M., A. (2008). The playing learning child: Towards a pedagogy of early childhood. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 52 (6), 623–641.
- Savage, J. (2000). Ethnography and health care. *British Medical Journal*, 321 (7273), 1400-1402.
- Schiller, W. and Einarsdottir, J. (2009). Listening to young children's voices in research—changing perspectives/changing relationships. *Early Childhood Development and Care*, 179 (2), 125-130.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1998). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds.). *Qualitative research: Theories and issues* (pp. 221-259). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Schweinhart, L. J. (2005). *Lifetime effects: the High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 40* (No. 14). High/Scope Foundation.
- Scott J. (2000). Children as Respondents. In: Christensen P. and James A. (eds) *Research with Children: Perspectives and Practices*, (pp. 98–119). London: Routledge.
- Sharp, C. (2002). School starting age: European policy and recent research. In *LGA Seminar 'When Should Our Children Start School?'* LGA Conference Centre: London. NFER.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for information*, 22 (2), 63-75.

- Shonkoff, J. P., Duncan, G. J., Fisher, P. A., Magnuson, K., & Raver, C. (2011). Building the brain's "air traffic control" system: How early experiences shape the development of executive function. *Contract*, 11.
- Siekkinen, M., Pakarinen, E., Lerkkanen, M.-K., Poikkeus, A.-M., Salminen, J., Poskiparta, E., & Nurmi, J.-E. (2013). Social competence among 6-year old children and classroom instructional support and teacher stress. *Early Education and Development*, 24, 877–897.
- Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P., Siraj-Blatchford, I. and Taggart, B. (2004). *The effective provision of pre-school education [EPPE] project: Findings from pre-school to end of Key Stage 1*. London: Institute of Education.
- Singer, E. (2002). The logic of young children's (nonverbal) behaviour. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 10 (1), 55-65.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I., & Wong, Y. L. (1999). Defining and evaluating 'quality' early childhood education in an international context: Dilemmas and possibilities. *Early Years*, 20(1), 7-18.
- Siraj-Blatchford, I., Sylva, K., Muttock, S., Gilden, R., and Bell, D. (2002). *Researching effective pedagogy in the early years (Research report RR356)*. Institute of Education, University of London.
- Smith, J.A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research In Psychology*, 1, 39 – 54.
- Smith, J.A. and Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J.A. Smith (Ed.) *Qualitative Psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. London: Sage.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P. and Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis*. London, Sage Publications.
- Spyrou, S. (2011). The limits of children's voices: From authenticity to critical, reflexive representation. *Childhood*, 18 (2), 151-165.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (2008). Decentering voice in qualitative inquiry. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 319-336.
- Stanley, L. (1993). On auto/biography in sociology. *Sociology*, 27(1), pp.41-52.
- Stephenson, A. (2009). Horses in the sandpit: Photography, prolonged involvement and 'stepping back' as strategies for listening to children's voices. *Early Child Development and Care*, 179 (2), 131-141.
- Stokes, T. (2019). Using participatory methods with young children; reflections on emergent 'ethically important moments' in school-based research. *Irish Educational Studies*, 1-13.
- Suggate, S. (2007). Research into early reading instruction and luke effects in the development of reading. *Journal for Waldorf/R. Steiner Education*, 11 (2), 17.
- Sylva K, Melhuish E, Sammons P, Siraj-Blatchford I, Taggart B (2004) *The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project: Technical Paper 12 – The Final Report: Effective Pre-School Education*. London: DfES/Institute of Education, University of London.
- TACTYC, (2017). *Bald Beginnings. A Response to Ofsted's (2017) report, Bold beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools*. Available online: <https://tactyc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Bold-Beginnings-TACTYC-response-FINAL-09.12.17.pdf> accessed 8/01/20

- Taylor, B., Francis, B., Archer, L., Hodgen, J., Pepper, D., Tereshchenko, A., & Travers, M. C. (2017). Factors deterring schools from mixed attainment teaching practice. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 25(3), 327-345.
- Te One, S. (2007). Participatory-research methods with young children: Experiences from the field. *Early Childhood Folio*, 11, 21-26.
- Theobald, M. and Kultti, A. (2012). Investigating child participation in the everyday talk of a teacher and children in a preparatory year. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 13 (3), 210-225.
- Thomson, F. (2007). Are methodologies for children keeping them in their place? *Children's Geographies*, 5, 207–218.
- Thrift, N. (2006). Space. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 23 (2–3), 139–155.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16 (10), 837-851.
- Turner-Bisset, R. (2003). On the carpet? Changing primary teaching contexts. *Education*, 3-13, 31 (3), 4-10.
- Tyler, S. (1986). Postmodern ethnography: From document of the occult to occult document. In J. Clifford and G. Marcus (Eds.), *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (pp. 123-140). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- United Nations (1989). Convention on the Rights of the Child. *General Assembly Resolution 44/25*, UN Doc. A/RES/44/25. UN. November 20.
- Vandell, D. L., Belsky, J., Burchinal, M., Steinberg, L., & Vandergrift, N. (2010). Do effects of early child care extend to age 15 years? Results from the NICHD study of early child care and youth development. *Child Development*, 81(3), 737-756.
- Venninen, T., Leinonen, J., Lipponen, L., & Ojala, M. (2014). Supporting children's participation in Finnish child care centers. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 42 (3), 211-218.
- Wadsworth, B. J. (1996). *Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development: Foundations of constructivism*. Longman Publishing.
- Walford, G. (2018) Recognizable continuity: A defense of multiple methods. In D. Beach, C. Bagley, & S. M. da Silva (eds.). *The Wiley handbook of ethnography of education*, pp. 36-49. John Wiley and Sons.
- Wall, S., Litjens, I., & Taguma, M. (2015). Early childhood education and care pedagogy review: England. *OECD*, 30-2. Accessed: www.oecd.org/unitedkingdom/earlychildhoodeducationandcarepedagogyreviewengland.pdf. on 26/06/16.
- Waller, T. and Bitou, A. (2011). Research with children: Three challenges for participatory research in early childhood. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19 (1), 5-20.
- Walsh, G., Sproule, L., McGuinness, C., & Trew, K. (2011). Playful structure: a novel image of early years pedagogy for primary school classrooms. *Early Years*, 31 (2), 107-119.
- Warming, H. (2016). Trust and power dynamics in the shaping of children's lived citizenship and participation in globalized societies. *Social Sciences Journal*, (in press).

- Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- White, M. (1991). *Self-esteem: Promoting positive practices for responsible behaviour - Circle-time strategies for schools, set A*. Cambridge: Daniels Publishing.
- Whitebread, D. (2017). Free play and children's mental health. *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health*, 1 (3), 167-169.
- Whitebread, D., Basilio, M., Kuvalja, M., & Verma, M. (2012). The importance of play: A report on the value of children's play with a series of policy recommendations. Brussels, Belgium: Toys Industries for Europe.
- Whitebread, D. and Bingham, S. (2011). School Readiness: a critical review of perspectives and evidence. *TACTYC Occasional Paper*, 2.
- Whitebread, D. and Bingham, S. (2014) School Readiness: Starting age, cohorts and transitions in the early years, in: Moyles, J., Georgeson, J. and Payler, J. (eds.) *Early years foundations: Critical issues. (2nd edition)*. Maidenhead: Open University Press. pp.179-191.
- Willig, C. (2013). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology (3rd ed.)*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Wiltz, N. W. and Klein, E. L. (2001). "What do you do in child care?" Children's perceptions of high and low quality classrooms. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 16 (2), 209-236.
- Wood, E. A. (2014) Free choice and free play in early childhood education: Troubling the discourse, *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(1), 4-18.
- Wood, E. (2017). Broad policy issues, pp. 109-113, in Payler, J., Wood, E., Georgeson, J., Davis, G., Jarvis, P., Rose, J., Gilbert, L., Hood, P., Mitchell, H. & Chesworth, L. (2017). *BERA-TACTYC Early Childhood Research Review 2003-2017*. BERA: London.
- Wood, E. (2019). Unbalanced and unbalancing acts in the Early Years Foundation Stage: a critical discourse analysis of policy-led evidence on teaching and play from the office for standards in education in England (Ofsted). *Education 3-13*, 47 (7), 784-795.
- Wood, E. and Chesworth, L. (2018). 6. Play and pedagogy. *BERA BITES*, p.28.
- Wood, E. and Hedges, H. (2016). Curriculum in early childhood education: Critical questions about content, coherence, and control. *The Curriculum Journal*, 27 (3), 387-405.
- Woodhead, M. (1999). Towards a gl2.2for research in early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 7(1), 5-22.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1990). Making a study "more ethnographic". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 19 (1), 44-72.
- Yanow, D. and Ybema, S. (2009). Interpretism in organizational research: On elephants and blind researchers. In: Buchanan, D.A. and Bryman, A. (eds.). *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Research Methods (pp. 39–60)*. London: SAGE Publications Inc.

APPENDICES

Appendix	Title	Page
1	Extracts from hand written fieldnotes	216
2	Extract from annotated fieldnotes	217
3	Fieldnotes. Inviting children to join the project	219
4	Fieldnotes. Focus Child D	222
5	Fieldnotes. Registration	222
6	Fieldnotes. Sit!	222
7	Fieldnotes. Story Times	223
8	Fieldnotes. Lucy's transition to the carpet	223
9	Fieldnotes. Freedom on the carpet	223
10	Fieldnotes. Class rituals	224
11	Children's vulnerability	224
12	Field notes. Owl Babies	225
13	Field notes. Walk the plank!	226
14	Fieldnotes. Bouncy castle	226
15	Extract from analysis of classroom observations	227
16	Example of IPA analysis leading to summary of themes for teacher interviews.	230
17	Ethical approval	235
18	Participant information sheet for staff	236
19	Participant consent form for staff	240
20	Participant information sheet for all children (parents/ legal guardians)	241
21	Consent form for all children (opt out)	245
22	Focus group information sheet	246
23	Participant consent form for focus group children	249
24	Fieldnotes. Planning a wedding	250
25	Fieldnotes, "Joe, what's church?"	250
26	Fieldnotes. Newstime	251

APPENDIX 1: Extracts from hand written fieldnotes

gmc "I've got a spinner at home" T. Oh I don't like them. Lots of excitement then general comments about spinners.

T skk skk what story shall we hear next? sends some chm to biles
 gilds is biles - TA interviews
 W sent to get him child spiks
 with T sorts it out.
 Fills T reads Chiodella from his

10:45 get coats for church
 T sings having a snooze on the carpet

10:50 - 11:20 church crowning Mary
 11:25 story on hometime carpets Out Babies
 L at back separate messing with bag but chms in
 W back
 M front picking fingers
 chm join in the refrain
 A in middle, shouts out occasionally + is reminded to be a quiet one.
 chm are quite restless during this session
 G middle side + smiling. End of story

TA question about how she uses her wings points out difference between (I) ads + us (skin + feathers) A names some birds "blue tits" "robins red back"
 TA times them in with questions what do you do when you see your Mummy? encourages interaction with actions.
 child asks TA is your Mummy dead?
 TA yes ... but I talk to her. (E)
 child Are you alone now? TA no I have ... I look after you when I'm here child you how do people get up to heaven? and how do we die? T differs (I) ways

look after Miss they hug
 T talks about their trip on Tuesday silent cheer. A very excited giggles co
 T then school photo shows me your dancing
 A Can you go when you're 3? T yes you can go when you're 3 & 5 ... 12
 A: I'm 3, I'm 3 (E)
 child I'm going to bring my bag
 T. no not this mummy but maybe @
 soon after nursery -- hee bring real mummies
 T. continues to go through day/week
 Friday is best day ... all in the

22.9.17
 Today's session in year one made me realise how much children value times on the carpet when they are allowed to show their news or show the class something they have brought in from home. Today, they came straight to the carpet after sitting in assembly for half an hour. They were restless and giggling round a lot. AB was enjoying playing with his hair, who was sitting with her back to the radiator and stretching her arms up and across the radiator above her head. She zoned in and out, often looking round the walls of the classroom. W was yawning + moving a lot. At one point, when putting his hand up to answer a question his whole body was thrown sideways as he balanced on one knee + one hand with his + arm raised + head cocked to that side. I really wished I'd had a camera to photograph that. W was late to the carpet + disengaged throughout the lesson about with the display on the cupboard but was listening

because I could hear him answering questions quietly. At one point he appeared interested because he sat up + shouted out the answer. W was restless in the middle as he always was in YR. He appeared generally attentive but yawned occasionally.
 There was a stark change in the children's behaviour when they shared news at the end of the session - stillness and silence.
 Made me realise how challenging it is to use this context carpet time as a place for whole class teaching. The pitch + pace has to be just right for every child to learn. The teacher was teaching them the names of different types of houses, but I wonder how many children have retained any of this new information or vocabulary. When I interacted with them in the context provision only no child was able to remember the names of the houses to label them and

APPENDIX 2: Extract from annotated fieldnotes:

At the end of each visit I would highlight parts of the fieldnotes and annotate with notes or add a reflection. I initially used Hamre's 'Teaching Through Interactions' (TTI) framework (2012), which is made up of three domains to support me to reflect on different aspects of classroom practice.

- Emotional support (ED)
- Classroom organisation (CO)
- Instructional support (IS)

Field Notes 28/04/17 Nursery Class

9.30 am Free Play inside

20. Children are back from assembly and engaged in free play activities inside. Two girls are
21. playing at baking using a mixing bowl filled with shiny glass pebbles which they stir round
22. and round with a wooden spoon. TA2 reminds them to be careful with the pebbles and
23. not to make so much noise by stirring them so fast. A group of boys are building a bridge
24. from the railway tracks for the toy trains. The T asks them to stop and show hands up in
25. the air. She provides a brief plenary about what and how they have been playing and
26. asks them to tidy up and come to the carpet. Children are all busy tidying up. All children
27. are on task and appear to know how to tidy up and be willing to do it.

Carpet Time 1 Tadpoles

3. T settles the children down with actions using hands, finishing with 'put your hands in your
4. basket' (children place their hands on their laps). She asks for the lights to be turned off
5. and switches their artificial candle on, creating a calm and 'spiritual' atmosphere. She
6. leads the morning prayer with actions which the children all join in, followed by a hymn.
7. The candle is blown out after a countdown from 10.

8. T explains she has brought something in from her daddy and she wonders if they know
9. what it is. It is on the table at the side of the carpet and covered up with a sheet. Some
10. shout out and she asks them to 'put a quiet hand up to answer'. Child 1: 'a volcano', child
11. 2: 'tadpoles'. The T leads a guided conversation through questions about what tadpoles
12. need to survive and grow, 'water' T 'any water?' child, 'no, pond water', T explains her
13. daddy looks after God's creatures so he has made them a pond with interesting things in
14. it, 'look a big stone to hide under'. She explains how the caretaker is going to fill it with
15. pond water but for now they are in a shallow tray of water and the children can come out
16. and look at them as they go to put their coats on. She invites the children to come out
17. one at a time and lets them look, then two at a time to speed things up. The children are
18. all fascinated by the tadpoles and they each get a snippet of time talking to the teacher
19. about them as they look at them together. The T expresses excitement as the tadpoles
20. move around and she affirms children's comments and asks them questions. For each
21. child or pair of children this is a close relationship time with the teacher if only for a
22. minute, as they give eye contact and are in very close proximity looking into the water
23. tray. There is a shared excitement and wonder between the teacher and the children. T
24. also maintains a calm and controlled environment with occasional reminders to children,
25. 'get coats, sit still, don't poke, come here'. The final two children have waited for several

26. minutes and they are rewarded with the teacher's praise and they spend much longer
27. than the others looking at the tadpoles with the teacher in the quiet classroom now that
28. the rest of the class are outside.

43. Whilst the children are waiting on the carpet, most sit quietly waiting. Focus child L
44. climbs over one child to get closer. This works well for her because the T notices her and
45. she is called out next. Frequently the child who is called out is praised for 'good sitting'
46. by the teacher, this being the reason for them being chosen to come out next. Two
47. children sit chatting quietly about their hands, three girls at the back are social chatting
48. about their homes. Another group of three girls starts counting and count up to 26. Two
49. girls (focus child L) are left now and they occupy themselves by counting following the
50. numicon number line that is displayed beneath the interactive whiteboard.

10.30 am Free play outdoors

1. Focus child L approaches me crying and sits next to me. I ask why she's crying and she
2. says. 'I don't like walking the plank'. A boy approaches dressed as a pirate with a toy
3. sword, shouting 'You gotta walk the plank', L moves closer to me crying and I intervene to
4. explain that L does not want to walk the plank so he will have to get someone else.

9. Focus child A is running round, he is active and climbs up the ropes confidently, 'walks the
10. plank' jumps off, falls and recovers running round to repeat the activity.

14. Focus child R is hiding behind the wooden pillars of the climbing frame and peeping
15. round. He skirts around, watching the children play and tries to entice me in a game of
16. hide and peep, which I engage in for a while. He appears to play on his own, watching
17. the children and repeats their play 'walking the plank' and jumping off the platform, when
18. they have moved away.

19. Focus child L is calling to N to water the plants. She joins in the game of walking the
20. plank, jumps off and wanders over to the ladders, she explores the boxes and selects a
21. red cone which she uses to cover her face. She goes over to the water butt and fills a
22. container with water, chats to a boy crouching down at the water tap, runs over to the
23. plants and pours her water over the plants and then over the moving windmills.

26. TA2 plays with the children letting them capture her and put her in jail, then escaping. A
27. group of children are engaged in this for a period of time. Focus child R watches from a
28. short distance and follows them all round the playground as they play. He smiles and
29. laughs occasionally at the comments and actions of the TA.

30. Focus child L returns to water butt, solitary, runs to blue shade, wanders and picks things
31. up and throws them (ball, cone). She pretends to be a dog growling and growls at a
32. child.

11.00 am tidy up time

32. The teacher asks all children to stop and put hands up in the air. She asks them to tidy
33. away and they do so, then they line up along the decking, standing on the step. She
34. calls their names and they go in one at a time.

11.05 am Carpet time snacks, phonics rhymes

35. The children sit in groups around three plastic picnic mats for snacks of milk and carrots.
36. They choose where to sit.
37. Focus child K sits at the front and gives milk out to others. At one point she gets up and
38. gives a second bottle of milk to a child on another mat. K and L are at the front of the
39. class in front of the IWB screen.
40. The mat furthest away from the IWB is next to the stock cupboard and the star reward
41. jar. Two girls are looking at how full the star jar is and comment, 'When it gets full we get
42. cookies'.
43. During the snack time the IWB is on showing a maths number stories and rhymes, eg
44. King One. The children are invited to ask for the number character they wish to watch
45. and whether they want the story of the song. Children are chosen for good sitting and
46. quiet hands up.

11.30 am IWB story Peppa Pig

47. Every Friday the children receive a reward if their star jar is full. Today they get cookies
48. after the mats are tidied away. The children move to face the IWB in a huddle and they
49. watch the story of Peppa Pig whilst the T hands out cookies.
50. Focus child B appears to be excited and points to the screen shouting out words in
51. relation to the story, 'high', 'fall'. He sits at the back of the group next to focus child J.
52. Child J says to B, ' I want lots of biscuits because when I grow up I will be big'. B repeats
53. key words from the story and watches it on the small laptop screen which is positioned
54. next to the IWB. Child J is also concentrating on the small screen.

APPENDIX 3: Fieldnotes. Inviting children to join the project

Field Notes 25/04/17 Reception Class

9.10 am Carpet Time

1. T invites me to have a chat with the children. I ask them if they know what my job is and
2. they suggest, 'you go to schools', 'you help us'. I explain that I am not a teacher or a TA
3. but a researcher. I explain that a researcher likes to find out about things by watching and
4. asking questions and that I want to find out about what they do in their school and how
5. they learn so that I can tell other schools some good ideas. I ask if they will let me write
6. about what they do in my research book so that I can remember what they do and share
7. some good ideas with other schools too. They nod and say yes when I ask if I can write
8. about them in my book. I also say to them that it is ok if they don't want me to watch them
9. sometimes or write about them, I won't mind if they just tell me. When I show them my
10. research book they are interested in the elastic band that keeps it closed 'so that no one
11. else can read it'. I suggest that they may also like to do research and find things out and
12. they could write things down that they see. A child asks 'can we write it in your book?'
13. and I explain that they cannot write in my book but could make their own books and do
14. research if they wanted. I tell them that they can write about me if they want to. I
15. then introduce the notion of consent, by explaining to them that the teachers had to sign
16. a letter to say that they would help me do my research by letting me come into their
17. class. I show them the cards and pens in my research folder and ask if they would also
18. like to sign their names and help me with my research by drawing a picture of what they

19. like to do in their class. Again, I remind them that they don't have to do it, just if they want
20. to. I leave them on the table for the children to access during 'play and learning' time.
21. The T welcomes a group of Y2 children who are staying in their class for the morning.
22. She explains that there is no assembly this morning because their buddies are doing
23. some hard work in the hall, so they can choose what to do whilst she takes her reading
24. group into the quiet room. She calls her group to her and the children go off to choose.
25. Six children come to my table immediately and start to fill in the cards.
26. 9.20: five children start to make their own research books. B and D are engrossed in
27. the task (see photo of book) they spend all morning on it and start to populate it with
28. sentences about things in they can do in their classroom. H's book is coloured in pink
29. and has a piece of elastic holding it closed exact replica of mine.



Figure 1: My fieldwork book

This is the notebook I used for all of my classroom observations and fieldnotes. I showed it to the children when I introduced myself and told them this was my research book. The children were fascinated by the elastic band, so I explained it was there to keep my notes private, because I was writing about them and their teachers and all the things they did in their class. They asked if they could write in my book also, which I was not expecting. I said they could read it with me anytime, but I didn't want everyone writing in it or I would run out of pages. This is when I suggested they may want to make their own research books.

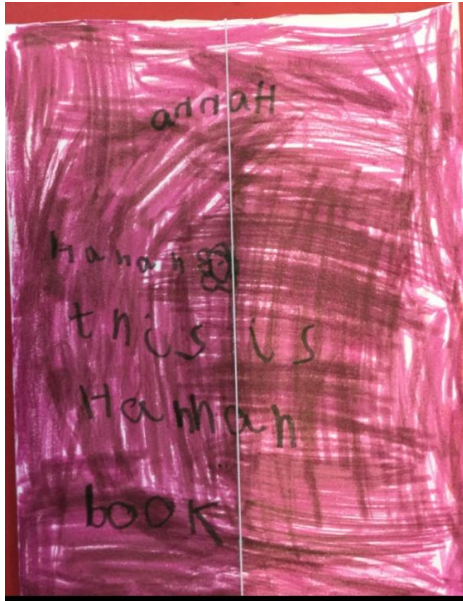


Figure 2: Child's replica of my book

This book was a good replica of my notebook. The child had folded the paper in half and placed it inside another to create a few pages. She had coloured the top cover in pink to match mine and sellotaped a thin piece of elastic from the back to go over the front cover, to match mine. Her work was carried out independently and when the other children saw it they started to copy and made their own books too. I interpreted this as a sign of their motivation, enthusiasm and confidence to engage in the research.

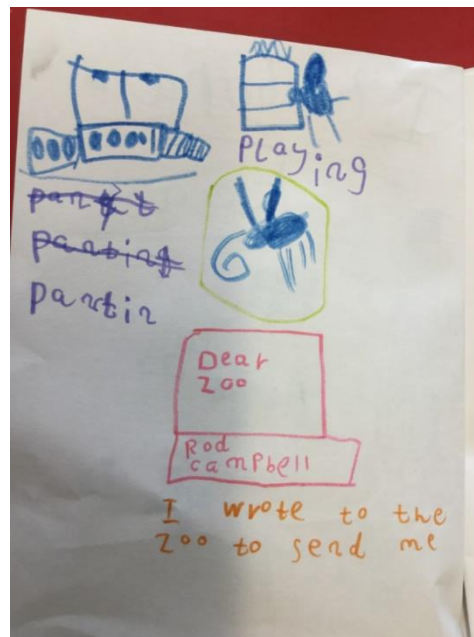
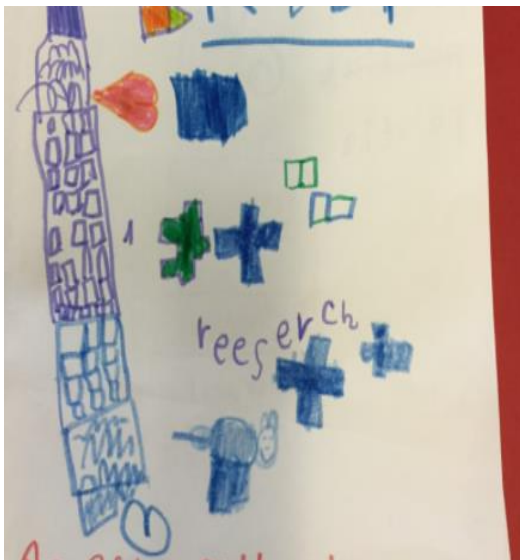


Figure 3: Front cover of child's research book and the inside page

Two children worked together on their research book. They spent the afternoon asking their friends what they liked to do in class. Their answers are recorded here (painting, playing, reading 'Dear Zoo'). The picture of the animal in blue, within the yellow frame, is representative of the story of the 'Three Little Pigs', a story the children had been working on in class for the past week. I interpreted this as an indication of informed consent, the children understood what was meant by research – they were finding things out about their peers and recording the information in their research books.

APPENDIX 4 Fieldnotes. Focus Child D

Fieldnotes (25/04/17) (Reception class) 10.10 Tidy up time.

21. Children are busy tidying up or avoiding tidying up. Lots of activity. D finds a roll of thin
22. elastic that has come undone and manages to tangle it around a group of about 8
23. children and the teacher. T- stops class and calmly gets them to untangle
24. themselves. Reminds them about tidying up again and that they are losing outdoor play
25. time so need to hurry up.
26. 10.15 Carpet Time – some children have already put coats on and come to the carpet. T
27. – ‘did anyone hear me ask children to put their coats on? She points out those who are
28. not wearing coats and praises them for ‘good listening’. D is sitting at the side edge of
29. the group nearest to the door and slightly away from the group. He has his coat on and
30. keeps on peeping inside it where he is hiding a large stick. As he does so, he keeps
31. looking round to check that no- one has noticed.
32. 10.20 Outdoor play. Lovely sunny weather but still a bit cold. N and YR out together.
33. Every child is fully engaged playing by the time I come out at 10.25 am
34. 10.25 Observation Target child D: Riding bike round tree in a circle leading several
35. other children. Occasionally shouts out, ‘I’m winning’. Gets stuck on bike behind him
36. which a nursery child is riding. Says ‘Oh stop it stupid bike’ and gently nudges the other
37. child’s bike out of his way. 10.30 wanders off and goes over to bouncers. Bounces
38. around then picks it up swinging it over his head and bouncing it on a child’s head. I
39. comment that I don’t think he should be doing that and he stops. Wanders over to the
40. water butt and is in conversation with a girl, hands on her shoulders, friendly demeanour,
41. chatting and filling up jugs from water butt and transferring water into tuff tray. Climbs up
42. toy cooker to look inside the water butt from the top, looking round to check no – one is
43. watching. Repeats this several times whilst still working with the girl to say whether there
44. is enough water to fill another jug. 10.39 He climbs up again to check inside and then
45. chooses a large blue basket plastic container to fill with water and carries it over to the
46. tray and pours the water in. He has now attracted a crowd of children who are gathered
47. round him. He climbs up onto the toy cooker again to check the water level inside and is
48. spotted by TA3 who tells him to get down saying, ‘do you want to fall in and drown? No,
49. get down’. He climbs down and she gently moves him aside then picks up his container
50. of water and pours it back into the water butt before refilling it again. 10.45 YR T asks
51. her class to line up and come inside.

APPENDIX 5: Fieldnotes. Registration

Field Notes (25/04/17) (reception) 9.00 am

1. Children gather on carpet on arrival in front of T seated on chair. All focussed. She
2. welcomes them and asks them to say good morning to me and the volunteer. Starts with
3. prayers, most join in with the words. T praises children for being able to remember all the
4. words to the prayer and gives some examples of what it means to keep the promises they
5. made in the prayer. Register – T mentions how good it is that these new register folders
6. have pens in them ready. Register is called and each child responds. G responds with,
7. ‘I love you’ and she laughs and thanks him. Children appear relaxed and focused.

APPENDIX 6 Fieldnotes. Sit!

Fieldnotes (9/05/17) (reception)

1. The atmosphere is highly charged in this morning’s session. The staff are late setting up
2. due to a staff briefing. It is SATs week. On the carpet there are lots of
3. explanations given about what is going to happen that week. After prayers the children

4. take turns to tell their news and there is excitement and full attention. Despite the rushed
5. atmosphere, the staff try to make time to listen to the children's news, commenting on the
6. things they knew about them from home, for example, "Who went to Dylan's party? What
7. was it like?" TA1 had seen Kaleb and his mum out at the weekend with their new baby,
8. he proudly shows his picture to the class. Dylan crawls closer towards to the teacher, as if
9. he is picking up on the tense atmosphere and wants to be near her. He kneels up to get
10. nearer and reaches out to touch her. Her stress is evident as she says, 'Sit' in a firm
11. voice and he does so, straight away. He seems to read her mood and respects it, giving
12. her the space she needs at that moment.

APPENDIX 7 Fieldnotes. Story Times

In all classes, storytimes appear to be more relaxed and informal than other carpet time sessions. There is a more informal ethos and more movement on the carpet as children seem to 'chill out' and listen.

Fieldnotes (16/10/17) Storytime (Year one)

55. It is the end of the day and the teacher signs 'story time is listening time'. She starts to
56. read the story and most of the children watch her. Joe is patting his hands on his knees,
57. C leans back on his hands. The teacher asks an occasional question, "How would you
58. feel if...?" I record in my notebook a snapshot observation of what children are doing two
59. minutes after the story has started:
60. Amy lies down and gently kicks the radiator, Evie is chewing on her hair and peeping
61. past H. Joe is picking his nose, rubbing his eyes and pulling on his eyelids. L is up on all
62. fours in the crab position, head facing the ceiling. Joe is blowing trumpet actions, he
63. turns to H and tries to distract him, H responds back with identical actions. M holds up a
64. plastic jewel on her hand and examines it. Amy copies the crab position of L and rocks
65. back and forth. G is rocking and shaking his arms in dance like 66.
movements. Joe has his head in his tee-shirt and mimicks the teacher "bye, bye".

APPENDIX 8: Fieldnotes. Lucy's transition to the carpet

Fieldnotes (16/05/17) (nursery) 10.40 am

27. The children are all occupied in the areas of continuous provision. Lucy takes something
28. out of her tray and throws it into the air, watching it fall to the ground. After she does this
29. a couple of times, I notice it is the paper butterfly she coloured in the day before. She
30. places it on the table and blows it off, then looks up as the teacher announces that it is
31. tidy up time. The children copy the teacher's signal to have a hand raised up in the air.
32. Lucy watches and wanders over to her tray, replacing the butterfly into it. The children
33. are busy tidying up and the adults too. Lucy goes over to the sink against the classroom
34. wall and pulls the step out from under it. She climbs onto the step, rolls up her sleeves
35. and starts to fill the sink with water. As the children start to gather on the carpet, Lucy
36. makes a soapy lather on her hands. She slowly rubs them together and looks to the
37. carpet where all the children are now sitting. The teacher calls her over, 'Come on, Lucy,
38. finish up there now'. Lucy dips her hands into the water and cleans off the soap. The TA
39. turns off the lights and Lucy pulls the plug out of the sink, looking over her shoulder to
40. see the children on the carpet. The teacher is settling the children on the carpet. Lucy
41. stretches up to take a paper towel and dries one hand then repeats the action to dry the
42. other one. She rolls down her sleeves, puts the towels in the bin and walks over to the
43. carpet, stepping over the rows of children to take her place on the carpet in front of the
44. teacher's chair. The story is just about to begin and Lucy strains her neck upwards to
45. look at the book.

46. I've noticed this ritual on many occasions when the children are called to the carpet.
47. Lucy's actions are carried out to precision and always manages to get to her place just in
48. time for the start of the story.

APPENDIX 9 Fieldnotes. Freedom on the carpet

The following extracts depict the stark contrast between the freedom the children experience when on the carpet without a teacher and the control when she returns:

Fieldnotes (8/11/17) End of the Day (Year 1)

56. The children are getting coats and bags from the cloakroom and returning to the carpet.
57. There is no adult present, it is their territory now: lots of chatter, hugs, laughter, huddles
58. of boys. Amy starts singing the song, 'Tomorrow' and has a group of girls gathered round
59. her. Two children are lying on their tummies having a chat, a group of girls are
60. exchanging pictures out of their book bags, three boys are tussling, rolling on top of each
61. other, two boys pretend fighting, one flinging his book bag into the air and catching it.

Fieldnotes (4/10/17) Getting Ready for Lunch (nursery children now in reception class)

42. The teacher is away from the carpet, talking to a colleague. The children's behaviour is
43. different on the carpet when they are unsupervised. They lie down, roll around, some sit
44. and chat. They mess with their coats, hiding, peeping and chatting, yawning, hugging,
45. tickling and crawling, two children are hiding under a coat, talking – so much movement
46. in contrast to the expected carpet time behaviour. When the TA announces that it is time
47. to line up, they rush and push and some get sent back to the carpet. Some get told off
48. for not taking notice and Megan is given a warning and then told to put her name on the
49. thinking cloud. Katie has her arm round Megan's shoulder and consoles her, telling her
50. that at least she is in the thinking cloud, not the thunder cloud. The TA asks them to line
51. up again and warns them that if anyone talks they will be sent back to the carpet again.

APPENDIX 10: Fieldnotes. Class rituals

Fieldnotes (3/05/17) (nursery) 9.40am

5. The children come to the carpet after tidy up time. The teacher sits cross legged on her
6. chair and uses a very quiet voice, 'Let's see if we are ready'. She asks the TA to turn off
7. the lights and this seems to have a calming effect, as the children settle down. The
8. teacher switches on the battery operated candle and places it on the alter. She motions to
9. the children to join their hands and they copy her and recite the morning prayers by
10. candlelight. At the end of the prayers, she picks up the candle again, the children are
11. watching intently, as she chooses a child to state a number and a colour. Fifteen is the
12. chosen number and green is the colour. The daily ritual begins. The teacher turns the
13. switch underneath which activates the candle to display light moving through a series of
14. colours. She leads the count: One, two, three, four..... When they get to 15 she moves
15. the switch again and the candle settles onto one colour – red. The children squeal and
16. giggle and shout out their colours. The boy who predicted the colour green stamps his
17. foot and shouts, 'No, man!' Some children are doing 'high fives' with each other, as their
18. prediction was right. I am laughing at this scene, which is now becoming familiar to me.
19. The teacher smiles and nods at me.

Fieldnotes (22/05/17) (reception) 9.00 am

6. In the reception class, a different child is chosen each day to have the privilege of sitting
7. on the 'comfy cushion' in a place of honour next to the teacher. The children gather on the
8. carpet immediately as they enter the classroom. They greet each other, moving places to

9. sit next to a chosen friend. There is chatter and movement as they wait for the teacher.
10. The teacher sits down and says, 'One, two, three; look at me' and then the ritual of
11. choosing whose turn it is to sit on the 'comfy cushion' begins. Some are sitting bolt
12. upright legs crossed, some have wriggled in closer to the teacher. One child, desperate
13. to be noticed is straining her head upwards and making a noise, 'mm, mm'. The teacher
14. scans the room then chooses a boy for 'good sitting' and 'being ready with a smile on his
15. face'. She calls out his name and he proceeds to collect the cushion and tick his name
16. off on the chart. He places the cushion in the place of honour, next to the teacher and
17. facing the rest of the class and sits down in triumph. I love watching this simple ritual
18. every time I come in. The children know that eventually everyone will have a turn
19. because they tick their names off on the 'comfy cushion chart' after their turn, but the
20. ritual of sitting up straight, straining to be noticed and the teacher's decision-
21. making process never fails to capture their interest.

APPENDIX 11: Children's vulnerability

Fieldnotes (3/05/17) (nursery)

45. The children are watching the familiar number songs and stories that are played on the
46. interactive whiteboard every day during snack time. Harry, whose speech
47. is unclear, puts up his hand and says something in a quiet voice that the teacher can't
48. understand. The teacher responds by saying, "Big boys' voice, please" and Harry
49. answers, saying 'Can I take my jumper off?' The teacher nods and is smiling, but she
50. replies, "Can I take my jumper off, *please?*" Harry looks embarrassed as he looks
51. round at the other children, then down at the floor. He takes off his jumper but keeps
52. looking round at the children, then sways to the music and occasionally voices one of the
53. words, whilst looking round again at the other children.

APPENDIX 12: Fieldnotes. Owl Babies

Fieldnotes (16/05/17) (nursery)

10.55 am

18. The teacher settles the children down by reminding them of 'good sitting, hands in
19. baskets'. The teacher introduces the story in a quiet voice showing them the book.
20. Teegan shouts out that it is her friend's birthday today and several other children join in
21. talking about birthdays, G. 'I had a birthday when I was three'. The teachers says,
22. 'Remember, carpet rules, hands up' and a number of hands goes up. She takes a few
23. comments from the children then tells them to put their hands down now while they listen
24. to the story. TA 2 moves away from the carpet, N and L have shuffled back to the back
25. row now and are leaning against the wall. Lucy joins the class, having washed her hands
26. in the sink. She steps over the children and settles herself directly in front of the
27. teacher's chair and strains to look up to see the book. A few children are yawning and
28. some are distracted by the TA who is cutting out templates on the adjacent table. The
29. children join in when the teacher asks them to, 'One, two, three', counting the Owl babies
30. in the story. A child shouts out, 'But a fox might eat them up'. Her comment goes
31. unnoticed. The teacher closes the book and asks them all to show her a 'snuggle', they
32. act out a snuggle and she encourages them to say the word as they do it. The teacher
33. says, 'Hands up if you love your mummy', all hands go up. She says, 'Hands up if you
34. love your daddy', children respond with hands up. She says, 'Hands up if you love Mrs.
35. M..... TA.... Fr. Stefan, Jesus... Mary'. She finishes with, 'Children you are the best
36. children in the world!'

APPENDIX 13: Fieldnotes. Walk the Plank

Fieldnotes (28/04/17) (nursery and reception outside) 10.40 am

80. Both classes are out together. In the paved area of the outdoor area, the nursery teacher
81. is playing a game of pirates with some of the children. She has a scarf on her head and
82. a play sword in her hand. She has joined up the crates in a long line, from the fence to
83. the grassed area. She walks along the crates with a long line of children all following
84. her. She has her hand raised in the air with her sword swinging from side to side and is
85. chanting, 'Walk the plank, walk the plank!' She moves in time to the words, one step for
86. each word, stamping as she chants. The children follow her, a few are able to mimic her
87. timing, stamping one foot down to match each word. The rest simply stamp and shout,
88. some saying the words, 'Walk the plank,' others laughing or squealing with excitement.
89. As she reaches the last crate, the teacher lets out a scream and jumps dramatically into
90. 'the sea', landing on the grass. The children copy her, each one letting out a loud
91. scream, as they leap off the crate and run to join the queue to start again.

APPENDIX 14: Fieldnotes. Bouncy castle

Fieldnotes (19/07/17) (Reception) 10.30 am

21. The teacher explains that the Year 3 class teacher is soon to be leaving the school so
22. she has treated her class to a bouncy castle for the day. The children show excitement
23. (gasps, ahh). Teacher, "And the best news is we get to have a go on it too!" The
24. children cheer and some hug each other. They are wriggling and showing excitement.
25. The teacher starts reminding the children of how to behave in the hall when they get to
26. go on the bouncy castle. She says that anyone who is in the thunder cloud will not be
27. able to go on the bouncy castle. She reminds Joe that he had had to sit out and sit on
28. the TA's knee during the school concert yesterday in the hall and asks him why this
29. was. Joe doesn't answer, but blushed bright red.

APPENDIX 15: Extract from analysis of classroom observations

At the end of each school visit, I read through my fieldnotes and made a summary in the chart below. I entered themes on the right hand column and at the end of the fieldwork I generated three broad themes following Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps for data analysis.

Date	Summary of Activity	Description	Emerging Themes	Overarching Themes
5/07 Child chats analysis of video	<p>Morning in nursery</p> <p>Free play on arrival</p> <p>Observed 3 Carpet Time (CT) sessions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prayers and pirate story some SST Outdoors - children decline my offer to come inside for small world activity. Making coca cola with mud and water 2. Snacks –IWB phonics and Gingerbread man story 3. Hometime and prayers 	<p>CT1 Starts with carpet rules reminder. Then counting and story, mainly instructional teaching, lots of prompts for carpet rules, but some elements of supporting children's thinking skills (sustained shared thinking SST). lots of humour, good atmosphere.</p> <p>The carpet is a place where children learn how to behave and sometimes it's not that straightforward. Child L 'I'm hot' T 'so what do you need to say?' L murmurs (inaudible), T 'big boy's voice', L 'I need to take my jumper away', T 'no, you need to stay on the carpet when we're here'.</p>	<p>Carpet rules</p> <p>Pedagogy</p> <p>Behaviour</p> <p>Identity</p> <p>Vulnerable</p>	<p>Community</p> <p>Identity</p>

		CT2 Routine same every day, the children know what to do and what to expect. Katie invites me to sit with her on the carpet and tells me what to do. This was a great sign of acceptance for me.	Routines	Community
7/07 Small world child chats	<p>Reception class (YR) afternoon child-chats with small world</p> <p>Observed CT sessions T out on a course</p> <p>TA1 leading the session, TA2 ready for hen do a bit subdued.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> TA1 10 mins Prayers and register. Dylan telling story of his swimming competition in hotel for 4 days. Children all wanting to come out and talk to the class. Some interaction with me as I sit on the carpet with them and ask what it's like sitting on the carpet. Hometime on nursery carpet IWB children all quiet and focussed on the CBBEs story. Treat for Friday. TA 3 leaves early for hen do. No wriggling during IWB session all focussed. Homely atmosphere with TAs 	<p>Sense of community and joy of belonging.</p> <p>When the T is absent the children seem to know that there is an even more informal atmosphere than usual. They are fully attentive when they tell their news. D tells TA1 about his recent swimming competition. It is a long and elaborate story that involves him staying at a hotel for 4 days and swimming hundreds of miles and involves a humpback whale. The children appear to be really interested in his story, they are listening and looking at him. Three hands go up, the two Polish children have their own quiet conversation in Polish, a girl and boy are touching each other's shoes and whispering. J has his fingers on his lips and hand up, eager to be noticed, two girls are playing together swaying side to side. There is a sense of togetherness and belonging, they all want to share their news but are told they don't have enough time to hear them all. They strain to be noticed, kneeling up, hands raised and some making low noises 'mmm mmm' with lips tightly pursed. This is important to them, to have their voice heard to be the centre of attention.</p>	<p>Community</p> <p>BelongingNews</p> <p>Attentive</p> <p>Relaxed</p> <p>Togetherness</p> <p>Seeking attention</p>	<p>Community and belonging</p> <p>Attention levels</p> <p>Community and belonging</p>
16/06	<p>Morning nursery</p> <p>Observed 3 CT sessions</p>	CT1 the CT rituals and physical environment impact the children's behaviour. Child T was supported to calm down by counting to three and looking at the thinking cloud and the sunshine on the behaviour display. The lights were dimmed	RitualsControl	Community

	<p>Free play on arrival. TA making Father's Day cards tense rushed atmosphere to get through them all. Some playing pirates.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CT 15 mins Prayers T been in trouble all morning and refuses to tidy up. Sits on edge of group on carpet but gradually calms down and joins them. Atmosphere calms down with lighting and story. <p>Outdoor play in rain with wellies on, T in trouble for hurting a child.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Snack time on mats TA3 is covering for T and struggles to set up IWB. Phonics songs then Peppa Pig pirate story on IWB ...silence 3. Hometime coats, bags and prayers reminder about activities tomorrow – special mention and sports day 	<p>and the candle lit, a familiar ritual. He is allowed to exercise his control and shows his feelings by positioning himself on the outer edge of the carpet with his hands over his ears. He soon joins the centre of the carpet after the prayers when they are counting down to blow out the candle and settles down. Is this his way of wanting to feel the sense of belonging again, safety in the middle of the group?</p>	<p>Belonging Physical space</p>	<p>Control Belonging</p>
--	---	--	-------------------------------------	--

APPENDIX 16: Example of IPA analysis leading to summary of themes for teacher interviews.

The following table contains an extract from the interview with Maria, the nursery teacher. It illustrates how the first three stages were conducted, showing my initial coding on the right and the emerging themes on the left.

<i>(Stage Three – themes)</i>	<i>(Stage one – read and re-read and take it in)</i>	<i>(Stage two- respond to the text)</i>
Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Exploratory Comments Descriptive, Linguistic, Conceptual
Quiet and structure	<p>R: So, what do you think is the value for children then, how do they benefit from carpet time?</p> <p>L: Emm, like I say I think it's that quiet time and that structure, and I think as well, even like the PSE side, You know like when you see their little friendships forming, and like you'll see L, S and M, the three of them all sit together and they like hold hands</p>	<p>What children get from carpet time:</p>
Friendships	<p>R: Ah</p> <p>L: Erm.. so I think that PSE side of it and I just think because it is very very busy in nursery and you do forget you know, like me and Stella we're both kind of like 'whooo' (loud) but there are those very quiet, gentle children that need, that need that quiet time, erm... and like I say like, N the teeny, tiny dot N, like today they were noisy and so I said, 'Oh children you're hurting my ears' and she said, 'it hurt my ears it's hurting my ears too'</p>	<p>Personal, Social, Emotional (PSE) – forming friendships, sitting together and holding hands</p> <p>very very busy</p> <p>need... need that quiet time</p>
Quiet time	<p>R: Ah</p> <p>L: So, I think yes the quiet time and the PSE and I think like the children being able to sit next to each other, to choose their friends like at the minute, A is dead popular and J's dead popular, so they all go and try and sit next to him and then J went today 'they're all following me' and I went, 'Oh, J just go and sit in the corner there next to A' so it is like right well, how am I going to deal with this situation?, but errr.... Yeah like I say I think just having yeah the quiet time, story time the structure and... just that adult input as well, knowing because sometimes you might miss, they might, you might not even speak to them you know throughout like a morning or the first half of the morning because they're like standing in the</p>	<p>Repeated - quiet time</p> <p>Children's identities – A is popular so the children all try to sit next to him, the child doesn't like it and it</p>

<p>Children's identities</p>	<p>workshop cutting and you may be somewhere else or doing another activity, so knowing that they're seeing you as well, as ... as a teacher</p> <p>R: Can they build their relationship with you better on the carpet?</p> <p>L: Yeah, I think they can because you can see the ones and they're like (whispers inaudible as if whispering to a child on the carpet 'stop it be quiet now') do you know what I mean?</p> <p>R: yeah, a quiet word?</p>	<p>is a dilemma for the teacher to know how to deal with the situation</p>
<p>Relationships</p>	<p>L: Mmm</p> <p>R: or a quiet look?</p> <p>L: Yeah and you can see them because L at the start of the year was like, 'when are we playing outside? When are we playing outside? (Laughter) and I'd just go like that (gestures to be quiet) I think without having to, you know the gestures and like you know you know who needs to go for a wee and like you see them and you're like (claps) 'off you go off you go' and yeah, so... and I think you get to see them</p>	<p>Repeated - quiet time structure adult input</p> <p>Teacher –child relationships – carpet time provides the place where the teacher and the child can meet, every child has her attention, which may not happen in the continuous provision time, a child might get missed.</p>
<p>Knowing the children personally</p>		<p>When she has them on the carpet they are all more visible to her you can see them and they know each other well enough to be able to understand non-verbal communication, they understand her gestures and she is attuned to their needs and can read their signals you know who needs to go for a wee. Attachment</p>

The next table illustrates stage five in which I collated the emergent themes identified through the whole of Maria's interview, into a set of superordinate themes:

Superordinate Themes:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruction 2. Behaviour 3. Quiet and calmness 4. Control 5. Struggles 6. Teacher Child Relationships 7. CT is a place where children’s identities are formed or constrained 8. Teacher identity

I made a note of the data extracts that belonged to each theme:

Emergent themes collated into Superordinate themes	Page/line	Key words or phrases from the transcript
Instruction		
<i>CT is for direct teaching and in-put</i>	15.10	Teacher led phonics
<i>Structured in-put</i>	12.17	I like it for that structure and for knowing that I can be doing an in-put
<i>Didactic approach to teaching</i>		they need... they need in-put
Behaviour		
<i>CT is for teaching rules and expected behaviour</i>	19.8	Golden rules board
<i>Learn to sit down and be quiet</i>	2.15	Getting them sitting down and quiet
<i>Rules, behaviour, praise and sanctions</i>	19.20	Rules. Thunder cloud
<i>behaviour management</i>	3.29	I think we’d hammered in good sitting and good listening and dedededededee
Calmness	2.1	Calming down
<i>Calming down</i>	24.2-7	Register and after dinner, calming, coming in and sitting down
<i>Transitions</i>		
Control	7.16	I know what I can do with you
Assessment	4.3-5	... I can hear and see all the children,
Struggles	11.16	it was hard because they didn’t all have that listening and attention
<i>Carpet time can feel stressful</i>		
<i>some children lack listening and attention skills</i>		Erm because me and T disagree about it (laughs)...

<i>pressure to conform to expected style of pedagogy for early years</i>	7.6	we've got to go outdoors, right we've got to get back in for snack, we've got to do that, we've got to do this,
<i>External pressures</i>	9.3	he just couldn't he couldn't access it and he just couldn't cope with it
<i>Some children can't cope with Carpet Time</i>	15.19	'he can't even hold a pencil' and she's like, 'he's not ready, l.' and I'm like, 'well, I'll make him ready...
<i>Frustration</i>	15.21	Like R sometimes she'll look at you and she'll look at you and she'll just wink (laughter)
Teacher Child Relationships		
<i>Warm relationships built up on the carpet</i>		So I think good relationships in terms of when we do sit with them as well and when they need that little bit of loving do you know what I mean?
<i>Attachment</i>		I think without having to, you know the gestures and like you know you know who needs to go for a wee and like you see them and you're like (claps) 'off you go off you go' and yeah, so... and I think you get to see them
<i>Knowing the children personally, being tuned in to their needs</i>		
CT is a place where children's identities are formed or constrained	18.10	A is dead popular and J's dead popular, so they all go and try and sit next to him
<i>Children's identities are formed on the carpet</i>	18.19	When you see their little friendships forming, and like you'll see L, S and M, the three of them all sit together and they like hold hands
<i>Friendships</i>		Is Louise going to pick them up (in reception) and go 'oh, what have you done with them?'
Teacher identity		
<i>Imposter Syndrome</i>	10.26	it was like herding sheep and I didn't really know what to do or how to do anything
<i>Uncertainty, not knowing what to do</i>	14.32	AAAH, ahhhh, ahhh, they were all just going everywhere and I just didn't know what to do
<i>Feeling out of control</i>	13.1	

<i>Struggling to articulate her pedagogy</i>	12.30	and I don't know I think er T just said that we did that
<i>Insecurity, following advice without understanding why</i>	8.1	(sighs) To be honest, I don't know, I don't know how I do, do that a bloke called XX did a bit of training with the EYFS... And he's always like three stories a day, three stories and day
<i>Confusion between what she believes and what she does</i>	2.19	(sighs) I don't know,
<i>New understanding through knowledge and experience</i>	2.26	so... yeah I think if I was staying... I might do things differently knowing I mean like now I've got the experience and the knowledge

Having completed this process for all four interviews I was then able to consider all of the superordinate themes across all of the interviews:

	T1 Maria	T2 Louise	T3 Emily	T4 Laura
Superordinate Themes	Instruction Behaviour Quiet and calmness Control Struggles Teacher-Child Relationships CT is a place where children's identities are formed or constrained Teacher identity	Togetherness Pedagogy Teacher-Child Relationships Identity Control Belonging Gender	Instruction Pedagogical dilemmas Struggles Assessment Being acknowledged Behaviour	Instruction Learning Control Identity Challenging children External Pressures

APPENDIX 17: Ethical Approval



Downloaded: 28/03/2017
Approved: 28/03/2017

Josephine McEvoy
Registration number: 130238429
School of Education
Programme: EdD Doctorate of Education

Dear Josephine

PROJECT TITLE: Towards a pedagogy of 'carpet time': An ethnographic case study exploring group gathering times in a nursery and reception class.

APPLICATION: Reference Number 012680

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 28/03/2017 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 012680 (dated 13/03/2017).
- Participant information sheet 1028426 version 1 (13/03/2017).
- Participant information sheet 1028425 version 1 (13/03/2017).
- Participant information sheet 1028424 version 1 (13/03/2017).
- Participant consent form 1028431 version 1 (13/03/2017).
- Participant consent form 1028430 version 1 (13/03/2017).
- Participant consent form 1028429 version 1 (13/03/2017).
- Participant consent form 1028428 version 1 (13/03/2017).
- Participant consent form 1028427 version 1 (13/03/2017).

If during the course of the project you need to [deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation](#) please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

David Hyatt
Ethics Administrator
School of Education

APPENDIX 18:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET for staff

Research Project Title: A study of Carpet Time sessions in Early Years classes.

1. Invitation to participate

You are being invited to participate in a research project. Before you decide whether to participate it is important that you understand the purpose of the research and what is involved. My name is Jo McEvoy and I will be conducting this research project as part of my doctorate in education. I have previously worked as an early years teacher and am now working at the University of Huddersfield as the course leader for initial teacher training in the Early Years. Please read through this information sheet and feel free to contact me (the researcher) if you require any further information. You may contact me by email j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk or [speak to me when you see me in school.](#)

2. What is the project's purpose?

The aim of the project is to explore children's and practitioners' perceptions of the purpose and value of carpet time sessions in the nursery and reception classes.

Although children in the Early Years learn in many different ways; through playing and making their own choices and through being taught directly in a group by the teacher, many Early Years teachers are reporting that they are more frequently using teacher directed activities with young children due to the pressure to have children ready for more formal learning in school. Thus, it is likely that more time will be spent on teaching children in groups through carpet time sessions. Therefore, this project aims to explore what happens during carpet time sessions and how effective they are in supporting children's learning. It is hoped that by observing sessions and finding out what children and staff think about carpet time, new ideas for supporting children's learning will begin to emerge and will help the school and other early years teachers to develop even better conditions for children's learning in the Early Years.

The research is planned to take place over two terms – from April to October 2017. This will allow me to follow the children from one school year into the next. For the most part I will be observing the children during carpet time and during their free choice activities. I will record my observations using fieldnotes.

I would also like to interview the two teachers in nursery and reception to find out what they think is valuable about carpet time and what its purpose is. I intend to work with a small group of children as a focus group and use play activities and conversations to try to find out what they think is the purpose and value of carpet time sessions. Some of the carpet time sessions will be video recorded and used for analysis by me with you and the focus group children to aid our discussion about what happens and why.

After the study has finished it is likely that the findings of the study will be used to support trainee teachers and other professionals through publications of academic papers or through presentations at conferences. All names of children and staff will be changed and the school will not be identified.

3. Why have I been chosen to be part of this research?

All of the staff in the nursery and reception classes have been chosen to participate in the project because it would be helpful for me to see the typical daily practice in each class with a focus on carpet time. You each work with the children in different ways and each will have experience of leading some aspect of carpet time sessions. You will each have your own individual experiences and opinions of carpet time and your contributions will support me to gain a richer understanding of the lived experiences of carpet time from the different perspectives of all who partake in it. The year one teacher and teaching assistant will be involved in the autumn term only, when I would like to observe the focus group children engaged in carpet time sessions during the first 6 weeks of the term.

4. Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide if you wish to take part. There is no obligation to do so and declining to take part will not affect your usual working routine. The research will take place around you but you will not be asked to contribute in any way. You will be free to withdraw from the project without explanation. You simply need to let me know that you wish to withdraw. You can let me know when you see me in school or you can email me. There is an opt out letter that you would be asked to sign and return to me to indicate that you wish to withdraw.

5. What will happen if I do take part?

You will not need to do anything different to your normal working duties. The routines and activities will all take place as planned. During the research I will work in the classroom like a volunteer and will:

- Join in with the daily activities in the classroom so that the children are comfortable to interact with me and continue to act in the same way they normally do in the classroom.
- Observe all carpet time sessions and sometimes make notes in my journal about what is happening.
- Help out in the classroom and sometimes make notes in my journal about how children are learning at different points of the day.
- Video record some carpet time sessions to look back on with you and the children to establish what happens and how effective it is for supporting learning.

The focus group children will occasionally take part in a playful focus activity with me to help me to understand what children's opinions are of carpet time. For example, they may be asked to provide a tour of the classroom to a toy character explaining what happens in each of the areas or to point out on photograph cards which parts of the day they enjoy most and why. If any of the other children approach and wish to take part in these activities, they will be most welcome to do so. Any child who is not a participant in the project will also be made welcome and included in any activities they ask to join in with, but I will ensure that no notes will be recorded in the journal about them.

When I make notes of my observations I will ensure that all names are anonymised so that your identities are protected at all times. When the findings of the study are written up in the final thesis any children or staff who are mentioned will be given a different name to protect their identity.

6. What do I have to do?

You will continue your work routine as usual and I will be observing and making notes of how children learn in carpet time activities and at other times of the day. I may chat to you informally about your experiences of carpet times and your thoughts on its value and purpose.

Reception and nursery teachers: You will be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview about your experiences of carpet time and your thoughts on its purpose and value. These interviews will be audio recorded so that I can transcribe them and refer back to them as the study develops. You will be offered the chance to read the transcripts when they are written, to check for accuracy.

All staff: There will be some occasions when the carpet time sessions are video recorded and you will be invited to analyse the footage with me.

Year one staff: You will be invited to join the study in September when I would like to be able to observe the focus group children engaging in carpet time sessions with you during the first six weeks of term.

Your identity will be protected throughout the research project and afterwards. Your name will not be used in any of the fieldnotes or in the final written thesis.

7. How will the video recordings of the carpet time sessions be used?

The video recordings of the carpet time sessions will be used for analysis and will be seen by the staff and the children only. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recording.

8. What are the possible disadvantages or risks to taking part?

There are no disadvantages or risks to taking part since you will be doing nothing out of the ordinary planned classroom activities. There is no risk of you being identified in future publications about the research since your name will be changed to protect your identity. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any point and without any explanation by simply letting me know that you wish to withdraw and signing the opt out letter to confirm that you have withdrawn your consent.

You may have some concerns about being observed when leading carpet time sessions. You can be assured that I am not assessing the quality of teaching through my observations and that the observations will be kept confidential and not shared with senior leaders in the school for the purpose of school improvement or performance management purposes. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw or opt out of any part of the study at any time without explanation.

9. What are the possible benefits of taking part in the research?

Whilst there are no immediate direct benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will contribute to future teacher training and support you with your on-going quality improvement work. It is hoped that we will all benefit greatly from being able to reflect together and engage in professional dialogue. The children will benefit from having an extra adult helper in their classroom once a week.

10. What if the project finishes earlier than expected?

You will be informed when the project is due to finish. It is planned for completion in October 2017 and should that date change in the meantime, you will be informed.

11. What if something goes wrong?

Should you have any concerns regarding the research project at any point please contact me on j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk or the headteacher in the first instance to resolve the problem. If this is not possible or if the issue remains unresolved you may contact my research supervisor, Dr. Rachael Levy: r.levy@sheffield.ac.uk. If you are still not satisfied that the issue has been resolved you may then refer the concern or complaint to the University's registrar and secretary.

12. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the observation notes written during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will be protected at all times. The video recordings will be kept on a password protected file on the encrypted hard drive of my university laptop so that only I will have access to them.

13. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The findings from the research project will be reported in my written thesis submitted to Sheffield University. In subsequent years I may use the findings as a basis for carrying out future research on this topic and will most likely share the findings of the project with education professionals and academics through conference presentations and published academic papers.

14. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is part of a doctoral thesis to be submitted to the University of Sheffield.

15. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

Sheffield University's school of education department has ethically reviewed and approved this project.

16. Contact for further information

Researcher: Jo McEvoy, email: j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk Telephone: 01484 478 122

Supervisor: Dr. R. Levy, email: r.levy@sheffield.ac.uk Telephone: 01142228154

Finally:

Thank you for taking the time to consider whether you wish to participate in this project.

Please keep this sheet for your information and if you decide to partake in the research please sign and return the consent form to me via the school office by Tuesday 18th April.

APPENDIX 19:

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM FOR STAFF IN SCHOOL

Title of project: A study of Carpet Time sessions in Early Years classes.

Name of researcher: Jo McEvoy

Participant Identification Number for this project:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated [30th March 2017] for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason (contact j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk or in person).

3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis and that I may appear on the video recordings but that these will only be used for the purposes of analysis.

4. I agree to take part in the above research.

Name of Participant:

_____ Date _____ Signature _____

Lead Researcher:

_____ Date _____ Signature _____

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

APPENDIX 20:

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET for all children (parents/ legal guardians)

Research Project Title: A study of Carpet Time sessions in Early Years classes.

1. Invitation to participate

The nursery and reception classes are being invited to participate in a research project. Before you decide whether to consent to your child participating it is important that you understand the purpose of the research and what is involved. Please read through this information sheet and feel free to contact me (the researcher) if you require any further information. My name is Jo McEvoy and I will be conducting this research project as part of my doctorate in education. I have previously worked as an early years teacher and am now working at the University of Huddersfield as the course leader for initial teacher training in the Early Years. I will be available in the nursery classroom on Tuesday 4th April for half an hour before and after school if you wish to discuss any aspect of the research project with me. Alternatively you may email me at j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk

2. What is the project's purpose?

Children in the Early Years learn in many different ways; through playing and making their own choices and through being taught directly in a group by the teacher. Direct teaching usually takes place when the children are sitting together on the carpet and is usually called 'carpet time'. This project aims to explore what happens during carpet time sessions and how effective they are in supporting children's learning. It is hoped that by observing sessions and finding out what children and staff think about carpet time, new ideas for supporting children's learning will begin to emerge and will help the school and other early years teachers to develop even better conditions for children's learning in the Early Years.

The research is planned to take place over two terms – from April to October 2017. This will allow me to follow the children from one school year into the next. For the most part I will be observing the children during carpet time and during their free choice activities. I will record my observations using field-notes. I also plan to interview the staff to find out what they think is valuable about carpet time and what its purpose is. In addition, I will work with a small group of children as a focus group and use play-centred activities and conversations to try to find out what they think is the purpose and value of carpet time sessions. Some of the carpet time sessions will be video recorded and shown back to the staff and the children to help them to discuss what works well and why. The video recordings will not be used for any other purpose. After the study has finished it is likely that the findings of the study will be used to support trainee teachers and other professionals through publication of academic papers or through presentations at conferences. All names of children and staff will be changed and the school will not be identified.

3. Why has my child been chosen?

All of the children in both the nursery and reception classes have been chosen to participate because it would be helpful to observe the whole class during carpet time sessions in order to understand how carpet time works for everyone. A small focus group of children have been selected by their class teachers to provide a representative cross section of children from each

class (ie girls, boys, ages). The class teachers have chosen the focus group of children based on their knowledge of which children are most likely to feel comfortable and confident to take part in the focus activities and conversations with the researcher. If your child is identified for the focus group, you will receive additional information sheet and a consent form.

4. Does my child have to take part?

It is up to you and your child to decide if they wish to take part. There is no obligation to do so and should you decide not to, you simply need to sign and return the 'opt out' letter. I will then ensure that I do not make any observations of your child during the research project or include your child in video recordings of a carpet time session.

If you decide that your child does wish to be involved, then you do not need to do anything else. If at any time during the project your child wishes to withdraw from the research, please inform your class teacher and send in the signed opt out letter and your child will no longer be observed as part of the project. Please note that this will not affect your child's normal school experience in any way and there is no expectation for any child to take part who does not want to. Your child will still attend all carpet time sessions but will not be included in the findings of the project.

5. What will happen if my child does take part?

Your child will not need to do anything different to their normal school day. The routines and activities will all take place as planned by the teacher. During the research I will work in the classroom like a volunteer and will:

- join in with the daily activities in the classroom so that the children are comfortable to interact with her me and continue to act in the same way as they normally do in the classroom.
- observe all carpet time sessions and sometimes make notes in my journal about what is happening.
- help out in the classroom and sometimes make notes in my journal about how children are learning at different points of the day.
- video record some carpet time sessions to look back on with staff and children to establish what happens and how effective it is for supporting learning.

The focus group children will occasionally take part in a playful focus activity with me to help me to understand what children's opinions are of carpet time. For example, they may be asked to provide a tour of the classroom to a toy character explaining what happens in each of the areas or to point out on photograph cards which parts of the day they enjoy most and why. If any of the other children approach and wish to take part in these activities, they will be most welcome to do so. Any child who is not a participant in the project will also be made welcome and will be included in any activities they ask to join in, but I will ensure that no notes will be recorded in the journal about them.

When I make notes of my observations I will not name any of the children or staff so that their identities are protected at all times. When the findings of the study are written up in the final thesis any children or staff who are mentioned will be given a different name to protect their identity.

6. What does my child have to do?

The children will not be expected to do anything different to their normal classroom activities. The focus group children will be invited to take part in occasional activities as explained above.

7. How will the video recordings of the carpet time sessions be used?

The video recordings of the carpet time sessions made during this research will be used for analysis and will be seen by the staff and the children only. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recording.

8. What are the possible disadvantages or risks to taking part?

There are no disadvantages or risks to taking part since your child will be doing nothing out of the ordinary planned classroom activities. There is no danger of your child being identified in future publications about the research since their names will be changed. Children will be free to interact or not interact with me during the study and to join in or not join in a focussed activity. I am an experienced teacher and a specialist in early years education. I will be particularly sensitive to and respectful of children's needs. For example, if a child appears to be upset or feeling unwell on a particular day, I will avoid observing at that time. You have the right to withdraw your child from the research at any point and without any explanation by simply informing the class teacher and returning the opt out letter at any time.

9. What are the possible benefits of taking part in the research?

Whilst there are no immediate direct benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will contribute to future teacher training and support the school staff in their ongoing quality improvement work to ensure that all children experience the best conditions for learning. The staff will benefit from professional dialogue with me in my capacity as an outside professional working in the field of early education and the children will benefit from having an extra adult helper in their classroom once a week.

10. What if the project finishes earlier than expected?

You will be informed when the project is due to finish. It is planned for completion in October 2017 and should that date change in the meantime, you will be informed.

11. What if something goes wrong?

Should you have any concerns regarding the research project at any point please contact me on j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk or the headteacher in the first instance to resolve the problem. If this is not possible or if the issue remains unresolved you may contact my research supervisor, Dr. Rachael Levy: r.levy@sheffield.ac.uk. If you are still not satisfied that the issue has been resolved you may then refer the concern or complaint to the University's registrar and secretary.

12. Will my child's data be kept confidential?

All the observation notes written about your child during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and your child's identity will be protected at all times. The video recordings will be kept on a password protected file on the encrypted hard drive of my university laptop so that only I will have access to them.

13. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The findings from the research project will be reported in my written thesis submitted to Sheffield University. In subsequent years I may use the findings as a basis for carrying out future research on this topic and will most likely share the findings of the project with education professionals and academics through conference presentations and published academic papers.

14. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is part of a doctoral thesis to be submitted to the University of Sheffield.

15. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

Sheffield University's school of education department has ethically reviewed and approved this project.

16. Contact for further information

Researcher: Jo McEvoy, email: j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk Telephone: 01484 478 122

Supervisor: Dr. R. Levy, email: r.levy@sheffield.ac.uk Telephone: 01142228154

Finally...

Thank you for taking the time to consider whether you wish for your child to be able to participate in this project.

Please keep this sheet for your information and chat to your child to see if they wish to be included in the research.

If you are giving consent for your child to take part, you do not need to do anything more.

If you do not want your child to take part, please sign and return the opt out letter to the class teacher by Tuesday 4th April.

APPENDIX 21: Consent form for all children (opt out)

Letter for child to opt out of the research project

Title of project: A study of Carpet Time sessions in Early Years classes.

Name of researcher: Jo McEvoy

Participant Identification Number for this project:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated [30th March 2017] for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent for my child's participation at any time without giving any reason by returning the 'opt out' letter to my child's class teacher.

3. I wish for my child to 'opt out' of this project.

Name of parent/legal guardian:

_____ Date _____ Signature _____

Lead Researcher:

_____ Date _____ Signature _____

To be signed and dated in presence of the classteacher and a copy returned to the parent/guardian.

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the opt out signed and dated form, the information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated opt out form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

APPENDIX 22:

FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION SHEET

Participant Information Sheet for focus group children (parents/ legal guardians)

Research Project Title: A study of Carpet Time sessions in Early Years classes.

1. Invitation to participate

The nursery and reception classes are being invited to participate in a research project and your child is being invited to be part of the focus group of children for this study. Before you decide whether to consent to your child participating it is important that you understand the purpose of the research and what is involved. Please read through this information sheet in addition to the general class information sheet and feel free to contact me (the researcher) if you require any further information. I will be available in the nursery classroom for half an hour before and after school on Tuesday 4th April if you wish to discuss any aspect of the research project with me. Alternatively you may email me at j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk

2. What is the purpose of the focus group?

The focus group of children are to act as representative sample of the whole class. It would not be possible to interview all of the children in the two classes and it is hoped that by interviewing a representative sample across the two classes I will be able to gain a deeper insight into children's views about carpet time in their classes.

The research is planned to take place over two terms – from April to October 2017. In the first term (the summer term) I will observe your child during carpet time sessions and at other times in the day to ascertain how they interact and learn in different contexts. I will also occasionally engage with them as a group asking them to take part in a focus play-centred activity to help me to gain their views and perceptions of how they like to learn. In the second term (the autumn term), I would like to observe them in their new class taking part in a carpet time session. I would do this on 6 occasions during the first 6 weeks of term and also have a chat with them individually about carpet time in their new classes.

3. Why has my child been chosen to be part of the focus group?

Your child has been identified to be part of the focus group of children to represent a cross section from children from each class (ie girls, boys, different ages). The class teacher has suggested your child is invited to take part in the focus group because she believes that your child is most likely to feel comfortable and confident to take part in the activities and to engage with me, researcher.

4. Does my child have to take part in the focus group?

It is up to you and your child to decide if they wish to take part. There is no obligation to do so and should you decide not to, you simply need to sign the consent form indicating that you do not give your consent. Your child may still take part in the study in the same way as the other children in the class as outlined on the class information sheet. If at any time during the project your child

wishes to withdraw from the focus group, please inform your class teacher and send in the opt out letter indicating that you do not wish your child to continue as part of the focus group.

Please note that being part of the focus group will not affect your child's normal school experience in any way. Any focus group activities that I carry out will take place during free play activity times and if your child does not wish to take part in a focus activity when invited, they will not be expected to do so.

5. What will happen if my child does take part in the focus group?

Your child will occasionally be invited to take part in a playful focus activity with me to help me to understand what children's opinions are of carpet time. For example, they may be asked to provide a tour of the classroom to a toy character explaining what happens in each of the areas or to point out on photograph cards which parts of the day they enjoy most and why.

6. What does my child have to do?

Your child will not be expected to do anything different to their normal classroom activities. The focus groups will take place as part of the typical routines of the day.

7. How will the data from the focus groups be used?

Children's comments and my observations of how the children engage in the activities will be recorded as fieldnotes in my journal and analysed to support the findings of the study. Your child's identity will be protected at all times and the children's real names will not be used in the final written thesis.

8. What are the possible disadvantages or risks to taking part in a focus group?

There are no disadvantages or risks to taking part in the focus group since your child will be doing nothing out of the ordinary. There is no danger of your child being identified in future publications about the research since their names will be changed.

Your child will be free to take part in a focus activity or to decline. I am an experienced teacher and a specialist in early years education. I will remain sensitive to your child's needs and respect their wishes at all times. For example, if your child appears to be upset or feeling unwell, I will avoid observing or inviting them to participate in an activity at that time. You have the right to withdraw your child from the focus group at any point and without any explanation by simply informing the class teacher and returning the opt out letter indicating that you wish for your child to withdraw from the focus group.

9. What are the possible benefits to my child of taking part in the focus groups?

Whilst there are no immediate direct benefits for the children taking part in the focus groups, it is hoped that the children will enjoy the focus group activities and gain confidence and satisfaction through taking part.

10. What if the project finishes earlier than expected?

You will be informed when the project is due to finish. It is planned for completion in October 2017 and should that date change in the meantime, you will be informed.

11. What if something goes wrong?

Should you have any concerns regarding the research project at any point please contact me on j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk or the headteacher in the first instance to resolve the problem. If this is not possible or if the issue remains unresolved you may contact my research supervisor, Dr. Rachael Levy: r.levy@sheffield.ac.uk. If you are still not satisfied that the issue has been resolved you may then refer the concern or complaint to the University's registrar and secretary.

12. Will my child's data from the focus groups be kept confidential?

All the observations and fieldnotes written about your child during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and your child's identity will be protected at all times. The video recordings will be kept on a password protected file on the encrypted hard drive of my university laptop so that only I will have access to them.

13. What will happen to the results of the research project?

The findings from the research project will be reported in my written thesis submitted to Sheffield University. In subsequent years I may use the findings as a basis for carrying out future research on this topic and will most likely share the findings of the project with education professionals and academics through conference presentations and published academic papers.

14. Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is part of a doctoral thesis to be submitted to the University of Sheffield.

15. Who has ethically reviewed the project?

Sheffield University's school of education department has ethically reviewed and approved this project.

16. Contact for further information

Researcher: Jo McEvoy, email: j.mcevoy@hud.ac.uk Telephone: 01484 478 122

Supervisor: Dr. R. Levy, email: r.levy@sheffield.ac.uk Telephone: 01142228154

Finally:

Thank you for taking the time to consider whether you wish for your child to be able to participate in the focus group for this study.

Please keep this sheet for your information and chat to your child to see if they wish to be included in the research.

Please return the consent form indicating whether or not you wish for your child to take part in the focus group.

APPENDIX 23

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM for Focus Group Children

Title of project: A study of Carpet Time sessions in Early Years classes.

Name of researcher: Jo McEvoy

Participant Identification Number for this project:

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated [30th March 2017] for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my child's participation in this project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent for my child's participation at any time without giving any reason by returning the 'opt out' letter to my child's class teacher.

3. I understand that my child will be videoed but that the videos will only be used for the purpose of analysis.

4. I agree to my child taking part in focus group activities with the researcher.

Name of parent/legal guardian:

_____ Date _____ Signature _____

Lead Researcher:

_____ Date _____ Signature _____

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:

Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

APPENDIX 24: Fieldnotes: Planning a wedding

Fieldnotes (22/05/17) (reception)

32. The teacher produces a carrier bag full of pieces of A4 card of all different colours and
33. designs. She tells the children they can make anything they like. Excitement and full
34. engagement. There is a sense of equality between the adults and the children as TA2
35. asks if she can have some of the card for her wedding place names. The children are
36. keen for her to have some, there is a real sense of community here. Several children
37. make props and signs for dentist play which is what they have been learning about
38. and some children are overheard having conversations about healthy and unhealthy
39. foods for teeth. The adults are responding to the children's conversations as they
40. create things out of the card. They chat about their families, who their cards are
41. for, power rangers and all sorts of things that interest them.
42. After forty minutes of making and creating with the cards the teacher gathers the
43. children on the carpet in a large circle. The children can all see each other and what
44. they have made. They are proud to show off their work when chosen to do so. The
45. teacher's use of suspense and friendliness supports engagement and attention. She
46. announces, "I've just had an amazing idea, but tidy away first and then I'll tell you". No
47. incidents of unwanted behaviour occurred in this session apart from one reminder to
48. Dylan to stop shouting, "I was just about to put you name back in the sunshine. Please
49. don't shout at me and I won't shout at you".
50. When they have finished tidying up the children gather again on the carpet in a
51. huddle. They are excited to be part of the teacher's 'amazing idea', which is to have a
52. pretend wedding for TA2 who is getting married in the summer. They plan the details
53. of the pretend wedding. The teacher uses lots of opportunities to promote thinking.
54. Dylan asks, "Who can be the boy?" leading to the teacher explaining the word
55. 'groom'. She asks them what they should wear and they tell their talk partners. One
56. child is asked for his idea and he says, cheekily, "swimming trunks", the children are
57. laughing and so are the adults. They enjoy his joke together and move on to ask the
58. children how they can find out what happens at a wedding. The teacher reminds
59. them, "Last week we found two ways of finding things out, what were they?" (use IT or
60. non-fiction books). There is a shared excitement and sense of purpose.
61. Children's attention appears to be high as indicated in their behaviour; there is silence
62. when anyone is talking, they are all looking at the teacher, there is little movement on
63. the carpet and many have hands up or shout out contributions. The teacher uses 'talk
64. partners' (the children form a pair and talk to each other) to enable all of the children
65. to have the opportunity to talk.

APPENDIX 25: Fieldnotes. 'Joe, what's church?'

Fieldnotes (16/06/21) (reception) 2.45pm

74. The children are gathered on the carpet for an RE lesson. They sit in a circle holding
75. hands, swaying side to side and singing, "We're all good friends together, a happy
76. family". The teacher asks, "What's church?" and they use talk partners to discuss. The
77. teacher takes feedback: A: "It's about God and Jesus"....C: "Yeah and all prayers for
78. the people who died".... G. "Oh, and people that might be injured because of that
79. bomb ... cos C. got hurt". The teacher notices that Joe is lying down on the carpet and
80. asks him directly, "Joe, what's church?" Joe replies, "It's about God and you go in
81. children's liturgy with Joan". The teacher establishes that church is a place and asks,
82. "What can you see in church?" S. answers, "God, Jesus and they fly, erm... angels".
83. The teacher takes some more answers and reminds them of their visits to church with
84. the school. She says, "Ok, so, one more question. Why do we go to church?" The
85. children shout out answers, "To learn about God", "to pray for people in hospital", "to
86. get married". The teacher responds to this idea, "Yes, I went and got married in
87. church", the children are interested, "How old were you?" She tells them, as if she

88. were in a casual conversation with an adult, "I was just 24, and then I went back with
89. my babies, what was that for, do you think?" Amy answers, "To put water on their
90. head". N interrupts, asking, "Oh, does the water grow your hair?" The teacher replies,
91. "No, it doesn't, but everyone clapped and it meant that my children became part of
92. God's family".
93. I found this circle time/ RE lesson interesting. The teacher managed to engage all the
94. children in talking and thinking about the topic, but she also connected with them in a
95. personal way, sharing a bit about who she was.

APPENDIX 26: Fieldnotes. Newstime

Fieldnotes (3/05/17) (reception)

47. The children are gathered together on the carpet in the small room. TA1 invites them
48. to tell her their news. They all love to do this and are fully attentive to each other. They
49. are only chosen to tell their news if they have their hand up. Many hands go up
50. but there is a lot of noise and movement as children try to get chosen. TA1 reminds
51. them to be quiet and chooses a child with her hand up. Some children try to
52. get noticed by doing other things, as well as putting up their hand. Dylan peeps
53. through a chair and has his hand up, Will raps his knuckles on the chair to make
54. noises to attract the TA's attention. Dylan puts his hand up and wriggles forward to get
55. noticed, then puts two hand up. TA1 has to frequently ask the class not to shout out
56. and to put their hands up. Finally, she cuts the session short, stating, "Some children
57. are being very rude, shouting at me".
58. For the TA, on this occasion, trying to maintain control appeared to be overwhelming
59. and she decided to finish the session early, rather than continue to the end.