

Practitioner Experiences of Forest School

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the situated subjectivities of the experiences of Forest School (FS) practitioners, in their journeys from training to initial practice.

The research explores the impact of FS training, environmental and socio-cultural influences upon the practitioners and how their practices adapt in context. Eight in-depth case studies of FS trainee practitioners were undertaken over a period of two years (2010-12) using multiple qualitative methods. The analysis is in three parts; on practitioner identities, approaches and contexts. The thesis contributes three new conceptual models to outdoor pedagogical research. The concept of *eco-social identity* frames the ongoing construction of self. The FS adult role is theorised as a *connector*, engaged in dynamic role processes. The analysis of practitioner approaches in context uses *Shared Space*; an ecosystemic frame of practice and agency. Further analysis of practitioners' experience of team contexts draws on theoretical lenses on role, socialisation and norms from Goffman and Foucault. Team relationships became positioned in either conflict, collaboration or congruence. The study contributes new insights into the impact of FS training and the influence of socialisation and subjectivity in the application of outdoor pedagogy. Early life experience, nature-society relations, and passionate purpose motivated the practitioners. Adult-to-adult interaction affected practice outcomes significantly, with strong disparities in setting teams regarding values and ethos, team interest, controls and standards in setting practices, curriculum pressures, setting aims, and site provision and care. The results imply that collaborative partnership and a whole team approach are effective strategies for ongoing practice, and tokenistic practice is a destructive strategy.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed: Mel McCree

Date: 4th February 2014

Acknowledgements

The children have just walked in from playing out at the nearby adventure playground. They tell me it is closing down next week. During the summer, they might visit every week night. This is the third local adventure playground to close in less than a year. Over dinner, there is talk of militant child-led direct action, but we all know it is too late. The children initiate political debate; questioning where the taxpayer's money goes, why the government doesn't care about them, and whether the local community could afford to run the playground. I often come out from the study to find aspects of the research topic being played out around me. My first, pointed acknowledgement goes towards the faceless neoliberal forces that shut down children's playgrounds, build on valuable green space, and enclose us within their walls in the name of profit. The struggle to resist and create anew is important. Anger motivated me to keep going with the PhD at times. My research is in a dynamic and changing area, although not necessarily changing for the better. I dedicate this thesis to everyone in search of a small patch of nearby land to play in.

I have learnt so much from everyone involved in the research. The participants generously shared their thoughts, feelings and stories. The knowledge arising from the research is indebted to them. The analysis was nurtured by skilled supervisors, with patience and professional support. The training centre was a wonderful place to play detective in and I thank the research sponsors. Good friends J & R helped beyond the call of duty. Dad fixed my heating. Thank you.

My heartfelt thanks go to Nigel. The completed thesis is testimony to his love, care and support. Finally, I acknowledge my new grey hairs, which I like to think are a sign of increasing wisdom.

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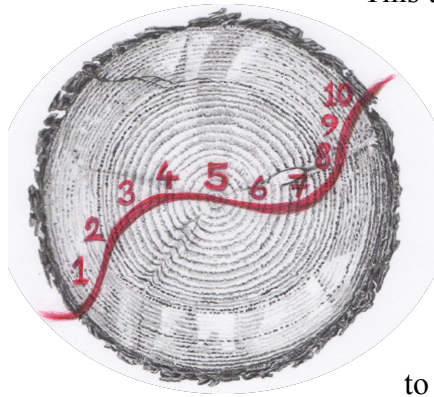
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



This thesis is a journey made up of several journeys.

Firstly, that of the eight practitioners, who generously gave of themselves to share their thoughts and experiences.

Secondly, it is the journey I took as a researcher;

to consider and tell their stories with fair representation,

to describe the process and the meaning I found within. Finally, it is the reader's journey, to follow the trail and uncover the stories. To help guide the reader through the thesis, each chapter is headed with an image of a tree in cross section. A red thread marks the progress through the chapters and, symbolically, through the space-time of the practitioners' journey.

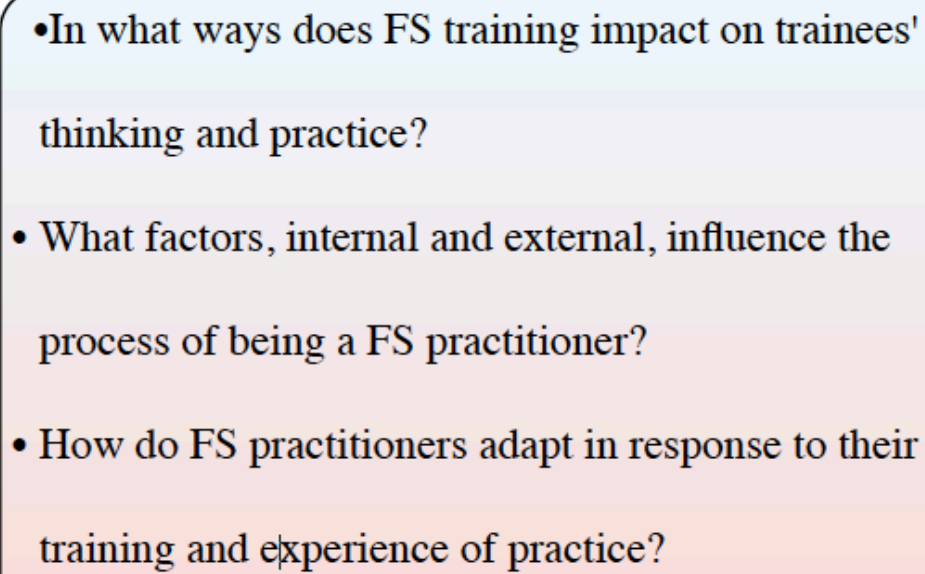
We enter the worlds of the eight practitioners as they train and practice Forest School (FS). The present research takes an ethnographic approach to charting the practitioners' experiences and focuses on their situated subjectivities. The journey begins at the edge of a forest, as in many an adventure story. It reveals itself as both a forest of perceptions and a real forest, entwining metaphor and meaning in the actual events. As we enter the forest, we witness the protagonists as they acquire skills and find the courage and resources within themselves to carry on. They deal with challenges and wrestle with demons, both inner and outer. Finally, some, but not all, make it back through the dark woods.

The complete process of FS training could be seen as a rite of passage. The practitioners move from the ordinary world of their everyday lives into the special world of FS training. They return back into the ordinary world with their new skills and knowledge to enact practice.

Purpose of research

The present research contributes to a tradition of existing research within FS and outdoor play and learning. The study is qualitative research in an area which is both dynamically changing and political. Concerns in pedagogy, geography, ecology, sociology and cultural studies about a range of topics including the changing nature of childhood, access to nature and environmental degradation rub together within FS. Therefore my research synthesises literature across pedagogical and eco-social disciplines, with a clear purpose to explore the significance of situated subjective experience. There is a gap in the literature on implicit, social or enculturated barriers that we may face in adult experiences of outdoor environmental education or training (Warren, 2005). FS training may frame for practitioners one set of values and attitudes, with accompanying pedagogical principles, approaches and strategies, aims and purpose. The practitioners' previous professional and life experience may have given them others. The setting in which they work in may give them another and the wider socio-cultural context will get them yet others still. This key concern is investigated within the analysis. My goal is not to clarify the purpose of FS, but to critically analyse how FS is manifested through adult experiences, to examine how FS and the people involved are changed through its situated socio-cultural production and draw out meaning from it. From this motivation, I derived my research questions (see Fig. 0).

Figure 0: Research questions

- 
- **In what ways does FS training impact on trainees' thinking and practice?**
 - **What factors, internal and external, influence the process of being a FS practitioner?**
 - **How do FS practitioners adapt in response to their training and experience of practice?**

These questions cannot be fully answered by the literature as they have not been widely researched. However, aspects of these questions can be found by looking into the literature. First, from research on FS itself and other outdoor pedagogy. Secondly, from spatial, cultural and social studies on situated subjectivities, social interaction and nature-society relations. The questions were designed to meet the aim of my research, to gain some provisional knowledge on the experiences of FS practitioners; how they understand their role and adapt to a situated approach. To do this, an in-depth understanding of the barriers and facilitators in the practitioners' contexts was necessary. To better understand the practitioners' realities and multiple approaches, it was clear that the research needed the voice of practitioners to evidence their experience, using the phronesis of practice, rather than theory, as a starting point. Practitioners' understandings are significant because they affect the experience of children (Louv, 2005), as worldly subjects. They affect the nature of FS practice for all who encounter it.

The temporal, spatial and cultural contexts of FS training

FS training is a long journey, ranging from a few months to a few years, depending on the practitioner. The stages of the present research were linked to four clear distinct temporal stages to the training (see Table 1). Practice is part of training and the context of the practice is included within the research. The research questions relate to these temporal stages in a variety of ways. The first question researches the impact of training on the practitioner over the entire course of training into practice. The second question considers the internal and external factors that contribute to the process of being an FS practitioner. This ranges in time from early experience in childhood to current experiences of practice and concerns for the future. The third question, on how the practitioners adapt in response to their training and experience, is located temporally in the last two stages, once they have begun to enact FS practice.

Table 1: Training stages

1 week	3 days	6 + weekly sessions	6 months or more
Training delivery	Practical skills assessment	Practice placement and assessment	Coursework completion
At training centre		At work	In own time-space

Spatially, the training is located in two different spaces; the training centre and the practice setting. By enquiring into external factors that contribute to being a FS practitioner and their eventual experiences of practice, a third space becomes included; the socio-cultural context of the practitioners and their settings. Therefore socio-cultural influences are of import, which I discuss in the second half of this chapter. First, I highlight the original contribution of the present research.

Re-conceptualising the outdoor practitioner: new contributions

Arising from the present research, the thesis contributes new knowledge to the literature on outdoor pedagogical research. The review in Chapter 2 covers all the primary (peer-reviewed with empirical evidence) literature on FS to date (see Appendix 2), which to my knowledge has not been reviewed as a complete set. Further, a focus on FS training itself has not been addressed in the literature thus far. Three new conceptual models emerged from the empirical research. The concept of *eco-social identity* frames the ongoing construction of self. The FS adult role is theorised as a *connector*, engaged in a dynamic role process. The analysis of approaches to practice uses the *Shared Space* model; an ecosystemic frame of practice and agency. I explicitly included the environment, or the more-than-human, within all these concepts, to contribute new theoretical and analytical frames for considering nature-society relations within pedagogy. In this way, I strove to overcome the disconnection from, or exclusion of, more-than-human nature that is present within social science (Sutton, 2004).

Research rationale

As I focus on the subjectivities and early experiences in the practitioners' journeys, it is only fair to illuminate some of my own, that have informed my position and led to the motivation for the present research. When I first discovered FS around the turn of the millennium, I had a number of responses. The first was a sense of surprise and relief, as by wrapping up a number of knowledges and approaches in an ethos and curriculum, FS had 'become something'. I was surprised that this 'something' comprised of various ways of being I was used to, but had perceived as socially and educationally marginalised. For example, making fires and cooking in

the woods, making shelters and using bushcraft skills, enjoying being part of nature in that dynamic living environment, observing the changes and sharing this with others. Environmental education later became a vocation for me, inspired in part by the direct experience. Previously, in the 1990s, I lived outside through all weathers as a lifestyle choice, both as an eco-activist and as a way of being. These are marginalised lifestyles in contemporary UK society, as it is not the norm to choose to live in something other than a house, or to subsist with basic means in a woodland location. To some extent, it seems the realm of tramps, mad people and other outsiders, who can risk protest and social rejection as they have seemingly less to lose. With the experience of fighting injustice, I identified with being an outsider. I was relatively young, exploring my agency in the world and experimenting with how to live by my beliefs. These social, outdoor experiences transformed my sense of self and belonging in the world, perhaps more profoundly than I understood at the time. All this seems a long time ago now, yet I acknowledge the impact of these experiences, heightening my own sense of *eco-social identity* and leading me to take action. Once I 're-joined society' in the late 1990s, seeking a vocation, the convictions that had been nurtured during these experiences led me to work creatively in environmental education, to carve a path based on my values and beliefs. I still spend a lot of time in the woods and carry a memory of the essence of that more intense time spent living within them, as my sense of being was markedly different, such as an increased resilience to all kinds of weather and an embodied direct connection with my surroundings. My work is increasingly about working outdoors with people, in wooded or edgeland environments. To return to the surprise and relief I felt in discovering FS, to me at the time, it opened up a space, where I could do what I did already, but it now had a name.

Five years later, in 2009, my initial motivation for the present research stemmed from further experiences facilitating outdoor play and learning. Having ‘parachuted’ in and out of many settings as a visiting professional, I had questions about the intersubjective experience. I became struck by the distinct differences in culture; approaches to outdoor practice and responses from staff within the settings. The culture of the setting, and the staff within, seemed to have a direct impact on practice outcomes. At times I felt integrated, at other times I felt like an outsider. I felt the impact of differing world views, life experiences and professional training and became curious as to how these topics could be broached. At the beginning of the research, I had trained as a FS level 3 practitioner, having trained at Level 2 in 2004 and subsequently managed and delivered FS and other outdoor play and learning projects. This enabled me to make an informed choice to study FS trainees within my thesis. The practical implications of needing a reliable cohort made me choose FS over outdoor playwork, as many FS practitioners work in settings with ongoing job contracts, whereas playworkers often have sessional contracts or more fluctuating job circumstances. Within the economic climate of the public sector cuts that began in 2010, stability was a key factor in my decision.

The rest of this introductory chapter discusses some of these influences around the idea of disconnection with nature as a socio-cultural driver for outdoor pedagogical practice. I critique the use of both words; disconnection and nature. Further contextual influences are then debated, focusing first on socio-cultural constructs of children and nature, and then on education and training, to give a background for the emergence of FS in the UK.

The dialectic of disconnection

There is strong evidence to support the claim that outdoor play and learning, particularly in natural environments, has wide ranging benefits and a positive affect on children (Malone, 2008; Dillon and Dickie, 2012). In contrast, studies show an increase in children becoming *disconnected* from the natural environment, with less than 10% of children playing in woodlands and natural places, compared to 40% in previous generations (England Marketing 2009). Coupled with a reduction of accessible green space, children's freedom for unsupervised outdoor play has reduced (Lester and Maudsley, 2007). With an increasing social anxiety about the erosion of both childhood and green space, symbolic dichotomies such as the 'natural child' in the 'unnatural urban' render the debate problematic (Jones, 2002). Problematic or not; symbolically, systemically and spatially, the debate is very real. The socio-environmental challenges we face are intensifying and require a range of interventions, including at a cultural level (Crompton, 2010). There have been rapid changes in both the physical realities and cultural concepts of the environment (Kempton, Boster and Hartley, 1995). There remains a widespread lack of understanding in the 'industrial growth society' (Kvaløy, 1984, p. 12) on the inseparability of ecological principles from social reality (Bowers, 2011; Gruenewald, 2004; Orr, 1994).

Disconnection is not limited to children alone; adults (in Western Europe) also report a sense of disconnection, manifest in ambivalence, a lack of care and a distancing from nature (Oerke and Bogner, 2010; Brämer, 2006). Yet exploring our relationship with nature, and as part of nature, can be an uncomfortable topic, raising negative associations that are difficult to deal with, such as feelings of

apathy, fear and despair (Macy, 1999). The present research includes the influence of such personal, subjective experience, intersecting with an enquiry into professional pedagogical practice, and impacted by policy. The present research draws on theories and concepts used to investigate nature-society relations, such as nature distance affect (Brämer, 2006), environmental generational amnesia (Kahn, 2002), biophilia (Kellert and Wilson, 1993; Wilson, 1984), and ecophobia (Sobel, 1996; 2004).

I understand *disconnection from nature* as a social construction, and whilst I embrace the cultural meaning of this term on one level, I reject it on another. Discourse analysis on the terms found in outdoor play and learning, is, whilst interesting, beyond the scope of the present research. However, words are laden with multiple meanings, and *disconnection from nature* is prevalent as a meme within current polemic on nature- society relations. With respect for the reader's critical perspective, I will briefly clarify my position. The term *disconnection from nature* is made redundant by an uncritical view of nature as something separate, and the idea that a separation from nature is actually possible, in the case of our innate nature (Sutton, 2004; Macy, 1999). Bearing in mind our innate nature and interdependence, I treat *disconnection from nature* here simplistically, as a social and spatial reality, in that people in industrialised nations spend less time in green space than our ancestors did. Secondly, I treat *disconnection from nature* as a cognitive reality, as from a social constructivist perspective, our thinking has followed our action in the world (Schwandt, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978). There is a clear role for education to help people see the world, and themselves in it, as an ecological whole (Sterling, 2010; Orr, 1994).

I acknowledge that there are multiple and differing views on the use of the term 'nature' (for example, see Sutton, 2004; Sandilands, 1999), beyond the scope of the present research to investigate. The epistemological position I take within the thesis blends the ecological, spatial and the social (discussed further in Chapter 3), rather than applying a Cartesian belief of some ontological divide between nature / culture. The old dualities are crumbling. They were, after all, illusionary. In their place, I like to imagine the messy, spreading rhizomes of interdependent relationship, snaking their way across the urban edgeland, to take root in our understandings like buddleia bushes on a disused factory wall. Bearing my position in mind, and encouraging a critical perspective, I will now continue the theme of disconnection, within my research focus of subjectivities surrounding outdoor pedagogy.

Socio-cultural constructs of children and nature

Prevailing attitudes towards children outdoors have had a pervasive effect on children's experience, increasingly more so over the last 50 years. Kyttä (2004) suggests that children are restricted in environmental experience by physical, attitudinal or cultural restrictions or adult interventions. O'Brien (2009) notes the increasing widespread concern that, compared to their parents' experience, children have less contact with woodlands and greenspaces, due to safety fears and the increasing range of indoor activities that are available. In the literature on outdoor play and learning, reduced opportunities for children's outdoor environmental experience and resulting concerns for children's well-being are common recurring themes (Muñoz, 2009; Nabhan and Trimble, 1994). Yet how these concerns are expressed can be productive or destructive. For example, 'Nature Deficit

Disorder' (NDD), the quasi-medical term coined by Louv (2005) is, ontologically, a physical impossibility, considering we are all part of nature. Nonetheless, the term has taken root in US cultural understanding and is increasingly present in current polemic in the UK. A highly publicised report on 'Natural Childhoods' (Moss, 2012), funded by the National Trust, headlines NDD, discusses children 'exhibiting the symptoms' (Moss, 2012, p. 2) and is described by the author as a 'call to arms' (*ibid*, p. i). The report is not based on rigorous research, misrepresents study findings and presents a biased view. Within this strain of polemic, I find little criticality that unpicks the wider systemic causes, or addresses the inequalities and eco- social injustices that reveal social striations, political and economic actors in the mix. Rather, the focus is on the vulnerabilities of children, or even our seeming disregard of their wellbeing, as the centre of the problem.

NDD describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses (Louv, 2005, p. 36).

The popularity of Louv's term exposes the power of social constructs in our understandings of nature-society relations, for example in the use of a deficit model with no medical basis and the idea that nature can be prescribed (Russell, 2012). It is my view that, despite the catchiness of the term or the stated human costs, framing the problem of alienation thus can be seen as scaremongering, using guilt or fear as a driver for change. Lester and Maudsley (2007) and Gill (2007) suggest that safety concerns are based on a culture of fear (Dixey, 1999), whereby some of the concerns are illusory but deeply ingrained in society. Within all these concerns there seems to be a collision of moral panic, such as risk-aversion and a fear of virtual risk (Gleave, 2008; Harden, 2000; Dixey, 1999) versus a moral imperative for children's inclusion, health and wellbeing (Prout, 2000).

FS is not immune from the catchiness of polemical claims. It can be presented as a panacea to the environmental stresses of modernity on children (Cree and McCree, 2013), much like the non-ironic use of the term NDD (Louv, 2005). Justifications for children's practice are often related to eco-social ills that need fixing, like this playwork example, in terms of:

chronic pollution of the child's ludic habit... spatial pollution through traffic, construction, urbanisation, industry and agriculture; temporal pollution through over-programming, academic pressures, out of school activities and a domination of an adult perspective of time; psychic pollution through the fear culture, excessive direction and supervision, a marketing-led media and a commercialisation of play and playspace. (Sturrock, Russell and Else, 2004, p. 29)

Orr identified relevant themes to children's opportunity to play in natural environments, and how societal influences have transformed children's lives from direct contact with community, nature, animals, adventure and challenge, to isolated individualism with 'an increasingly abstract and symbolic appreciation of nature' and routine contact with inanimate objects, technology and virtual reality (Orr, 2002, p. 291). This also feels like the creation of a binary that generalises children's lives and focuses on perceived ills. I prefer the position of Lester and Maudsley (2007), who note that the natures of both childhood *and* adulthood are constantly being negotiated and re-negotiated; influenced and destabilised by current social, technological and economic change. This statement includes adults in the same travails of navigating our everyday lives, showing that we may also be challenged by the status quo. Cunningham (2006) gives a historic perspective in stating how for almost a thousand years, children were assumed to have capabilities that would be rarely credited now in the UK. He describes our contemporary fixation with giving children happy childhoods, that in turn creates a playing down of their abilities and their resilience. Children are still adept at finding ways to play

outdoors despite adult attempts at regulation (Ward, 1978).

Within the dominant discourse of provision, the child is constructed as an adult-in-waiting, or a future citizen who can be programmed to contribute to the country's economic success. Young children are viewed as vulnerable and weak, in a state of embryonic transition towards maturity (Gabriel, 2010), corresponding with Piaget's model of child development (1962) and also with Louv's deficit model as described above. The developmental approach is in contrast to the view of the child as a participating social actor and a person in their own right (Curti and Moreno, 2010; Fler, 2006; Prout, 2000; Quortrup, 1987). Dahlberg and Moss (2005) construct a space for both protection and strong participation to exist, thereby warning of the dangers of taking a polarised position. Taking into consideration the discussion thus far, how do these factors translate to mainstream education and care?

Environmental disconnection in education and training

There are further intersubjective challenges when putting outdoor pedagogical principles into action. Within the efforts of pedagogical research to validate approaches to outdoor learning, little focus has been placed upon the influence of socio-cultural experience (Bowers, 2011; Rickinson, 2001). In a noted and extensive review on research in outdoor learning, no mention was made of educators' perceptions or dis/connections with nature (Rickinson, Dillon, Teamey, Morris, Choi, Sanders and Benefield, 2004). The review instead reports a lack of confidence in teaching outdoors, the barrier of institutional requirements and fears about safety and risk. Within the FS literature, Waite, Davis and Brown (2006c) and Maynard (2007b) conducted research investigating how teachers and early years practitioners engage with FS. Yet there is no explicit FS research on supporting

further adult involvement or training. Within early years pedagogy, both FS research and practice outdoors are more extensive than for other age groups, due in part to a statutory requirement for outdoor provision, and improvements in curriculum guidance (Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2007; Maynard, 2007b; Knight, 2009). Yet debates rage on online practitioner forum threads, displaying a diversity of values and attitudes. For example, whether practitioners should be expected to go outside in the cold when they don't want to (TES Early Years forum, 2013, online), or how wonderful the cold weather is, with opportunities for elemental play and a boost for the immunity (Day, 2012, online). There can be valid practical reasons to not go outside, but deeper socio-cultural considerations are less discussed (Bowers, 2011).

The classroom is just a room at the end of the day.
You don't have to have the lesson there.

(Teacher quote, OFSTED, 2008, p. 14)

An integrated view of learning and development challenges the assumption that learning happens indoors (Waite, 2010). There are signs of progress that may help further support the adult role in outdoor pedagogy, that include an acknowledgement of values and attitudes. A recent study was commissioned by Natural England (Rickinson, Hunt, Rogers and Dillon, 2012), on school leader and teacher insights into learning outdoors in natural environments. The study was an evidence-led proposal to support the stated aim of the UK Government and Natural England, to enable 'better and fairer access to natural environments and thereby reduce the levels of children's disconnection with the natural environment' (Rickinson *et al.*, 2012, p.iii). Within the findings, local and individual factors that influenced the way teachers and school leaders understand and approach outdoor learning were identified as barriers to enabling outdoor learning, including teachers' own

educational experiences and values, the needs of their students and their school context. The local factors were key to the variance in how schools used outdoor learning and all schools in the study reported that they wanted to do more outdoor learning. The teachers interviewed described these local barriers and gave views on how they might be overcome. Individual teacher confidence and competence was seen as a key aspect of their own experience. The need for enthusiastic coordinators, committed to outdoor learning, was viewed as an important enabler, in particular when combined with support from senior staff, 'as staff can be very challenged by the idea of teaching outdoors' (teacher quote, in Rickinson *et al.*, 2012, p. 17). Some teachers felt that deeper-seated reservations about outdoor learning were also a barrier in not recognising its value, for example that 'there is a strange mindset...the view is that if you're not in school then you're not actually learning' (*ibid*). A need was expressed for external validation, from senior staff and government, that what happened beyond the classroom was valuable. Further constraining factors in teacher confidence and competence included fears around accidents and discipline, additional workload, bureaucracy and competing priorities such as statutory obligations such as tests and inspection. Teachers interviewed stated that they stay where they're comfortable and would need training to be more creative beyond the classroom (Rickinson *et al.*, 2012, p. 22). They needed to know how to assess and structure lessons outdoors, and not knowing how to assess the impact or 'record progress as hard evidence' was a barrier (Rickinson *et al.*, 2012, p. 18). Similar findings are echoed in Dillon and Dickie's prior research (2012).

New pedagogy, new paradigm

Education can be ‘an instrument for imparting healthy personal and social attitudes towards environment and development’ (UNESCO, 2005, p. 41). Trainee teachers and children’s practitioners need experiential training and support to learn new approaches to education (Rickinson *et al.*, 2012). UNESCO research recommended the need for a change in attitudes in training teachers, that ‘one of the great challenges of ESD is to have student teachers understand the interrelatedness of the environment, society, and economy, and have this interrelatedness be evident in their teaching and their lives as community members’ (UNESCO, 2005, p. 41). This may require ‘student teachers to think about their profession from a different perspective and learn skills that perhaps, teachers in previous eras did not learn or use’ (UNESCO, 2005, p. 41).

The UN Decade (2005 - 2014) for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is quietly coming to an end (UNESCO, 2005). Whilst policy is slow to embrace such initiatives, critics of ESD say the opposite is true, that sustainability has sold out (Gruenewald, 2004; Orr, 1994). Outdoor learning bears relation to ESD, yet encompasses a variety of approaches (Cree and McCree, 2012). The effect of policy upon the implementation of outdoor learning is significant, as ‘government guidance when coupled with inspection criteria is a strong determinant of the opportunities offered by practitioners’ (Waite, 2010, p. 117). Curricula guidance can be perceived as a requirement (Passy and Waite, 2008). Within the context of teacher performativity and testing regimes (Hammersley-Fletcher and Qualter, 2010), priority is given to meeting standards and targets, leaving the ‘scenic route’ (Waite, 2010, p. 118) of creative curricula and outdoor opportunities behind.

There is an argument for outdoor learning to become an entitlement for all children, as without the support of policy and senior staff, it may remain on the periphery (Waite, 2010). Further, due to substantial variation in teacher training for outdoor learning (Kendall, Murfield, Dillon and Wilkin, 2006) student teachers are inadequately prepared for practice, highlighting a need for statutory inclusion in training.

An overview of FS and current developments

It is important to state that, as a unique approach, FS is delivered by specifically trained practitioners and is not a generic term for a style of outdoor play and learning. FS can be defined as an eco-social pedagogical practice taking place in local woodlands, for a sustained period of time, ranging from 6 weeks to years. Despite the lack of policy support, FS is a growing form of training and provision (Kraftl, 2013; Knight, 2009), with an estimated 10,000 practitioners that have received training in the UK (Cree and McCree, 2013). FS is having an impact on mainstream children's services (Kraftl, 2013) and exemplifies another idea of politics, in that change agency exists outside of the macrocosm of state policy, in small, local and tangible changes. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari, Rose (1999) talks of 'minor politics':

Minor engagements ... cautious, modest, pragmatic, experimental, stuttering, tentative...concerned with the here and now, not with some fantasised future, with small concerns, petty details, the everyday and not the transcendental. (Rose, 1999, cited in Dahlberg and Moss, 2005, p. 14)

This seems to describe how FS has evolved, in an emergent, practice-based and non- hierarchical manner. FS began as a grassroots movement in the mid 1990s by early years practitioners, building upon a strong legacy of outdoor play and

learning within the UK, aided in part by cross-cultural borrowing of Scandinavian outdoor pedagogic practice (Cree and McCree, 2012; Knight, 2009) (see Appendix 5). The FS movement emerged from the interests and needs of practitioners working in the mainstream, indicating that FS practice is partially a response to the mainstream context (Cree and McCree, 2013). Elsewhere, I have used social movement theory to analyse the dynamics of contemporary FS (Cree and McCree, 2013), locating FS in a wider group of diverse movements for outdoor play and learning and social ferment surrounding ‘free range childhoods’. I pinpointed this stage of the maturation of FS as emerging from the excitement of social ferment into a process of formalisation, with a concern for clarifying standards, professional identity and a potential entitlement aim for access to FS for all children. National FS principles were not agreed upon until 2011, through practitioner consultation in the lead up to the establishment of a national governing body for FS, now called the Forest Schools Association (FSA) (Forest School Institute for Outdoor Learning Special Interest Group (FS IOL SIG), 2012) (see Appendix 3). In part due to this historical lack of coherence, and in part due to its non-hierarchical origins, the nature and interpretation of FS varies widely across training, delivery, practitioners and settings (Cree and McCree, 2013; Kraftl, 2013). Training provision is unregulated, monitored by a voluntary network of FS training providers. Herein lies a problem, in that establishing a collective idea of FS practice undergoes continuing debate within the FS community and wider communities of practice within children’s services. A perceived identity crisis in FS has its impact, as FS is adapted by the inherent subjectivities, values and attitudes within the context of practice. Concepts of what constitutes a FS experience are developing and altering as it is adopted by groups with other interests (Maynard, 2007c). As settings choose FS for different reasons, there is a need for clarity of purpose and aims, for

example, whether it is perceived as an occasional optional addition or used to meet curriculum requirements (Waite, 2011a). Some theorists argue that the novelty of FS from regular experiences is part of the power of an outdoor experience (Broderick and Pearce, 2001). This again brings up the tensions felt by teachers in meeting curriculum requirements whilst using a FS approach that values free play and autonomous learning. Some practitioners look to outdoor learning to provide a ‘special experience’ (Dillon, Morris, O’Donnell, Reid, Rickinson and Scott, 2005; Davis *et al.*, 2006). However, being ‘special’ rather than integrated into everyday practice may limit its integration with wider learning, as well as threaten the cost effectiveness for settings. This section serves as an overview to the current position of FS, and these issues are discussed further in the literature review in Chapter 2.

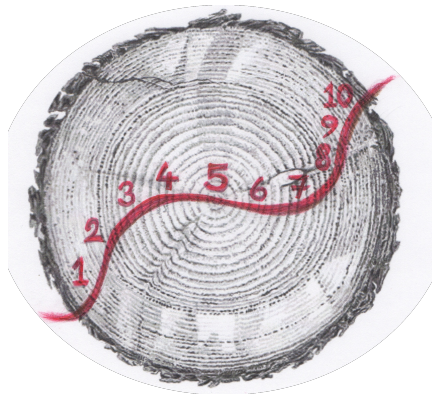
Outline of thesis

Here I give a brief outline of the thesis structure. In Chapter 2, I begin by examining the content of FS training alongside the FS literature, to draw out the pedagogical principles, tensions and fitness for purpose FS may have, or not, within a setting. In Chapter 3, I explore the significance of situated subjectivities in the context of FS, drawing on inter-disciplinary literature to address the rationale for researching the particularities of practitioner experience. I outline the conceptual model of *eco-social identity* as an orientation. In Chapter 4, I describe my methodology, including *Shared Space*, and my rationale for choosing a qualitative case study approach. In Chapter 5, I present the individual case studies of the eight practitioners. In Chapter 6, I return to *eco-social identity* to frame the practitioners holistically, enquiring into their early life experience outdoors, ongoing identity formation and the impact they report the training has had upon them. In Chapters 7 and 8, I frame the practitioners’ approaches, in the form of short encounter

narratives of practice and reflective *Shared Space* analysis, looking at how they embody their approach and deal with the here and now of the sessions. I introduce the conceptual model of the *connector* to theorise on their emerging role. In Chapter 9, I frame the practitioners' contexts. I look at the impact of socialisation and norms on the implementation of FS within their contexts, in relation to the expectations of both the contexts and the FS practitioners. I examine differing levels of conflict, collaboration or congruence in relationship between the settings and the FS practitioners, across the cases. In Chapter 10, I conclude by summing up the findings and implications. I reflect on the journey I have made as a researcher and on how the new contribution speaks to literature, practice and policy.

CHAPTER 2:

THE EXPERIENCE OF FOREST SCHOOL TRAINING



The present research charts the experience of FS practitioners taking the journey from training to practice. In this chapter I consider how the adult role is shaped in FS and what may be pertinent to their experience, in a review of the primary FS literature and Level 3 training content. To address the question of the impact of training, I identify and discuss issues raised in three of the four themes: *pedagogy and ethos*, *fitness for purpose*, and *tension and conflict*. The fourth theme of *values and attitudes* is explored in Chapter 3.

Methodology

I undertook a comprehensive literature review on FS, limited to peer-reviewed literature using empirical evidence (see Appendix 1). I then identified the key findings on both pedagogical outcomes (i.e. benefits to the participant) and adult experience (see Appendix 2). I grouped the findings into 4 themes: *pedagogy and ethos*, *fitness for purpose*, *tension and conflict*, and *values and attitudes* (see Table 2 below). Secondary literature was the sole source of evidence on FS before 2005, and I include wider literature in the following discussion. One objective of the present research was to assess the impact of training through in-depth study of adult FS experiences. Apart from the present research and a small study by Waite,

Davis and Brown (2006b), there has been no empirical research to date that includes FS practitioner training. To facilitate a discussion on training alongside the literature, I refer to the available Open College Network West Midlands Region (OCNWMR) Level 3 qualification training learning outcomes and assessment criteria (Forest School Training Company Ltd (FSTC), 2009), the QCF Qualification Guide (OCNWMR, 2013) and the revised FS principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012) (see Table 3 and Appendices 3 - 4)

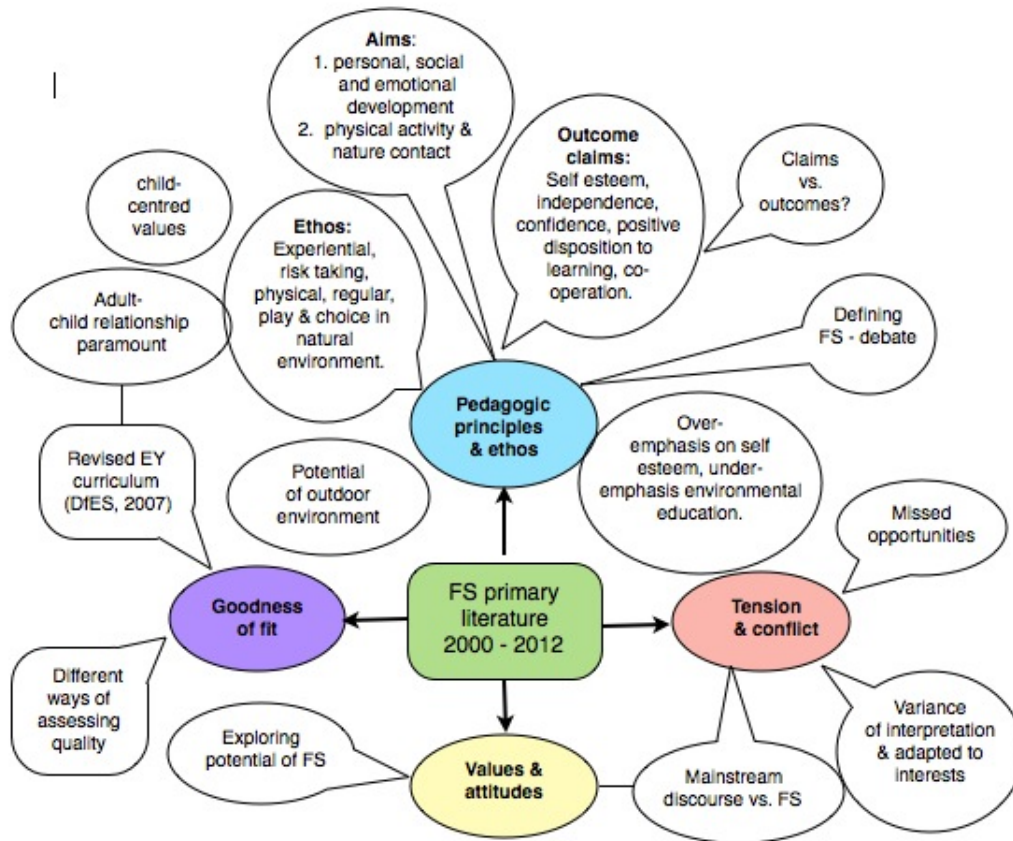
Table 2: Primary FS literature themes

Primary literature (grouped by study)	Pedagogy & ethos	Fitness for purpose	Tension & conflict	Values & attitudes
Ridgers, Knowles & Sayer (2012)				
Roe & Aspinall (2011a; 2011b)				
Waite (2011a; 2010)				
Knight (2011c)				
O'Brien (2009) O'Brien & Murray (2007)				
Waters & Begley (2007)				
Maynard (2007b; 2007c)				
Maynard & Waters (2007)				
Davis, Rea and Waite (2006)				
Massey (2005b)				

An overview of FS literature

Up to 2012, 10 groups of empirical studies have been published in 14 peer-reviewed academic journal articles. 16 researchers have contributed to high quality empirical evidence on FS, of which 2 were PhD students. The scarcity of empirical research on FS provides one rationale for the present research. The related features in the 4 themes are clarified in view of their relation to the present research (see Figure 1). *Pedagogy and ethos* concerns FS principles, aims and ethos, influencing the adult practitioner in training and practice, for example in how adult-child interaction is approached. *Fitness for purpose* refers to the ways in which FS fits the purposes of the participant or the setting. These two themes are discussed in this chapter, alongside the inherent presence of *tension and conflict*. There was some inherent overlap between themes, especially regarding tensions, for example, in relating pedagogical principles to practice (Davis, Rea and Waite, 2006). Therefore, tensions are discussed throughout the chapter. Chapter 3 includes further detailed discussion on *values and attitudes*. Within the themes, I drew out aspects of practitioner experiences in FS, yet only three papers focus on the adult specifically (Knight, 2011c; Maynard, 2007b; Maynard and Waters, 2007). I found significant gaps in the literature on adult perspectives, training and the pedagogic role of the environment. The present research redresses this balance through a focus on situated adult experience.

Figure 1: Relational features map of primary FS literature



Pedagogy and ethos

In order to understand practice, an investigation of pedagogical principles is important (Dillon *et al.*, 2005). Waite and Davis (2007) note that more research is needed about pedagogy adopted outdoors when transferred from the classroom. Very little research has explored what FS practitioners regard as the important principles underpinning their practice (Waite *et al.*, 2006b). A practitioner questionnaire conducted by Waite *et al.* (2006b) received a third of responses on responsiveness to individual needs and changes over time, such as an ‘awareness of different learning styles’, ‘small, achievable chunks’ and an ‘extended period of time’ (p. 14). Other linked aims were play and imagination, motor skills, fun, the

whole child, environmental care and a sense of agency or empowerment. The research undertaken by Waite *et al.* (2006b) had a small response rate, therefore cannot be seen to be representative of FS practitioner views nationally. However, as explored in this chapter, these pedagogical principles are common themes throughout the FS literature. The early FS literature focused on evaluation and defining the aims, ethos and outcome claims of FS. The aims of FS were: personal, social and emotional development, focused on increasing self-esteem and positive learning dispositions, with secondary ranked aims of physical activity and contact with nature (Maynard, 2007c; O'Brien and Murray, 2007; O'Brien and Murray, 2006; Waite *et al.*, 2006b). Outcome claims included positive learning dispositions, strengthened self-esteem and enriched early years practice (O'Brien, 2009). The present research does not focus on outcome claims of FS. Where applicable to adult experiences, the research enquires into adult interpretation of FS pedagogy, aims and ethos. The following sections look at the variance in understanding and application of pedagogical principles found in FS; definition, constructivism, affective and experiential learning, play, relationship with the natural world, observation and assessment, and reflective practice and constructs.

Impact of varied definition upon pedagogic principles

Within the literature, many attempts to define the FS ethos have been made and it is not the aim of this review to compare them. The variance in defining FS affects the setting perception of FS pedagogy and adult role, and the treatment of further empirical evidence (Knight, 2011c). Before the launch of the new Forest School Association (FSA), a national practitioner consultation was conducted on the key aims and principles in 2011. This led to the revised FS principles (FS IOL SIG,

2012), marking a turning point in establishing a collective baseline for practice (see Table 3 and Appendix 3). There are many issues surrounding the governance of FS nationally, which are beyond the scope of this study (Cree and McCree, 2013).

Knight (2011c) began the process of researching a co-constructed definition of FS, to clarify the conditions required, make the implicit features explicit and stimulate debate within the FS community. Given that FS is becoming a popular educational intervention, Knight hopes for consensus within the FS Trainers Network as ‘the problem of defining FS is real’ (2011c, p. 592). Her concern is that without a clear definition of a FS intervention, it is hard to measure and assess it.

Table 3: FS definition and principles

Recognised definition (FS IOL SIG, 2012)
<p>'FS is an inspirational process, that offers all learners regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands-on learning experiences in a local woodland or natural environment with trees. FS is a specialised approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland learning.'</p>
Recognised principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012)
<p>1. Forest School is a long term process with frequent and regular sessions in a local natural space, not a one-off visit. Planning, adaption, observations and reviewing are integral elements.</p>
<p>2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.</p>
<p>3. Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners</p>
<p>4. Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and themselves.</p>
<p>5. Forest School is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners who continuously develop their professional practice.</p>
<p>6. Forest School uses a range of learner centred processes to create a community for development and learning.</p>

FS is stated as a learner-centred process (FS IOL SIG, 2012), not a programme of planned adult-led activity. The aims of FS have closer parallels with an ecotherapeutic process and facilitating child-centred play than with traditional lesson planning (Cree and McCree, 2013). The aim of FS is for the adult-led structure to fade over time, as learners gain confidence and engage in more exploratory play, moving from indirect to direct experience of nature (Davis *et al.*, 2006; Massey, 2005b). Yet due to the variance in how it is perceived, FS in practice may remain predominantly adult-led or adult-initiated (Cree and McCree, 2013). Within the framework of sustained, shared thinking in co-constructed learning (Siraj-Blatchford and Sylva, 2004), both learner and adult initiation are part of the relationship. Adult-initiation within this framework requires a skill of reciprocity in responding to the learner's emergent needs, and FS practitioners need a sufficient understanding of constructivist pedagogy to enable a learner-centred environment.

The constructivist pedagogue

Leather (2012) argues that a theoretical and philosophical base for FS needs better articulating and is largely absent from FS literature. FS can be theoretically located in a social constructivist approach to learning (Leather, 2012; Waite, 2011a; O'Brien, 2009; Maynard, 2007b; Kahn, 1999). Vygotsky's social learning theory (1978) is particularly appropriate (Leather, 2012), due to the learning being 'play-based and, as far as possible, child-initiated and child-led' (Knight, 2009, p. 17). Constructivism concerns the meanings constructed by people 'taking part in context-specific and socially situated activity through social interaction' (Schwandt, 1994, p. 338). Kahn (1999) suggests that children are active agents, constructing understandings through interaction with the physical and social world.

Constructivism focuses upon the individual's unique experience; how we learn and the thinking process. Dewey's concept of the transaction of learning, leading to the meaning making of an experience (Dewey, 1998) has influenced constructivist thought. Social constructivism differs from Piaget's cognitive constructionism, in that knowledge is socially constructed, not just determined by the cognitive needs of the learners. Further, learning is embodied and symbolically created, in particular through language, in an active process of developing one's own meaning (Vygotsky, 1978). The adult role is to facilitate and organise activities that help learners to discover their own learning, which the FS principles reiterate (FS IOL SIG, 2012). O'Brien (2009) notes that this is a move away from traditional teaching, focusing on learning by doing to promote child reasoning. The teacher poses questions whilst the children are engaged in activity, experimenting, problem-solving and meaning-making, as a mediated process (Waite, 2011a). The teacher and learner are co-constructors of meaning and knowledge, and the teacher-pupil relationship is based on guidance rather than instruction. Assessment can be seen as an active process, of uncovering and acknowledging shared understanding (Adams, 2006), and relates to the potential of the adult to discover and apply new perspectives on the learner (O'Brien, 2009).

Within the literature on FS, the National Curriculum and accompanying dominant pedagogy is described as teacher-led with prescribed activities and directive methods (Waite, 2011a; 2011b; Cree, 2009; Maynard and Waters, 2007). The National Curriculum is criticised for removing the individual practitioner's autonomy and the specificities of each context and the individual children, implying a construction of knowledge as transmissible rather than co-constructed.

This is similar to the ‘banking’ concept posed by Freire (1970), who framed the mainstream model of education as oppressive, where the student is viewed as an empty account for the teacher to deposit knowledge, and the overall pedagogy seen as attempting to control thinking and action, limiting the creative power of both teacher and student. Waite states that the dominant teaching method, exemplified by the Primary Literacy Strategy (Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (1998), ‘oversimplifies complex relationships where learning is constructed’. She refers to Vygotskian principles that promote learning by ‘interactions through class discussion, collaborative working, and activities that are relevant and contingent to the learners’ prior knowledge and experience’ (Waite, 2011a, p. 66).

Pedagogy as experience: the role of experiential learning

Alongside social constructivism, FS has explicit philosophical roots in experiential and progressive adult environmental education (Walter, 2009), strongly influenced by Dewey (1959) and, in outdoors pedagogy, by theorists and practitioners such as Hahn, the founder of the Outward Bound movement (Cree and McCree, 2012; Warren, 2005). A key feature of FS training is that theory is interwoven with practical skills and experience, combining woodland skills with experiential exploration and pedagogical study. The tradition of experiential learning within outdoor education regards fusing practical and academic aspects as best practice (Malone, 2008), so theory can be matched with application. Malone’s literature review (2008) built a strong case to support the claim that ‘experiential learning outside the classroom is essential for developing the ‘whole young person’ (p. 7). Malone defines experiential learning as ‘a process that develops knowledge, skills

and attitudes based on consciously thinking about an experience' (p. 8), crucially combining reflection and feedback. This definition emphasises the personal experience of emotion as well as knowledge and skill. New insights from neurobiology highlight the significant role of affect in learning, showing how thinking and emotional processing are deeply integrated within the brain (Rose, Gilbert and Smith, 2012; Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007). Rational decision-making and reasoning are 'subsumed within the processes of emotion' (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007, p. 3). Therefore, all learning is multi-sensory, mediated through our emotional engagement with the physical and social world. Rose *et al.* (2012) view the generation of emotional intelligence as of equal if not greater significance than academic intelligence. Further, engaging in learning through enjoyment is in some ways a co-constructivist approach (Vygotsky, 1962), drawing on shared meaning-making. The practitioner's role becomes more facilitative by providing creative stimulus for learning, perceived as the interaction of a situated individual within a community of learners (Lave and Wenger, 1991). For experiential education to succeed therefore, educators need to engage the affective dimensions of learners' minds. There is a need for inbuilt evaluation that demonstrates outcomes in shifts in the learner's way of 'thinking, doing, experiencing, feeling, interacting or responding' (Malone, 2008, p. 8). Considering FS trainees, in what way does experiential learning outdoors prompt such shifts? The use of real life problems and experiences can involve problem solving and critical skills, which can be extended again to considering the different role of an outdoor pedagogue. Experiencing the woodland at the training centre may prompt an emotional shift in relationship with the natural world. However, the need for adequate reflection and feedback is emphasised (Malone, 2008). An experiential

approach such as this relies upon the skill and perspective of the trainer.

Further, it is the trainer's responsibility to facilitate trainees to consider their relationship to the natural world, if it is an explicit part of the training.

Pedagogical theory and the complexities of play-based learning

If the aim of FS training is to model and reflect the FS process, according to the FS principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012), it will contain learner-centred, outdoor, experiential and practical content with space for reflective, co-constructed learning. Pedagogical theory is utilised in FS training and, depending upon the training provider, can give a thorough summary of key theorists. This part of the curriculum is not stated in detail within the OCNWMR QCF guidance (2013) or assessment criteria (FSTC, 2009). Contemporary themes in pedagogy such as valuing outdoor play, neural development, ecological perspectives on child development, dialogics, emotional intelligence and child-centred learning are embraced by some trainers (FSTC, 2009). Play is 'recognised as vital to learning and development at FS' (FS Principle 6b, FS IOL SIG, 2012) so training to facilitate play is equally vital. Leather (2012) sees child-centred and play-based activity as the unique contribution FS makes to the wider field of outdoor education. FS pedagogy advocates participants directing and initiating play, within a considered process with a significant adult (Knight, 2009). However, play, notwithstanding play-based learning, is problematic in theory and practice (Hughes, 2012; Wood and Attfield, 2005; Sutton-Smith, 1997). Wood (2007) examined the tension between the rhetoric and reality of play-based learning, attributing the problem in part to the preferencing of free play, free choice and ownership within child-initiated play. FS experiences contain both free and guided play (Maynard, 2007c). Evidence suggests that young children learn best in

a supportive environment that encourages extended child-initiated play (Rose and Rogers, 2012a; Wood and Attfield, 2005). Bruce (1997) described adults facilitating play as ‘sensitive co-ordinators’ (p. 48), who vary their degree of support and intervention. Children need time to think for planning and reflection (Epstein, 2003), and the adult needs to leave time for this process. Moyles, Hargreaves and Merry (2003) demonstrated that up to 80% of the talk in classrooms is teacher talk, with a dominance of statements, not questions. This seems to be the opposite of a sensitive co-ordinator, and teachers may seek further training to gain skills and experiment with play-based learning. Examining the complex role of the adult facilitating play is beyond the scope of the present research, yet it bears future consideration in how play, and related pedagogical principles, are understood by FS training providers and practitioners. Are all FS trainers equipped with a deep enough understanding of the complexities of play? If learning is to be co-constructed, how is this understood and taught on the training course? At present, FS training courses have not been compared within research. With no quality assurance for training in place, informed training on play and co-constructed learning cannot be guaranteed. This can contribute to a diversity in trainees’ understandings of FS pedagogic principles.

Ridgers, Knowles and Sayer (2012) researched how play was encouraged in an example of FS practice. The child-centred study examined ‘children’s perceptions, knowledge and experiences of play in the natural environment’ (p. 49). FS had a positive influence on the children’s natural play and knowledge of the natural world, and decreased the children’s perception of weather as a barrier to play. However, other barriers stayed the same, such as the impact of parental restriction,

adult supervision and perceived fears about play at home. The authors recommended inviting parents to take part in FS to facilitate ‘more natural play in children’s lives’ (p. 60), noting that the impact on family was unknown and worthy of future research. Given the intention that FS has an impact on the home lives of children (Ridgers *et al.*, 2012; FS IOL SIG, 2012), an insight drawn from this study is the active involvement of adults to meet FS pedagogic aims. Spatial processes were also significant in children’s understandings, and the study is one of the few within the FS literature to attend to them (Kraftl, 2013).

Ridgers *et al.* (2012) strove to present a rich picture of children’s views, building on O’Brien and Murray’s (2007, p. 254) recommendation that FS evaluation needs to include ‘the voice of children and their experiences’ to a much greater extent. It is interesting that a study presenting children’s experiences recommended a focus upon adult subjectivity and locates adult barriers to play. Fears, such as handling insects, can impact on children’s attitudes, behaviours and emotions in natural play (Bixler, Floyd and Hammut, 2002; Kellert, 2002) and Ridgers *et al.* (2012) found positive outcomes in the children facing fears through FS. Future research that measures similar factors in adults would be valuable, given that children are not alone in demonstrating an aversion to nature or risk. The present research in part investigates the importance of attitudes towards nature and play in the FS adult role.

Implicit environmental education

Beyond practical woodland and naturalist skills, in FS, environmental education is enacted through positive experiences of natural environments, affecting caring attitudes and environmental knowledge (Chawla, 1988). Due to restricted access to nature for children, the responsibility now falls upon schools to provide these experiences (Malone and Tranter, 2003). Davis (1998) notes that time in natural environments may not be enough and we should include education 'in', 'about' and 'for' the environment. There is overall very little in the literature that investigates the potential of environmental education in FS, rather there is a predominant focus on personal development (Maynard, 2007b). It is perceived as not within most pedagogues remit to give voice to environmental impact within their role, even within the literature on FS practitioners' views (Davis *et al*, 2006). Maynard (2007a, 2007b) has gone some way towards stating this dichotomy, that environmental education is a secondary and less explored aim in FS, and a caring disposition towards the environment is left to naturally occur. She observed 'some FS projects may overlook important opportunities for environment education' which is 'under emphasised' (Maynard, 2007b, p. 328). In her study (2007b) the participant FS practitioners made it clear that including environmental education derived from their own interest, rather than FS philosophy. Sterling (2010) wrote that regarding learning for resilience & sustainability, there are tensions between an instrumentalist view and an intrinsic value view of environmental and sustainability education. The former seeing such education as a means to individual and social change, the latter upholding the primacy of the autonomous learner who, secondarily may or may not take action towards sustainability. Sterling argues for an integration of both intrinsic and instrumental views. Some research has been

done on adults in environmental education and the links to social justice methodology (Warren, 2005). Proudman (1995) notes that experiential education tends to engage the learner emotionally. The time in the training to form a personal and critical relationship with environmental values (Orr, 1994) encourages the potential of social change through education.

Without explicit time within the FS training programme, to consider the potential of environmental education within FS, its value can be missed altogether. Learning about, and reflecting on, a nature-based experiential process can be missed out from the pedagogical concepts taught. Within the FS principles is an assumption that the participant's relationship with the natural world is something that grows naturally over time, within a sustained FS programme (FS IOL SIG, 2012). However, the training contact time is short, so the chance for the trainees to experience a similar journey is not possible. It is therefore surprising that experiential environmental education is not an explicit part of the agreed FS training curriculum (Cree and McCree, 2013). If FS, environmental education and outdoor pedagogy are to further contribute to statutory curricula and higher education, this missed opportunity (Maynard, 2000b) is important to address. FS training offers an opportunity to personally investigate a relationship with the natural world.

There is an inherent risk in saying 'it is the philosophy that is the essential element of FS, not the site'. ('Mythbusting' page, FSA website, 2013) in that FS philosophy may lose its symbiotic relationship with the site. In an experiential outdoor pedagogy, an assumption could be that the site is of a deeper value and an inherent part of the philosophy. The FSA webpage (2013) states pragmatically that FS can

happen in a variety of outdoor locations, although woodlands represent the ideal because ‘the diversity and abundance of natural resources make it easy to facilitate learner-led discovery’. The question remains the discovery of what? Discovery is used here as an open and unqualified term, perhaps based in the tenets of discovery education, which relate to FS (Leather, 2012). Discovery of the self, of a learning disposition, of a relationship with the natural world, of all of these things and perhaps more? Leaving the object of discovery open to interpretation, means that the FS site may be, in the eyes of the adults present, only a backdrop for social discovery rather than something to engage with in itself (Nerland, 2007). FS is practised in various locations, yet greater experience of biodiversity and natural affordances (Kyttä, 2004; Gibson, 1979) is lost in less wild sites. In contrast, activities need not be related to the site. Without adult-initiated activity to support, the learners may not naturally engage deeply with the site. There is a lack of explicit mechanism to ensure that the site is an active agent in the FS experience. The assumption is that practical skills in woodland management will heighten this awareness, yet it is not always effective in practice (McCree, 2012c, private correspondence). Training holds an implicit opportunity for trainees to deepen their relationship with the natural world, firstly through close examination of site features, the ecosystems and species present. Secondly, time spent in a woodland environment has an affective dimension. One training provider states how trainees look forward to this aspect, referring to it as their ‘therapy’ (McCree, 2012c, private correspondence). However, this aspect is, like environmental education, an implicit assumption in the training, and, depending on the training provider, the focus varies. Trainees experience the FS process; reflective discourse within the training can help an awareness of relating to wider nature to be an explicit consideration.

Observation and assessment

Observation and evaluation is taught to be embedded into session planning. Based on the assessment framework that was developed in their early FS national research, Murray and O'Brien (2005) recommended further self-appraisal as a tool. In the study, the stakeholders reported that it was a useful way to learn from each other, including the problems of running and evaluating FS. (p. 77). Being involved in the action research process of the research, the practitioners gained a sense of ownership by following their own propositions and lines of enquiry investigating into the impacts of FS on the children. Building in evaluation was previously seen as 'the role of the outsider' (p. 78). The self-appraisal methodology was a useful addition to their work and 'hitherto unexplored' (p. 78). They were able to review and improve their practice and highlight the changes in the children. The study recommended self-appraisal as a 'regular part of the delivery and management mechanisms' (p. 78). Importantly it asserted that FS itself as a formative evaluation tool for both teachers and practitioners to assess and better understand the children in their care. The indicators in FS evaluation may supply 'new perspectives' that classroom or academic performance indicators can miss (Knight, 2009; O'Brien, 2009) Further discussion on assessment pressures is presented in Chapter 3.

Reflective practice and constructs

Waite *et al.* (2006b) make the point that the FS process can be used on the practitioners themselves. Much of the reflection time may happen outside. Reflective practice (Schön, 1983) is of value within a team setting but can become a challenge to experienced practitioners who may have grown used to working in a certain way, requiring an ongoing positive learning disposition and a level of

critical reflexivity (Paige-Smith and Craft, 2011; Mezirow, 1990), or ‘technologies of the self’ (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999). For example, remembering to self-assess whether one has the required sensitive attention to adult-child dialogue, the use of open questions and listening skills and an awareness of jointly constructed meaning (DfES, 2007; Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2007). Through critically engaging with dominant discourses, space can be created to produce alternative discourse, boundaries and constructions. Reflective practice, as a deconstructive tool, is within the culture of FS, but yet its limitations are similar to those found in the mainstream, such as time, support, skills development, and the key factor of motivation. Finally, as we live in an age of rapid change, our experiences of social worlds are constantly shifting, in particular regarding our constructs of nature, technology, childhood, adulthood, family and other social structures. Social factors are quickly affected due to shifts in the global economic and environmental climate, having a knock-on effect on issues within practice. Yelland and Kilderry (2005) suggest a move from attachment to accepted wisdom on what is right, or ‘good practice’ towards an inquisitive, open perspective where we might enquire ‘in what ways can we create effective learning environments?’ (p.7). This is especially pertinent when reflecting upon outdoor practice and new approaches. Shared reflection allows the airing of tensions and thoughts to remove the problem from the personal and into a collective endeavour.

So far, within this chapter I have reviewed pedagogy and ethos on FS, from academic and training literature. I have examined definition, constructivism, experiential learning, play, environmental education, observation and assessment, and finally reflective practice and constructs. The second section of this chapter concerns the theme of fitness for purpose.

Fitness for purpose

The term *fitness for purpose* derives from industry, assessing a product's quality against its stated purpose (Harvey, 2013). The purpose is seen as the customer's needs (i.e in FS, either the learner or the setting) (Harvey and Green, 1993). In essence, *fitness for purpose* is the practitioner's ability to fulfill the learner's or setting's needs through the FS aims and ethos. The term is used in quality evaluation within higher education, although it is debatable whether fitness for purpose is assessed against the setting's purpose specifications, or conformity to wider social norms or purposes (Vlăsceanu, Grünberg and Pârlea, 2007, p. 71). The term raises the questions of who judges fitness and whose purpose is being met? As Ball (1985, p. 96) asked, 'What the hell is quality?' Dahlberg and Moss (2005) point out quality is not a neutral term. In education, the learner and the setting may have differing priorities and definitions of purpose and quality. Campbell and Rozsnyai (2002, p. 20) state that the term can imply that 'anything goes' if a purpose is formulated for it, such as justifying learning outcomes. The term further ignores a possible divergence of views between the practitioner and the learner as regards both fitness and purpose. A FS practitioner could be seen to uphold the aims and ethos of FS as their purpose (although this raises further issues of the voluntary nature of quality within FS), which may contrast to the setting's expectations.

Fitness *of* purpose can help clarify whether a purpose is deemed valid to aim for.

Negotiations about the purposes of FS are necessary if quality is assessed as meeting the setting's requirements. Taking these issues into account, the term is used in the review to demonstrate where congruence is found between FS purposes, as in the FS principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012) and as embodied by the practitioner, and the setting's purposes for FS practice.

FS has fitness for purpose within early years Foundation Stage curriculum guidance (DfES, 2007), which recommends a balance of indoors and outdoors, of adult led and child initiated practice, and of play-based learning and free play choices (Knight, 2009). The FS approach is aligned with traditional ideas of best practice in early years education, such as a focus on 'hands on' experiential learning, echoing Froebel and other early pioneers (Knight, 2009; Maynard, 2007c). Within both approaches, the young child is seen as a co-constructor of knowledge, identity and culture, an ethos highlighted by Dahlberg *et al.* (1999). FS reworks these ideals within current cultural and global concerns, e.g. sedentary lifestyles and over-managed play (Maynard, 2007c). Continuing repeatable sessions are advised within the FS principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012) to embed and enhance progression and a sense of achievement. Yet within primary school, when children move into Key Stage 1, the National Curriculum has a different focus and set of priorities. FS does not fit so easily within the aims of schools, which have seen a diminishing emphasis on outdoor play and learning (Waite, 2010; Maynard, 2007c).

There are isolated studies within the literature which assess FS's fitness for purpose against health and wellbeing aims as well as education. Roe and Aspinall (2011a;

2011b) conducted studies on children (aged 10-12) with ‘poor behaviour’ (defined as having ADHD, at risk from exclusion or withdrawn behaviour) and extreme mental trauma, including a comparative study (2011a) with children with ‘good behaviour’. They demonstrated the positive outcomes of a forest setting intervention on mood, affective and cognitive domains, compared to school settings. The effect on subjects with poor behaviour was greater than those with good behaviour. Further, FS was seen to be providing for the children’s basic needs for security, of food, warmth and shelter (Maslow, 1954), that may not have been met sufficiently in their own lives. This has relevant implications, given that 9% of 10-18 year olds are seen to have a behavioural problem (Foresight, 2008). Anger control can be a challenge for staff working with children with poor behaviour or emotional trauma, and FS interventions may help children to be more receptive to learning experiences. Importantly, Borradaile (2006) cautions against FS as a tool for behavioural management and segregation within mainstream school, as children may feel excluded. Yet where segregation has already happened, within special schools and programmes for excluded young people, FS is a popular approach, demonstrating strong fitness for purpose within alternative and affective education (Kraftl, 2013; Cree, 2011; Knight, 2011a). Roe and Aspinall’s research (2011a; 2011b) highlights the rich potential of FS when the drive for learner achievement is relaxed and the restorative relationship with the setting is explicit. It could be argued, from a position of affective learning (Rose *et al.*, 2012; Waite, 2011a), that the learning potential is deepened by taking a restorative route into the FS process.

The woodland setting

In Roe and Aspinall's research, the settings chosen are established forest settings, whereas not all FS takes place in an established forest. Roe and Aspinall's focus is on the effect of trees and woodland upon wellbeing. The researchers draw on Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989) and studies supporting a link between nature and psychological restoration in children (Kuo and Faber Taylor, 2004; Martensson *et al.*, 2009). Given the variance in FS sites, no certainty can be drawn from the research that FS interventions will have a positive outcome for the participants. FS pedagogy is not discussed apart from some consideration of the activities used; the focus is on the impact of the setting, testing whether nature is an important resource. Here the goodness of fit of the intervention is reliant upon the quality and affordances of the site (Kytta, 2004; Gibson, 1979). The researchers note the problem in separating out the effects of programme activities, staff and setting. The effect on the adults involved is largely omitted from their studies, beyond gaining new perspectives and further trust with the children, through shared play and increased disclosure. Arguably the same research could be undertaken with the staff present, to test the outcomes on their mood, cognitive and affective domains, professional and personal development. Kuo and Sullivan (2001) show the restorative potential for adults in contact with nature. Ward Thompson, Travlou and Roe (2006) demonstrate how outdoor adventure can promote a feeling of competence and sense of purpose in adults. Future research on natural environment affect on adults would be valuable, to support the argument for staff, often working in stressful environments, to participate in FS. Given the need for increased teacher competence outdoors (Dillon and Dickie, 2012; Rickinson *et al.*, 2012), research focus on adult participation is worthwhile in promoting professional development.

The qualitative difference between an experience in an established, mature woodland and the back of a playground with one or two young trees, highlights the potential for interpretation of a 'natural environment with trees' (in the definition of FS). The only research that compares FS site provision notes that the 'woodland environment was better able to support the development of positive risk taking behaviours', in part due to the increased affordances compared to the school site (Waters and Begley, 2007, p. 365). Another report questioned whether a restricted wooded area affected the FS ethos (Cook, Velmans and Haughton; 2012). Literature on outdoor pedagogy explores the significance of the affective impact of the quality of the natural environment. Wells and Lekies' (2006) studies found that nature activities such as planting seeds and picking flowers have a positive and significant effect on environmental attitudes in children, but only a marginal effect on pro-environmental behaviours. In their study, a greater influence came from spending time in 'wild' nature, such as playing in the woods. People, who as children participated in 'wild' nature activities, were more likely to have pro-environmental behaviour in adult life (Wells and Lekies, 2006). Access to outdoor space is not enough to encourage caring attitudes in children (Malone and Tranter, 2003). Maynard (2007a, p. 257) states 'the use and management of the outdoor space by adults is as important as access itself'. Together, the literature presents a strong argument for valuing the long-term process of FS, seeking wilder sites and resisting assessment practices that demand convenience as well as immediate and measurable achievement. Considering the importance of the setting to FS, the impact of visiting established woodland is worth asserting, for the increased affordances of physical challenge, wonder and connection with nature (Waters and Begley, 2007; Davis *et al.*, 2006; Murray, 2004; Fjørtoft and Sageie, 2000; Carson, 1956).

Setting aims and values towards outdoor space and pedagogy

As well as the site, the level of an FS intervention's fitness for purpose depends upon the given aims, values and interests of a setting. For example, FS may meet a setting's need for outdoor provision, but a child-initiated approach may not meet the need for a focus on specific curricula achievements. If a reason for communicating the inherent values in FS is to more closely align them with those in the setting, the question remains whether the stated outcomes of FS will satisfy the needs of the setting, or require those to be challenged and transformed.

Following FS principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012) this latter requirement implicates the FS practitioner in a wider political and socio-cultural project, that of transforming the aims and values of the setting. In Waite *et al.*'s (2006a) survey on the development of outdoor learning in early years settings ($n = 259$), respondents identified adult attitudes as a barrier ($n = 101$) as compared to funding ($n = 131$), the nature of the space available ($n = 71$), external factors such as safety, climate, etc ($n = 54$). An evaluative study found that for some early years practitioners, provision of outdoor learning may simply be seen as a removal of barriers to free flow between indoors and outdoors but not as a qualitatively different form of learning (Davis *et al.*, 2006). Another study observed that teachers adopted the same pattern of working outdoors as inside, needed convincing of the benefits of outdoor pedagogy and were resistant to leave the comfort of the classroom (Maynard and Waters, 2007). Changes to early years curricula in England (DfES, 2007) and Wales (WAG, 2007) has improved attitudes in practice, in part due to strong support for FS (Knight, 2009). However, similar attitudinal barriers and competence gaps were found in recent research on teacher insights (Dillon and Dickie, 2012; Rickinson *et al.*, 2012), highlighting the need for increased outdoor

learning competence, with the inherent values and principles.

With positive intention, schools establishing FS sites in their own grounds often make extensive improvements, such as utilising old conservation areas, planting, establishing a base camp and fire pit (Swarbrick, Eastwood and Tutton, 2004), thus removing transport costs or landowner negotiations. School playgrounds have limitations in that they can be highly managed and essentially risk-free spaces (Maynard, 2007c; Waters and Begley, 2007), even though different grounds can have varying degrees of wildness, variance of terrain and biodiversity. Waters and Begley (2007) note that the school ground site may be perceived differently by the children, as still part of the rule-bound structure of the school. School grounds are still within the setting's enclosure of disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977). Therefore a respect for alterity in a different approach to pedagogy is more challenging to achieve.

The context of FS training

The present research questions the impact of FS training upon the practitioner. Does it have fitness for purpose given the requirements of settings? The OCN Level 3 training course comprises of 3 modules: practical skills and woodland management, learning and development and establishment and delivery of a FS programme (FSTC, 2009). The course aims to teach skills outdoors alongside reflection and discussion of experiences, related to theoretical knowledge. Practical skills are assessed and trainees complete a portfolio, including a handbook with policies, woodland management plan, ecological impact assessment and a communication strategy. The potential to support the further needs of trainees is limited within the training structure (Cree and McCree, 2013). Waite *et al.* (2006b) stated that some

trainers pointed to a need for further CPD courses or ongoing mentoring to help establish confidence in newly qualified FS practitioners. In terms of training aims for practitioners, Waite *et al.* (2006b) indicated that some undertake FS training simply in order to broaden their knowledge of outdoor learning, as few other options are available at a vocational level. It might be that FS training is not the most appropriate option for a broad outdoor training.

The practical skills and woodland management module differs almost entirely to other pedagogical training for outdoor play and learning, due to the training in practical skills in both tool use and woodland skills and management (Cree and McCree, 2013). Practical skills, such as firelighting, can be found in some outdoor playwork training and supplementary outdoor learning courses. The depth and focus on practical ecological skills and experiential activity in woodlands during the training course provides one of the distinct differences between FS and other comparable training. Such skills and knowledge are essential for the FS practitioner in order to make woodland ecosystems available as a learning resource to participants. Trainees learn how to do site conservation and maintenance, becoming empowered to take hands-on pro- environmental action (Walter, 2009). Tool use varies between providers and some training may be restricted to a couple of tools only (McCree, 2013, private correspondence). Safety and tool use may be less familiar to the learner than pedagogy and child development or experiential, affective approaches to learning, for example. Therefore, FS training addresses a barrier in statutory ITT and EYPS curricula, providing a thorough grounding in experiential, practical skills and knowledge for outdoor pedagogy (Cree and McCree, 2013). It is beyond the expectation of lecturers with a specialism in EYFS

or National Curriculum objectives to have the practical skills, site or resources to train in FS, unless they are a FS practitioner, and it is not part of the statutory curriculum for learners. 'Enabling environments' in the EYFS curriculum, taught on early years professional status degree courses, for example, means a variety of environments, both indoor and outdoor and a focus on the pedagogical relationship (DfES, 2007). Environmental knowledge about species and living systems is not taught within ITT and EYPS curricular, beyond a science specialism, so a specific relationship with the natural world is not well addressed through dominant and statutory means of training. A growing number of universities are now choosing to provide experiential modules in FS and related outdoor play and learning (Lester, 2006; Podmore and Doyle, 2005). FS training therefore provides for the additional practical requirements of settings wishing to include outdoor pedagogy.

Socio-economic influences upon FS training provision quality

Diverse FS training provision exists in the UK, yet there is no comparative research to consider the implications of different approaches to training. Variances in training exist without national standards. The new FSA is considering how training may be regulated and quality assured, yet at present, besides the basic training curricula and the new Qualifications and Curriculum Framework guidance, there is no obligation to train using a particular approach ('How to choose a FS trainer' FSA webpage, FSA, 2013; OCNWMR, 2013). A voluntary Quality Improvement Framework (QuiF) was developed for practitioners (Forest Education Initiative, 2009), yet no similar evaluation or assessment exists for FS trainers, unless they voluntarily elect to adapt and use the QuiF or another method. This raises issues, which, with time, the FSA may be able to address. Within reason, a trainer can re-invent FS to suit

their own approach and skills base. Another issue is that rigorous criteria for becoming a trainer are not applied at present and it is not obligatory to join the UK FS Trainers Network. The onus rests on the individual buying the training, to research and ensure they have an adequate trainer. The impact of quality assurance is worrying, as it is not the best quality organisation that dominates a commercial market sector, but the most aggressive and competitive (Harvey, 2005). In addition to the diversity found in FS training, there is a diversity of backgrounds found in the practitioners. Most come from within the children's workforce (Knight, 2011c; Waite et al. 2006b). A level of experience in working with children and young people is necessary to undertake the Level 3 practitioner training. Further, ideological or practical differences in the training cannot be broached successfully within the free market without active participation by providers (Cree and McCree, 2013). Such differences in training may have a strong impact upon how FS is delivered, accounting in some way for the variance found in FS provision. FS training contributes significantly to the trainee's construction of the adult role, developing key skills, embedding a certain ethos and approach to practice. Different trainings have different emphases and methods, e.g on modelling child-centred or learner-centred processes, the balance of facilitating process versus activity, the amount of tool use, placement assessment, reflective practice such as exploring one's own relationship with the natural world etc (McCree, 2012a, private correspondence).

Summary

Within this chapter, I discussed how the adult experience and role in FS is shaped by ethos and training, through examining training information and guidance, and a

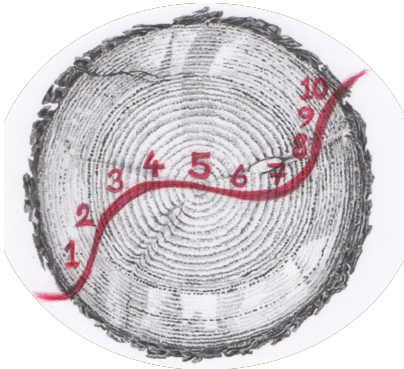
review of the literature on FS. Active pedagogical principles, fitness for purpose, tensions and concerns were identified and discussed, relating to the present research question on training impact. I explored some of the variance in understanding and applying pedagogical principles found in FS; definition, constructivism, affective and experiential learning, play, relationship with the natural world, observation and assessment, reflective practice and constructs. The present research contributes new knowledge towards a significant literature gap on the adult experience in FS, particularly as subjective interpretation is found to be active in FS pedagogy, ethos and aims.

The following chapter takes another approach to reviewing the literature, focusing in on the subsequent questions in the present research by developing the idea of situated subjectivities in relation to FS practitioner experience.

CHAPTER 3:

SITUATED SUBJECTIVITIES

IN PRACTITIONER EXPERIENCE



After their training course, the practitioners develop FS in settings in order to complete their qualification.

My goal in this chapter is to develop the idea of situated subjectivities in relation to FS practitioner experience. What are the specifics of subjectivity in

the location of a practitioner's everyday experience? How do multiple subjectivities affect their role? How, for example, do cultural values, understandings, professional and governing structures influence their practice? I review literature from a number of disciplines to illuminate the thinking that has led to my approach. I then illustrate the significance of situating the FS practitioner role and identity formation in multiple subjectivities, socio-cultural contexts and team relations. This chapter provides a rationale for how practitioners and others might construct their role and experience in FS and the potential impact of those constructions.

The chapter is in four main sections. The first section reviews some theoretical perspectives from human geography on situating the subject, considering spatiality, non-representational theory and affect. From this, I consider how the situated subject can best be represented within the present research. The second section moves through some different views on subject and identity formation, concerning nature-society relations in socio-cultural constructs and intersubjective meaning-making.

The literature I draw on here is from ecopsychology, social constructionism and educational research. The third section looks at the subjectivities of role perception within the social setting of a team. I introduce Goffman's interactionist theories on how role perception and performance is situated and contributes to the idea of a continuous self. Then I consider the different perceptions of the FS practitioner role. The fourth section develops the influence of socialisation and structure in subject formation and role. I compare Goffman's analysis with Foucault's post-structural perspective on the power of social norm. Finally, I conclude by considering some of the implications of the situated subjectivities explored, within the development of the FS practitioner role.

Omissions and limitations

Before entering the main body of the chapter, it is worth stating the obvious, that there is much more that can be said on the subject of the subject and the co-production of situated subjectivities. Due to the necessary limits of space, I focus on specific aspects pertaining to the FS practitioners' experiences, chosen by my own subjective mechanisms with the present research in mind. I have omitted other positions and bodies of literature that would have enriched the discussion but made it unnecessarily lengthy. I feel that, along with the reader, I am dipping my toes into a vast pool of theory and concept, taking a couple of deep dives here and there, but seeing the rest stretch beyond the human horizon. I will deal here with the 'relations of proximity' within the FS practitioner role, whilst remembering that subjectivity is 'a question of sameness and difference, near and far' (Probyn, 2003, p. 298) and only a partial picture can ever be presented.

Subjective experience as spatiality

What thinking helps us to understand the situated subjectivities of the FS practitioner's experience? I begin from the premise that the self is spatially located and, in doing so, it is productive to consider space differently, from perspectives across human geography and the social sciences. Massey, one of the foremost thinkers on space, makes three clear propositions about space, summarised as being relational, multiple and open (Massey, 2005a, p. 9). Space and social relations are mutually constitutive and space is a social product of our inter-relations that is continually under construction. I have drawn on notions of spatiality, a term used by Pile and Keith (1993, p. 6) to 'capture the ways in which the social and spatial are inextricably realised in one another; to conjure up the circumstances in which society and space are simultaneously realised by thinking, feeling, doing individuals and...the many different conditions in which such realisations are experienced.' The notion of spatiality fits well with both my orientation and the nature of the practitioners' roles, which includes spatial, material relations with an FS site as a place of multi-layered meanings and experiences, as well as the intermingling of social relations and affects that cluster around the co-production of their roles.

The 'spatial turn' of the last few decades in the humanities and social sciences have brought about 'the identification of what seems like a constantly expanding universe of spaces and territories, each of which provides different kinds of inhabitation' (Thrift, 2006, p. 139). Within human geography, a discipline broadly concerned with the self in space, phenomenological geography has positioned a move away from assuming a fully-formed subject existing prior to experience,

towards examining the ways in which the subject becomes, in or through experience. This move can be seen as a re- engagement, or post-phenomenology, by drawing on post-structural writers such as Deleuze, Levinas and Derrida. Merleau-Ponty defines the phenomenological approach as an attempt ‘to give a direct description of our experience as it is, without taking account of its psychological origin and the causal explanations which the scientist, the historian or the sociologist may be able to provide’ (Merleau-Ponty, 2002: vii). A post-structural re-reading can ‘extend the boundaries of the phenomenological focus upon the experiencing subject’ (Lea, 2009, p. 373), which includes both human and the more- than-human, and the wider ways in which we inhabit the world. For instance, we might consider how we dwell ‘with’ the world rather than as an experiencing ‘of’ the world. This resonates with Ingold’s concept of inhabitation, of a life lived in the land and not on it, in other words, to ‘live life in the open’ (Ingold, 2008, p. 1804) of both earth and sky. Considering that FS practitioners inhabit life outdoors on a regular basis, this seems another appropriate theoretical starting position in striving to understand their situated subjectivities

What Ingold calls the land or the world, Massey calls space. Ingold states that he cannot bring himself to describe it thus, that he thinks of space as the void or a non-world. Yet ultimately he admits that they are both conceiving of the same ‘multiplicity of trajectories’ (Ingold, 2006, p. 891) In her book, ‘For Space’ (2005a), Massey develops a theory of subjectivity or agency, through a postmodern conception of space as geographical, temporal, and relational. Massey argues against more traditionally held notions of space as closed or flat, or as Ingold imagines it, lifeless and empty, in that:

conceiving of space as a static slice through time, as representation, as a closed system and so forth are all ways of taming it. They enable us to ignore its real import: the coeval multiplicity of other trajectories and the necessary outward-lookingness of a spatialised subjectivity (Massey, 2005a, p. 59).

There is a dynamism inherent in Massey's position, an open re-conceptualisation of space, which affords the potential for a re-thinking of the subject as part of space.

Within the social sciences (Goffman, 1956), neuroscience (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007) and other theoretical positions and disciplines, ideas of rationality and atomised subjects have been discarded. It is outmoded to argue that the subject is located solely in the individual, for that kind of 'identity is an invented Western tradition that has had its day' (Thrift, 2008, p. 84). Following Levinas (1998) and his work on the Other, within a radically open conception of the subject, open to alterity within and without, we can question how individuals become themselves within their environments, the social, natural and cultural worlds, in their multiples and differences. Thrift describes how we might view ourselves as 'maps of concern, constantly forming and breaking up.' (Thrift, 2008, p. 88).

I find the metaphor of map-making useful in finding and marking the way through both the analytical journey and the journey of the practitioners' experiences. With this notion, the present research could become more cartographic than ethnographic, yet the questions raised are; where to turn my attention to? What and how to map? Pile and Thrift (1995) note that the subject is difficult to map for several reasons; there are no precise boundaries, it is not singular, having different and sometimes conflicting subject positions, it is always moving, both culturally and physically, and is only partially locatable in time-space. Further, mapping is a representational metaphor that comes historically loaded, notably in the type of

rationality 'in which everything can be surveyed and pinned down' (Pile and Thrift, 1995, p. 1). Given the challenges of conceiving the subject and subjectivities as dynamic, fluid and multiple, it is a quest to represent the seemingly non-representable. I have been inspired by non-representational theory in an attempt to find a fair and equitable position that could account for such complexities.

Representing affective relations

Non-representational theory has had an impact on affective and emotional geographies, both of which have taken different approaches, according to Pile (2010). Pile notes that emotional geography has charted the outward expression of emotions, located in an individual, whilst affective geography is concerned with the interstitial, spatial modes of feeling between agents, human or otherwise. This in-between shared space is the domain of affective flow, that moves and transforms within and across subjects. Non-representational geographies (Massey, 2005a; Thrift, 2000) seek to include materiality, affect and embodiment in an enlivened conception of space, as 'places that acquire meaning through human agency' (Kraftl, 2013, p. 48). For example, a FS site is a place that becomes further enlivened as a centre of human activity and meaning-making in flows of relation. Those interactive flows, physical, affective and cognitive, deriving from multiple subjects and moving between them, cannot all be reduced to logical dialectics, such as Marxist class analysis, or pedagogical observation of learning engagement. There will always be other meanings, located in the diverse and surprising unfoldings of life-itself, going on within the space, and before, around and after it in time-space. In this re-conceptualisation, the moment has already passed and any true representation is evaded and exceeded by life-itself. This 'excessive liveliness'

(Kraftl, 2013, p. 48) cannot be fully captured or explained. The challenge is to find ways of thinking that can pay attention to such registers or forces and communicate them.

Affect is ‘a different kind of intelligence about the world’ (Thrift, 2004, p. 60), and can be seen as a shifting distribution of subjectivity in a population of actors (Thrift, 2008). Multiple actors, human and more-than-human, contribute to the building of affective relations, dispersing the self throughout these relations. Often this is an invisible process unless the emotions stirred up are powerful and noticeable, such as the passion a practitioner might hold for their practice, and the response that may get from others, that either increases or decreases the affect. Passion itself may be a noticeable affect, yet there are micro-responses happening all the time, that contribute to subjective formation.

The entire realm of small, banal, low-key, daft, happenstance things, moments, events, practices, experiences, emotions, complexities, quirks, details and who-knows-what-else? in and of everyday lives, for instance—ought to be taken far more seriously (Horton and Kraftl, 2005, p. 133).

Within the present research, I wanted to try and capture some of these moments, a process somewhat like chasing barely visible butterflies. I intuitively looked for clusters of affects around the co-production of the practitioners’ roles and sought to understand how best to proceed. This led to the development of the conceptual model of *Shared Space* (outlined in Chapter 4), and a deeper re-reading into the literature around situated subjectivities, to find both allies and critics of the position that I came to own through the research process. To conclude this section, I have illustrated some thinking on the social through the lens of the spatial, considering a re-conceptualisation of space and spatiality in order to situate subjectivities.

Being the situated subject: the formation of identity

What is the impact of being a situated subject as a becoming FS practitioner? The present research enquires into what internal (within the practitioner) and external (within the setting team and other) factors influence the process of being a FS practitioner and how the practitioner adapts, on the basis of experience. This section explores how a practitioner might form their sense of identity, in their relationship with nature and the world and in their professional role. I present a re-working of identity in the formation of *eco-social identity*.

Influenced by changes around us in our lives, society and culture, identity can be seen as the relationship between subject and affect, constantly in flux and in multiple locations (Pile and Thrift, 1995). Cultural identity is well debated within the literature, with a sense that we cannot fix to older notions of traditional identity, that the realm has been de-traditionalised, for example, in the movements of peoples throughout the diaspora and in the multiplicity of virtual identities. Goffman (1974) theorised how our identities are constructed in a process of constant re-negotiation or a sense of a continuous self. Sfar and Prusak (2005) frame identity formation as stories; those we tell ourselves about ourselves, and those others tell about us. Both influence the perception of self, becoming a situated self as a social product (Goffman, 1956). Goffman defines the self as social product in two ways, one being what an individual performs in public, a sense of self arising out of that, not before in the predominant sense of an innate psycho-biological self. Secondly, the self is restricted by it being a socially validated encounter, within hierarchies of status, norms and approval (Goffman, 1956, p. 56).

Eco-social identity integration: an individual or ecological being?

Given that FS practitioners work in a nature-based pedagogy, what dynamics are there between their identities and nature-society relations? To include both relationships with the environmental and the social contexts when considering this question, I critically assessed the construct of an ecological identity and refined the construct to an *eco-social identity* (ESI). Here, I describe the process, to explain how ESI as a construct, and accompanying theories, relate to the present research. I then consider what, in FS training and practice, reinforces a sense of ESI and to what extent it contributes to becoming a FS practitioner.

An ecological identity (EID) is defined by Thomashow as ‘all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self’ so ‘nature becomes an object of identification’ (1995, p. 3). To have an EID is in itself a generational change, a construct first introduced by Mead (1934) and developed by environmental psychologists, sociologists and educators (Chawla, 2007; Chawla and Hart, 1995; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of human development (1979) is perhaps the most widely known and applied, acknowledging a sphere of social influence as part of the ecology. Bronfenbrenner did not use ecological to mean purely flora and fauna, rather his emphasis was on the interconnected and interdependent nested systems we live in.

An expanded sense of self that includes nature emerged in response to a critique of contemporary life in Western industrial society, from ecofeminist and deep ecological positions. It chimes with evolutionary biologist Wilson's biophilia

hypothesis, which posits an evolutionary and innate need for an intimate association with the natural world (Kellert and Wilson, 1993; Wilson, 1984). Various factors are seen to help form EID. Clayton and Opatow (2003) state that it develops from an individual's 'direct, personal, immediate, and emotionally significant experiences with the natural world that change the individual's understanding of self' (p. 14). Further factors in forming an EID can be deep experiences within nature, social interactions in and for nature (Gooch, 2003), beliefs that the environment is important in its own right (Clayton, 2003) and a socially constructed cohesive understanding of self and others, human and nonhuman (Chawla, 1999; Chawla and Hart, 1995; Thomashow, 1995).

This is a necessarily cursory summary of thinking on EID as an area of identity politics with implications for the present research. Bragg (1996) argues that an ecological self is innate but stifled by modern life and in this statement a tension between theoretical positions can be found. Theories of ecological selves fall down when simply saying that we must become more connected with the natural world, identifying with it, to find our real authentic selves in nature. Connecting with nature can be helpful, yet we live in a sphere of dominant social influence, and therefore this stance closes itself to other sociological positions regarding the social self. Ecofeminist and deep ecological perspectives can be interpreted as too essentialist in their view of the ecological self, based on 'the idea that humans can return to an organic state of grace by transcending the ways in which nature has been constructed in patriarchal development' (Sandilands, 1999, p. 70). Sandilands notes the danger inherent in this quest, for 'ecological degradation is a complex social problem' (*ibid*, 1999, p. 70). Deep ecology and ecofeminism can be guilty of

espousing modern romantic ideas, that our 'proper' place is as a natural being is distorted by an artificial society. These theories are in danger of reproducing an impossible dualism of nature / culture that they propose to stand against, arguing for a pure 'pre-social' state which is impossible, yet a meme that has been in place since Rousseau's time. Since the Romantic era, the endeavour of social theory has contributed to our understanding of self formation processes and the complex interweavings of human social life. Therefore a theory of ecological self can misrepresent sociological theories of social selves, which to a large extent do take into account our biological or embodied self (Goffman, 1961b). From an eco-social perspective, we cannot be severed either from the natural or the social realm. We do not have an authentic self that pre-dates our social self, or a relationship with nature that excludes society; we are social beings. Similarly we do not have an exclusively social self without our biological nature; we are natural beings.

Encouraging people to see themselves as part of nature is potentially advantageous, in inspiring strategies towards more sustainable societies, but a socially complex view is necessary. Sutton (2004) makes the point that we tend to need to be shaken out of our social self, as the primary reality, to realise our innate biological self. Therefore we need to accommodate both ecocentric and sociological perspectives to address the issue of self formation that includes an ecological self or identity. I reframe ecological identity and the project of the ecological self as *eco-social identity* (ESI), to overcome the theoretical obstacle of sacrificing the impact of the social self. ESI keeps nature in the frame, inviting in an ecocentric perspective, while considering identity from our unavoidably anthropocentric perspective. I return to Mead (1934) who framed identity as derived from the social process, the

divide between I and Me, where we partially construct our identities based on the generalised reflections of ourselves from others. When considering the practitioners in the present research, despite many of them having a deep affinity with nature, their identities are constructed and negotiated largely within social realms. ESI has greater fitness for purpose for the present research.

Role perception and professional identity

From this perspective, given that the social realms are seen to have such influence, what subjective social processes might influence the practitioners' perceptions of their role, or professional identity? In Zembylas' (2007a) review of studies on emotion in teacher identity, he argues that emotions have featured in educational research in three main ways; individual, socio-cultural and relational. The third relational approach has sought to overcome the individual / social divide presented in the previous two approaches. A relational approach focuses more on affect than emotion, understood as intersubjective co-production, collective and situated (Kraftl, 2013). There has been an increased interest in emotion and affect surrounding the role of emotions in teaching and teacher identity, as part of the affective turn in philosophy and social science (Zembylas, 2007). Nias noted that the teaching role involves 'intensive personal interactions' and an investment of the self into work (Nias, 1996, p. 296). There is an emotional labour in teaching (Zembylas, 2007a) and teachers 'often so closely merge their sense of personal and professional identity that work becomes a main site for their self-esteem and fulfilment, and so too for their vulnerability' (Nias; 1996, p. 297). It is therefore possible that some FS practitioners may be invested eco-socially, in both the emotional labour and the ecological labour, intertwining a sense of purpose,

personal values and an ethics of care that rests deep inside them. Further, the emotional dimension of the role is heightened in consideration of the interconnected neural processes of emotion and cognition (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007; Nias, 1996).

To understand more about the subjective processes of a practitioner necessitates exploring these conjoined emotional and cognitive aspects. How do we make meaning of these affective flows, lines and trajectories? How might a FS practitioner be influenced by the process in their perception of their professional role? Beyond the plethora of literature on emotions in teaching, much of the FS literature rests on a paradigm of social constructivism, which is also present in the pedagogical approaches and training for FS practitioners. Social constructivism offers a different perspective from the spatial and non-representational theories that have been explored thus far. It emphasises the meaning-making exchange and the deep influence of social constructs, as opposed to more perceptual ideas of being in the world explored in the beginning of the chapter. In the following section I consider what the social sciences offer in terms of perspectives on situated subjectivities in practitioner role production, with an emphasis on exploring values in the outdoor pedagogical role, both towards FS and towards the environment.

Berger and Luckman (1967) theorised on how reality is socially constructed, introducing social constructionism to social science. There are differing views on how constructs happen. Gergen and Gergen (2003) postulate that understanding of the world is the result of active, cooperative relationships, in historically situated interchanges, that produce terms and received knowledge as social artefacts. Social

constructionism as an epistemological position requires that we are critically reflexive about the ways in which we understand the world, to question culturally specific and taken for granted assumptions (Burr, 2003). Burr also shows linguistic exchange to be important, building on what Wittgenstein called language games, embedded in socio-cultural patterns (Gergen and Gergen, 2003). The social construction approach highlights the diverse meaning and power of an exchange (Burr, 2003). For example, the meaning of FS to a new participant or adult assistant is different to that of a practitioner familiar to FS pedagogy and being in the natural environment. FS, like pedagogy and schooling, is in itself is a social construction. Being aware of multiple meanings and perspectives enables social norms to be challenged. How we engage with the outdoors, whether for survival, leisure, play or learning, is socially and culturally located.

Reconstructing situated subjectivities

There is a tension within FS around the process of reconstructing subjectivities in professional practice, not only between the differences within FS practice, but also the interrelationships between FS and mainstream practitioners (Maynard, 2007b). Subjectivities affect the social norms and order of the practice settings, as well as the enactment of pedagogic principles. Thus the meaning-making of FS practice is in constant negotiation within each context, whilst attempting to both become part of it and potentially transform the inherent values. Waite (2011a) states that pedagogy is informed by values and context and argues for a 're-awakening of a value-based pedagogy' (p. 80). Values can be defined as 'trans-situational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity' (Schwartz, 1994, p. 19). Further, compared to attitudes, values

are seen as ‘more central to the self, transcend objects and situations, and determine attitudes and behaviour’ (Stets and Biga, 2003, p. 400). Values are an important part of how a practitioner constructs their professional, personal and social identities (Goffman, 1974; 1956). What values are present then in the practitioners’ social worlds, that may influence them and become a challenge for intersubjectivity?

Nature-based values - or values driving behaviour?

Kyttä (2004) suggests that children are restricted in environmental experience not just by physical restrictions but also attitudinal or cultural adult interventions. A need is clearly established in the literature for a positive adult role model in terms of attitudes towards and care for the natural world (Chawla, 2006; Mathews, 1992), particularly in terms of affective education, where FS is often positioned (Waite *et al.*, 2006b). McKendrick (2005) reported the adult’s will and motivation as a determining factor in developing outdoor learning. Values drive behaviour, which drives subjective opinion. The literature on pro-environmental behaviour change is insightful in this respect.

Behaviour is generally a strong determinant of opinion... This is why one cannot drive behaviour with information based on opinion... We adopt ‘views’ which explain or are consonant with our behaviours, even if the topic appears to be one of ‘simple fact’. The reasons we do this... all boil down to being driven by values. (Rose, Dade and Scott, 2007, p. 6)

Rose *et al.*’s research (2007) demonstrates a lack of causal correlation between individuals holding a particular attitude towards a piece of behaviour, and engaging in that behaviour. Widespread research shows that there is not a direct correlation between being concerned about environmental problems, or showing a positive attitude toward the natural world, and engaging in pro-environmental behaviour

(Oskamp and Schultz, 2005, Stets and Biga, 2003). This is referred to as the ‘attitude-behaviour gap’, wherein knowledge of issues and information does not drive behavioural change (Rose *et al.*, 2007). People may ascribe importance to FS or other alternative outdoor approaches, whilst maintaining their previous behaviour (i.e not changing their behaviour to reflect any new values), as consideration of the values underlying behavioural choices is perceived as unimportant (Rose *et al.*, 2007). The weak relationship between concern or care and behaviour gives insight into some of the challenges in effecting outdoor pedagogy. Therefore, to change behaviour, or to enact pedagogy in a new way, entails starting with the personal motivations that drive behaviour. This is significant when considering practising and providing FS, which involves promoting values of care, towards the natural world, and towards the learner by engaging in learner-centred processes.

A similar gap is found in a study of teenager’s environmental attitudes (Brämer, 2006) revealing a high valuing of nature, which was constructed as vulnerable and in need of conservation, matched with a deprecation of economic consumption of nature that does not understand surrounding sustainability. Brämer then found a nature-distance affect in that the group held a low interest and lack of knowledge about nature and natural resources. Only a small amount of time was spent in nature although it was accessible, and it was viewed as scenery or a backdrop rather than a place to engage with. Oerke and Bogner (2010) found compatible ambivalence in an extensive international survey of teacher’s environmental attitudes, where more younger people and women rejected an anthropocentric and objectified view of nature, and some had lower care and interest in nature than older groups. Oerke and

Bogner advocate for a balance between the usage and conservation of nature in the sustainability debate, to find a respectful view of nature that is realistic and not disjointed from lifestyle. Whilst increasing understanding of environmental problems, they state that teachers need to be careful not to construct nature as a forbidden, fragile subject, or one connected with guilt or admonitions. There is a culture of denial around environmental issues (Sterling, 2010) and discussing nature-society relations can raise uncomfortable feelings, such as guilt, disempowerment and apathy (Macy, 1999). Finding positive values in a relationship with nature is challenging when mixed within a messy social context and further, a limited early experience of time spent in nature (Chawla, 1988). Encouraging positive nature-society relations is challenging within the dominant discourse, often framed as problems and issues. The challenge is to find another frame, so that

...Once ‘climate response’ is converted from an ‘issue’ into choices and opportunities to get ‘better things’, it can enter the mainstream and escape from the dysfunctional values stand offs that have bedevilled ‘climate action’ in many countries in the past. (Rose, 2007, p. 23)

This last point resonates with Sobel’s concept of ecophobia (1996) that urges not to burden young children with environmental problems and the operations of institutions beyond their levels of direct experience and comprehension. Instead, to facilitate positive place-based relationship in their locality.

Intersubjectivity and mixed values on outdoor pedagogy

Values and other subjectivities are part of the communication, verbal and non-verbal, that happens within a team setting. Intersubjectivity is about developing and co-creating shared understanding (Newson and Newson, 1975) within social relationships, from a socio-cultural perspective on interaction and context in

learning (Rose and Rogers, 2012b). In contrast to individual understanding, or the notion of an individual self, intersubjectivity can refer to common-sense interpretations or agreements about elements of socio-cultural life, or to the process of divergence away from such shared understandings. Intersubjectivity therefore relates to social norms and constructions, in terms of different perceptions in the process of shared cognition and attempting consensus that is necessary in a social context. Trevarthan and Aitken (2001) make the distinction between primary and secondary intersubjectivity. Primary intersubjectivity is active across all communication and relationship, so within adult-to-adult interaction as well as adult-child interaction. I argue there is potential for an eco-social perspective on the secondary form of intersubjectivity (Trevarthan and Aitken, 2001) that includes a third object in the process of meaning-making and transmission between adult and child. I include the environment as an active object in this transmission. I discuss this further in my *Shared Space* model in Chapter 4.

In the previous section, perspectives from the social sciences were drawn on identity role construction, and the exchange and communicate of values as regards outdoor pedagogy. In the process of the shared team experience, a range of inherent subjectivities (values, attitudes, social constructions, norms) concerning pedagogy and the natural world are encountered (Goffman, 1956). The experience might include the subjectivities of the FS practitioner, setting team, children, parents and community, setting curricula and policies. The next section looks at the role relationships that a practitioner might encounter and considers the dynamics at play in the setting team.

Role relationships

In this section exploring role relationships in teams, I introduce Goffman's interactionist theories on how role perception and performance is situated and contributes to a continuous 'situated self' (Goffman, 1961b, p. 85). Then I consider the implications of different perceptions of the FS practitioner role. Goffman states that role 'consists of the activity the incumbent would engage in were he to act solely in terms of the normative demands upon someone in his position' (1961b, p. 75), or is the 'typical response of individuals in a particular position (*ibid*, 1961b, p. 82). A role functions in interaction with 'role others' in a 'role-set', to maintain or destroy the system as a whole. Here I define the system as the staff team's maintenance of the setting aims and objectives, that the FS practitioners act within. An enclosed social system, with a group of contributions in a 'single assemblage of activity' is the chief concern of role analysis (*ibid*, 1961b, p. 77). By taking on the obligatory functions and behaviours of a role, the individual is involved in the socialisation process of the context, thus role is seen as the basic unit of socialisation. Status and social value is imbued according to role, paralleling the use of status within improvisation principles, for without the use of status, there is no clear definition or way forward in the action. Invitations for action are made and accepted, rejected or modified, highly influenced by the status of the participants. Goffman views role as part of the impression management of the self, for in performing a role, certain role-appropriate qualities are expected of them by others and the individual can find within a role a 'me ready-made' (*ibid*, 1961b, p. 77), or a 'situated self' (*ibid*, 1961b, p. 85), as a basis for self-image and the image that others may have of them (*ibid*, 1961b, p. 77). An individual may use multiple techniques of self-portrayal in response to societal cues. Goffman described the self

as a 'peg' on which different roles are hung, much as an actor plays a character (1969, pp. 447). His dramaturgical perspective of the self has been criticised by MacIntyre (in Manning, 1992, p. 52) for ignoring the connection between sociology and moral philosophy, in which the self is viewed as having moral agency. It is assumed that one individual holds many roles, and that the individual can demonstrate different levels of commitment, role distance and segregation between roles, with moral implications in how the individual relates and responds to the role/s. The complexity of social situations implies that a person will depart in various degrees from the normative expectations of a role. However, the normative expectations of the FS practitioner role are not exactly clear.

The FS movement emerged from the interests and needs of early years practitioners working in the mainstream, indicating that FS evolved partially in response to the mainstream context (Cree and McCree, 2012). Increasingly, FS practitioners are in-house, FS-trained, members of staff (Knight, 2011b), and if not, are FS practitioners who are contracted to work within settings. Therefore mainstream pedagogy, team role and interaction, are key factors of influence in FS practice and FS is embedded contextually within mainstream approaches. Some literature on FS examines the FS adult role within mainstream settings (Cree, 2009; O'Brien, 2009; Maynard, 2007b; Maynard and Waters, 2007) identifying mismatches between the expectations held by mainstream and FS practitioners (Maynard, 2003). This becomes complex when considering practitioners who work as part of mainstream contexts, in that mismatches may be situated in the role of a practitioner, juggling both FS and mainstream expectations. Goffman finds a 'troublesome ambiguity' (1961b, p. 83) in role analysis categorisation, in that a

collective representation of a role is not always easily found. Goffman recommends that each social system identified requires an extensive preliminary study, which is addressed within the present research by in-depth case analysis. As discussed in Chapter 2, currently in the UK there is no concrete system of activity regulation for FS practitioners that can be used as a 'contextual point of reference' (Goffman, 1961b, p. 84). The practitioners within the present research hold their own individual views and experiences in relation to FS principles and accompanying values and ethos. Again this relates to the identity crisis in FS in that the values and ethos can be understood differently even by those having received the training and done the coursework. Further, the subjective perceptions of their role from the role-set (other colleagues in the settings) disclose different social fates for the individuals. Thus, for each practitioner, their roles are viewed and performed very differently. This highlights the challenges in the present research to examine the subjective experiences and interactions, and to be wary of assumptions of what a generalised view of the practitioner role might be.

Role, social norms and fitting in

I now extend the discussion of the influence of socialisation to look at what lies beyond the role-set, or in both spatial and post-structural terms, how wider structures and governance are distributed in the bodies of the practitioner and their immediate team. Role has been described here as a significant contributing factor to creating and maintaining social norms. There are commonalities between Goffman and Foucault's perspectives on the maintenance of social norms. In Foucault's work on discipline and power relations, the concept of normalisation (1977) describes the medium of power and authority in contemporary society,

locating power as not individually held but dispersed throughout society, moving silently through networks of social practices. Further, the power and governance we use to regulate our own and other's behaviour does not necessarily derive from us, it is distributed from a governing authority to its extremities, a capillary effect manifest in localised forms and institutions. Discourses are therefore influenced by hierarchical roles and relationships, and disciplinary power is supported and regulated by an 'enclosure', such as a school or institution, and the 'cells' within, such as classrooms and timetables, with shared languages of meaning and practice (Danaher, Schirato and Webb, 2000).

Of paramount concern to Foucault is 'the point where power surmounts the rules of right...and extends itself beyond them, invests itself in institutions, becomes embodied in techniques, and equips itself with instruments and even violent means of material intervention' (1980, p. 97). He envisages power in this way as present in discipline in social institutions such as the barracks, hospital, school or factory, later adding the family, neighbourhood and the social encounters of the everyday and drawing likeness to the disciplining of nature by technology. What Foucault means by discipline is the internalisation of the normative codes of behaviour prevalent in society, and so therefore the discipline is something we first learn through our early enculturation and socialisation. In this way, our everyday social controls have been colonised, (Foucault, 1977), to preserve the social order set in place by the ruling state regime and there is a blurry and indistinguishable line between state and civil society.

Hierarchical observation is part of this flow of institutionalised power in a school context, manifest in not just the observation and assessment of children but of the teachers themselves, by other staff, inspectors and parents. A 'relation of surveillance...is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching' (Foucault, 1977, p. 176). Furthermore, this authoritative gaze does not have to be visible, simply the potential of it is enough as the normalising gaze is turned inwards and used in self-regulation as well as the regulation of others. I find this relates directly to an aspect of Freire's theory of the pedagogy of the oppressed (1970), developed by Boal (1990) into the internalised oppressor or the 'cop in the head'; fears that continue in the protagonist after the oppressor no longer has visible power over them. Boal believed that these 'cops' had roots in the external world and that locating them was a helpful technique towards empowerment, by making conscious what was not conscious, by deconstructing, questioning and identifying an authentic response.

Maynard notes that observation, in Foucault's view, relates to the development of the human sciences and 'the power of the norm' (1977, p. 184), i.e. using scientific methods to test and analyse people in relation to a norm (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999). Therefore, through a Foucauldian lens, knowledge, truth and power are inextricably linked. Truth itself cannot be located, instead there exists a plurality of discourses, with different levels of authority or power (Weedon, 1997). From this poststructuralist view, we inhabit many different subject positions, or are positioned by others, and are therefore inconsistent in our position (Davies, 2003; Danaher *et al.*, 2000). Subjectivity and identity are constantly shifting, 'constituted and re-constituted' (Maynard, 2007b; Davies, 2003). This seems to be in parallel with Goffman's perspective on role analysis.

On norms, Goffman contributed intensive empirical observation, for example in 'Asylums' (1961a), in how both privileging and punitive systems of discipline are in operation in what he termed total institutions. Within such institutions, which can be extended to the institution of state-governed schools, Goffman saw the world of the staff as held in a constant tension 'between what the institution does and what its officials must say it does' (1961a, p. 73), which can lead to the treatment of humans within the system as if they are objects to be 'processed through an industrial plant' (*ibid*, 1961a, p. 73). We all have the agency to exercise power, yet the power we exercise may not be our own autonomous power, but that of the institution itself, for whom we become an agent, preserving the norms of the present social order.

Both Foucault and Goffman attempt to frame the mechanisations of the power of normalisation by analysing the effect of dissidence. FS within state-run settings can have a seemingly dissident effect, as FS practice challenges prevailing norms. The principle of dissidence could work in reverse, where the norm in some mainstream settings deviates from accepted practice in FS. For practitioners or team members in interaction, the personal quickly becomes political and vice versa. Goffman defines socialisation as deference to the appropriateness of a situation by excluding open self-reference, and desocialisation as an increasing openness and persistence of self-referencing (1961b, p. 24). By disclosing or self-referencing attachment to different values, ethos or approaches such as FS within a state-run system, FS can act as a desocialising factor on the prevalent norms. Tensions therefore exist as through social interaction, we demonstrate our values, aims and ethos. Within a team setting, Goffman refers to a necessary element of collusion in order to achieve the team's aims.

Governance, truth regimes and the production of outcomes

Dahlberg and Moss (2005) highlight the inherent risk in the dominance of one discourse within early childhood settings, leading to ‘further uniformity and normalisation of thought and practice’ (p. vi). They emphasise the origin of this discourse as part of the institutionalisation of childhood, where provision can be understood as an enclosure that reproduces technical practices for specific knowledge outcomes. Further, institutionalisation may be bad or good; it could produce effective forms of governing children and children’s services.

Institutionalisation can be found in early years practice, schools, Forest Schools, playwork and the majority of places where children can be found in contemporary society. The term ‘children’s service’ is criticised by Dahlberg and Moss for a non-critical view of children as things to be done to, rather than active participants, and they prefer the term children’s spaces. Related to an increase in provision, a neoliberal political agenda (Hursh and Henderson, 2011) dominates children’s services in the UK, with an underlying belief in provision that prioritises social regulation and economic success (Dahlberg and Moss, 2005). Neoliberal thought is a ‘benevolent mask’, purporting values of freedom, choice and rights, yet the grim reality is ‘naked class power’ on a local and global scale, focused in the main financial centres of global capitalism (Harvey, 2005, p. 119). Neoliberalism can also be identified in an increased call for privatisation of education, such as current academisation in UK context, and the dismantling of state support for education. In 2003, 86% of UK nursery provision was commercial and for profit (Laing and Buisson, 2003). Much FS practice is also based in the private sector, and in this way, FS serves the neoliberal agenda whilst it remains a largely commercial enterprise outside of the public education system. The accompanying values are not

always effectively critiqued in their implications for eco-social justice and the tenets of child-centred and nature-centred practice (McCree, 2013).

Within UK mainstream contexts, where there may be conflicting values surrounding FS and practitioner role and identity, the pedagogical approach is dominated by performing to achieve targets (Waite, 2011a), reducing the opportunity to engage with a values-based pedagogical approach. The UK is the world-leader in centrally controlling the training of practitioners, subject content, curriculum delivery and assessment, with accompanying intense workloads (Hammersley-Fletcher and Qualter, 2010). Managerial control and greater levels of accountability use educational performance to compete in the global economy (Bottery, 2000; Sachs, 2003; Ball, 2007). This is manifest across all ages of education and care, putting pressure on practitioners who need to prioritise certain aspects of children's achievement over others in order to help them achieve benchmark standards, as in the Foundation Stage Profile (Rogers and Rose, 2007). As well as raising the expectations and stressors for children to perform and develop in a prescribed manner, standardised assessment practices have been criticised for creating an environment of 'performativity' for practitioners (Ball, 2003). Alexander (2001) argues that due to the over-simplification inherent in the National Curriculum, there has been a tendency for teachers in England to interpret pedagogy as the same as teaching. He suggests a broad definition of pedagogy, where the practitioner engages with the discourse surrounding the act of teaching, to make sense of it, for 'discourse and act are interdependent, and there can be no teaching without pedagogy or pedagogy without teaching' (Alexander, 2001).

With the increasing regulation of curriculum frameworks and tighter controls, the practitioner has less autonomy and is reduced to being a technical producer of state methods and discourse, in role as ‘teacher-technicians’ (Dadds, 1997). Such policy intention and implementation has had an impact on professional identity (Hammersley-Fletcher and Qualter, 2010). Firstly, practitioner identity is challenged and restricted by centrally-driven and often inconsistent changes and secondly, in becoming the subject of blame (by the media, society and the state) for failure to perform (Webb, 2006). Until the 1970s, UK teachers and practitioners had a history of autonomy and self-responsibility for curricula, which, now removed, has led to their professional identities becoming fragmented (Ball, 2003). Practitioners’ personal identities are now less involved with their professional identities, therefore their values are less engaged in relationship to their practice. Waite (2011a) suggests that current training models in ITT have become criterion-led and focused on achieving competencies, with diminished time spent on affective content and philosophy which could develop criticality around personal values and pedagogical interrogation. For example, a FS practitioner may not need to construct themselves as an ‘outdoorsy person’ (Maynard, 2007b) in order to facilitate it appropriately, with a positive and informed attitude towards outdoors pedagogy. Without spending time reflecting on personal values and attitudes to leading learning outdoors, and with little curricula obligation to do so, the chances for effective critical outdoor practice are diminished.

FS as site of pedagogical resistance

Finally, the discussion brings into question how much the consideration of subjectivities in FS is a political project, in that there may be a need for advocating for alternative values, policies and practice (Waite, 2011a). Murray and O'Brien (2005) note that, through engaging in FS, adults in their study found themselves changed in their perception, attitude and practice, in relation to their previous construction of role. Not all FS is the same in delivery, and practitioners may perceive their roles very differently, or engage at varying degrees with critical reflection. This presents a challenge to the present research, in that building a concept of the role of a FS practitioner, from the cohort of practitioners, depends upon a variety of different role constructions and levels of reflective engagement. What affordance is there for setting teams to engage in critical reflection through FS? A further challenge for the research is that the fieldwork and the analysis of affordances is limited to the practitioner and not the teams. How much could FS be an active force for cultural change concerning pedagogical values and nature- society relations? Returning to the theme of the current variance in FS nationally, there remains an identity crisis concerning key aims and ethos (Maynard, 2007c). For example, within some FS promotional literature and advocacy, the focus remains on the learner, prioritising building 'positive dispositions towards learning' over relationship to the natural world (Cook *et al.*, 2012; 'Mythbusting' FSA webpage, 2013). Enjoying learning is an aim that settings can assimilate into their technical practice, but it is not the only aim of FS. Whilst a plurality of practice brings affordance for diverse perspectives and specialisations, the claim for the special and distinct nature of FS denotes a level of responsibility to the FS practitioner to examine their own values in relation to practice and engage in

intersubjective discourse within their teams. Without this critical dialogue, there is a risk that adapting FS to suit the needs of the setting and appealing to perceived interests may not result in serving the interests of the setting, the practitioner or most importantly, the children. Research shows the importance of the ownership of values in political campaign strategy.

There is a metaphor that political campaigns are marketing campaigns where the candidate is the product and the candidate's positions on issues are the features and qualities of the product. This leads to the conclusion that polling should determine which issues a candidate should run on... You make a list of the top issues, and those are the issues you run on... It does not work (Lakoff, 2004, p. 20)

As a social and pedagogical movement seeking success, FS must, like any lobby group, 'have a clearly articulated moral vision, with values rather than mere interests determining its political direction' (Lakoff, 2004, p. 74). The political psychologist Westen states: 'as soon as voters perceive you as turning to opinion polls instead of your internal polls, your emotions, and particularly your moral emotions...they will see you as weak, waffling, pandering, and unprincipled. And they will be right' (Westen, 2007, p. 99).

As a final thought, this bold stance on making values visible can include being open to experimentation. FS could be framed as the Other (Levinas, 1988) within the dominant discourse and vice versa, or it could be fully integrated. What might it mean, for example, if the pedagogical practices of both FS and the setting entered into an encounter where alterity was respected rather than absorbing the Other into the Same (Levinas, 1988)? Critical intersubjectivity demands an ethical stance with room for otherness, such as children's otherness, without feeling the need to understand them through adult lenses, to see them as versions of ourselves

(Dahlberg and Moss, 2005). An eco-social perspective includes adults and the environment, to enter into a collaborative process of exploration and experimentation, to strive together for effective practice.

Summary

This chapter has drawn on a broad range of literature to explore the impact of situated subjectivities upon the FS practitioner. I discussed some theoretical views on the subject as socially, spatially and ecologically situated and the research challenge of representation. The formation of identity, to relationships with nature, intersubjectivity, values and other shared affects, social constructs of role and the structural regimes that the practitioners work within were considered. In examining role within this context, issues were raised about powerful, subjective, social influences and constructs. The chapter has demonstrated that the potential of practice depends upon situated subjectivities, providing a rationale for the present research.

Based upon this theoretical exploration, the following chapter explains the methodological approach I took within the present research. I introduce the conceptual model of *Shared Space* that emerged during the fieldwork and was used as an analytical tool. In the empirical chapters following that, I focus on aspects of subjective experiences grouped within *identity*, *approaches* and *contexts*. Taking a spatial and ecosystemic approach to exploring the relational, often ephemeral, subjective experiences, I locate the practitioners contextually and show how their practice is embodied and acted out differently or in connection with other pedagogies, social structures and ecological approaches. The nature of my enquiry

focuses on the situated subjectivities, affective registers and concerns that arise in this complex interweaving. From this basis, the present research attempts to track the influences and the adaptations.

Why do practitioners choose to train and how much does the training process change them and their role? In Chapter 6, I look at motivation and choice, as to what in their lived experience of the world leads the practitioners to this point, using the conceptual model of *eco-social identity* discussed within this chapter to frame the enquiry. I then consider what the initial impact of the training is upon the practitioners. What can their subjective experiences tell us of the realities of practice and its influences? In Chapters 7 and 8, I look at how the practitioners embody their approach and deal with the here and now of the sessions, and develop the conceptual model of a *connector* to theorise on their emerging role. What does their practice become once adapted and grounded in context, and what happens to them in the process? In Chapter 9, I complete the practitioners' journeys by locating them in their settings. The new knowledge can inform a diverse view of what FS practitioners are and what they do, in their differences, in their challenges and successes, major and minor, that locate their practice in experience.

CHAPTER 4:

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY



Thus far, I have developed a perspective on practitioner experiences in FS, by examining perspectives in the literature on FS and then on situated subjectivities, such as affect, values, social constructs, role and norms. Here, I describe the

research context, sample, paradigm, design, methods and the analysis process.

In juxtaposition, I reflect on methodological and ethical issues within the process.

Research context

I conducted the fieldwork over two years from October 2010 – October 2012, initially at a training centre and then in professional settings. The centre was an established FS training provider that planned to continue provision during the research period. I gained support from the tutors as sponsors and maintained good communication. The local authority founded the centre, noteworthy in its commitment to education for sustainable development (ESD). However, the centre lost funding during the public sector cuts of 2011, when many field study and outdoor learning centres closed. The centre continued without funding due to its business base and reputation. The grounds comprised of 65 acres, with a third planted and managed for educational purposes, and the rest mature woodland. Training took place both outdoors in dedicated FS sites and indoors in purpose-built rooms.

Table 4: Participant profiles at the time of research

Profiles of research participants
<p>Ant was an education undergraduate, going on to do a Masters in Sustainable Education. He was interested in FS for his dissertation research and as a way of combining his skills. He was new to teaching, and his FS placement was at a semi-rural primary school with Year 2 children. He was outside for 20% of his work time for his placement and was studying the remainder of his time.</p>
<p>Caterpillar has worked as an early years practitioner for 9 years. During her FS training, she also undertook a part-time foundation degree course in Childcare and Early Years. She worked in a private nursery in a town as the outdoor area co-ordinator working with pre-school age children (3 - 5 years) and took two groups for FS on a weekly basis, outside for 80% of her work time.</p>
<p>Eagle has worked as an early years practitioner for 8 years. During the FS training, she became dissatisfied with her job. After the training, she became a nursery manager in a town. In the new nursery, she was unable to do FS due to other pressures in her role, outside for 10% of her work time.</p>
<p>Lion has worked for 10 years as a teaching assistant. She was working in a rural primary school for 3 years with Reception and Year 1 aged children. She ran FS with 2 class groups on a weekly basis, outside for 30% of her work time. She had resigned from her post before the research ended.</p>
<p>Monkey has worked for 7 years as an early years practitioner and for 5 years in her current role, in a rural pre-school. She took two groups out for FS on a weekly basis, outside for 50% of her work time.</p>
<p>Moose has worked for 9 years in her current role as education manager in a rural environmental education centre, where she worked part-time previously alongside work in political campaigning. Within FS, she worked with primary aged children from a home education group and teenagers on a weekly basis. She was outside for 90% of her work time, delivering both FS and other outdoor programmes.</p>
<p>Rhino has worked for 20 years as a dance artist within education and voluntarily for 3 years as a parent home educator in her local group. She took the home education group for FS on all-day weekly visits to a local woodland site. She was outside for 40% of her total work time.</p>
<p>Salamander was a play services manager for an urban local authority for 4 years, with over 15 years experience in early years and play. She was delivering FS to 4 groups per week and advising schools doing FS in her programme. She aimed to deliver less and manage more. She was outside for 40% of her work time.</p>

Sample

Nine FS trainees self-selected, with informed consent (see Appendix 6), to participate in the research. I accepted everyone who volunteered at first, but two worked at the same setting and, as the research progressed, the overall cross-case comparative analysis of their contextual outcomes was affected by having two similar data-sets. It seemed fairer to have participants from different contexts only, therefore eight participants remained for the full study. I valued autonomous participant volition from an emancipatory standpoint and favoured a depth of narrative and analysis over a large sample number. I attended four courses to enable the trainees to volunteer without pressure, and to observe the participants sufficiently. Their profiles are summarised on the previous page (Table 4). The participants had animal or insect names to maintain their confidentiality.

Settings, resources and space

The initial aim of the research was to study early years practice, yet some of the practitioners worked with both young and older children in mixed groups. The second half of the fieldwork focused on their professional settings after the training. Table 5 (p. 84) summarises the eight participants' settings and resources. The settings ranged from isolated village schools to busy urban parks, and six had FS sites on their setting location. The space, species and affordances available for FS varied widely, ranging from 20 metres square of mixed trees and shrubbery, to established woodland set in acres of grounds. Moose's site was the most extensive: purposely designed and planted 20 years ago as a woodland play area for children, with species carefully selected for affordances of play, diversity and interest. Half of the sites were limited in size and diversity.

Table 5: Setting profiles

Participant	urban	rural	on site	off site	Practice setting	Site resources
Ant		Y	Y		Primary school (Y2)	Wooded area
Caterpillar	Y		Y		Private nursery	Wooded area
Eagle	Y		Y		Private nursery	Garden area
Lion		Y	Y		Primary school (Reception / Y1)	Wooded area
Monkey		Y	Y		Private nursery	Wooded area
Moose		Y	Y		Environmental centre (all ages)	Centre woodland
Rhino		Y		Y	Home education group (2 -11 years old)	Private woodland
Salamander	Y			Y	Playwork & FS service (6-11 years old)	Woodland in public parks

All settings had a number of trees and undergrowth, fire pit, paths, digging pits and one or more climbable trees. Some had extra affordances: log piles for species habitat, fire wood and play sticks, ponds, established fire pits and cooking equipment, ropes and nets for tree walkways and swings, varied amounts of assisted tool use (bow saws, saw horses, axes, mallets and penknives) and art equipment. All practitioners had a safety bag with first aid and other kit including identification.

Representation and omissions

All the participants worked in England; therefore the analysis of UK-wide practice was outside the scope of this study. With strong national differences in pedagogy, play and outdoor approaches in national curricula and policy, comparative research across the UK would be valuable in the future. The participants provide a broad spread of different provision, representative of current diverse FS practice for young children. I valued the particularities in the spirit of case study research.

Paradigm

In Chapter 2, I identified a gap within FS research on practitioner perspectives and the experience of training. Research agendas within FS and outdoor play and learning have largely focused on outcomes and benefits to the child (Gill, 2011; Knight, 2009). Within pedagogical literature, there is little explicit focus on the adult role and perspectives outdoors (Rickinson *et al.*, 2012). Pedagogical and play theory research align closely to both psychological and childhood studies, which have influenced past theories and methods. In recent years, mixed forms of inquiry have emerged as a further strong influence in social science methodology. Within the literature, the chief paradigms within pedagogical research are widely discussed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011) so I will not argue for or against a particular approach. Instead, I give an overview of the key interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives and paradigms chosen for the present research, examining the philosophical assumptions and world views underlying the knowledge basis in my rationale.

As outdoor play and learning are inherently human activities, social science, and in particular, theories on complexity, spatiality, social constructivism and symbolic interactionism, have relevance to the present research. Nature-society relations are present in the experience of FS and, from a complexity perspective, ecosophy (Guattari, 2000; Næss and Rothenberg, 1989), environmental perception (Ingold, 2010; Kytä, 2004; Gibson, 1979) and spatial research in human geography (Massey, 2005; Thrift, 2004; Katz, 1999) provide useful epistemological positions. Chesters and Welsh (2005) trace the lineage theoretically of complexity and intra-disciplinary sociological thinkers from Bateson (1973), through Goffman (1974) to

Deleuze and Guattari (2002), and finally to Melucci (1989). Their thinking, in particular that of Goffman and Ingold, who in turn were influenced by Bateson, Gibson and Deleuze and Guattari (Ingold, 2007), had a profound impact on the development of my own thinking throughout the development of the present research. Suffice to say this is an inherently interdisciplinary perspective, which brings its own complexity, yet it suits both my own position and the context of the research. Education, play, social contexts and nature-society relations are dynamic processes. Research into these fields is inherently complex, involving a multiplicity of actors, interests, experiences and modes of inquiry. Thus in practice, the nature of research as it progresses can challenge pre-conceived boundaries that delineate different theoretical paradigms of research. The pattern of these methodological developments denotes a shift in thinking, within ontological and epistemological perspectives, on how we construct reality and knowledge in research, and how we view the role of research and the researcher.

In establishing a methodological position, I considered the data types that my questions would produce and evolved an approach to this data with fitness for purpose. The understanding I sought necessitated an interrogation of aspects of human thinking and behaviour. I aimed to examine how research participants reflected on subjective constructions of reality, both their own and the dominant constructs in their immediate context (Goffman, 1974; 1969b), in an approach combined with phenomenology (Fonow and Cook, 1991), environmental perception (Ingold, 2011) and spatiality (Kraftl, 2013; Thrift, 2004) to interrogate their lived experiences and encounters. Thus, to enable the investigation of how people make meaning and form knowledge from an outdoor pedagogical

experience, the theoretical framework chosen is that of post- structuralist social constructivism, aligned with a spatial, ecosophical perspective.

The strong focus on the subjective experience led me to choose qualitative methods of data collection within an interpretivist framework. I will illustrate my belief in the validity of interpretivism with a spatial analogy. The geocentric model, or Ptolemaic view of the universe emerged in the 2nd century AD. Ptolemy theorised that the earth, as a sphere, was the centre of the universe and that the sun, moon and stars orbited the earth in uniform concentric circular motion. The model was superseded in the late sixteenth century by a heliocentric model developed by Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler, with the aid of telescopes and other technology. Now the widely accepted belief in Western thought, or the dominant scientific discourse, is that we on earth orbit the sun. Surprisingly, polls conducted by Gallup in the 1990s found that (n = 1000 adults in each country), 16% of Germans, 18% of Americans and 19% of Britons believed that the sun revolves around the earth (Gallup, 2010). Amongst other things we could consider from this poll (such as its methodology), it indicates the diversity of belief and the disparity between the availability of knowledge and education and the tenets of the dominant discourse. Thus, the poll demonstrates an aspect of how social complexity influences the understanding of the natural sciences. Considering the evolution and demise of the geocentric model highlights a risk of assuming that, as researchers, we are at the centre of the universe, dominant in the field of study and that the field revolves around us exactly in the manner that we perceive it. We may perceive it thus, or in any other way, but interpretivism and its associated perspectives encourage an explicit and conscious acknowledgement of constructs. Located in a plurality of

perception, interpretivism rejects the notion of theory-neutral observations and the natural science perspective of universal laws (Gregor, 2004). In terms of the rationale of my research, interrogating aspects of human subjectivity such as values and knowledge bases, it was logical to analyse the values inherent in my research paradigm. Interpretivism accepts there are different forms of knowledge or truth claims, that change with time. Researchers working within this tradition analyse the meanings people confer upon their own and others' actions. Interpretivism relates to the sociological theory of interactionism, developed by Weber and Mead in the late nineteenth century, and to constructivism. Schwandt describes constructivist theories as 'sensitising devices' that lead us towards sharing 'the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it' (Schwandt, 1994, p. 338). Every era has socially defined boundaries of valid approaches to knowledge, to truth and, therefore, power. Guba and Lincoln state that 'multiple "knowledges" can coexist when equally competent (or trusted) interpreters disagree' (1994, p. 113). Their emphasis on consensus, competency and trust highlights the political struggle implicit in building knowledge.

My study is anthropocentric, but strives to include an ecocentric outlook. In reality, this is a fuzzy anthropocentrism (Randall, 2007), for as humans viewing the world, we cannot truly be ecocentric. I propose that an *eco-social intersubjectivity* characterises a difference in approach that goes beyond the dualisms of human / nature, physical / social reality, positivist / interpretivist paradigm or objective / subjective truth-claims. *Eco-social intersubjectivity* highlights the nature of relationship and interdependence at a deeper level of living systems thinking

(Guattari, 2000; Næss and Rothenberg, 1989), bringing in to question the subjective position of the researcher in terms of their worldview and constructs of nature. Within the dominant discourse of the 'industrial growth society' (Kvaløy, 1984, p. 12), is a notion that humans are separate from nature and can control or contain nature. The seeming moral assumptions within this discourse are that humans have rights and privileges over and above the majority of other species and elements of the natural world. An anthropocentric lens of separation is illusionary, for it separates humans from nature, and the relational meaning of the research from the social world. Nature-society relations link directly to my research, in how the practitioners' (and their team members') experiences in the natural world relate to their worldview and approaches. Re-locating the self in *eco-social intersubjectivity* opens up the possibility of increased relatedness with nature, to perceive the self as an interdependent part of a living system (Macy, 1999). This related to Ingold's concept of 'inhabitation' (Ingold, 2008, p. 1804). I do not assume that the practitioners hold an *eco-social identity*. I use this as a conceptual model to explore their inhabitation of their worlds, of how nature-society relations are present, or not, in their intersubjective exchanges. I inquire as to whether or how the practitioners' identities and subjectivities may be impacted through their life experiences, *in context and in continuous formation*. This fits with my view of 'life-itself' (Kraftl, 2013, p. 20) as an ongoing collaborative encounter with the human and more-than-human. Importantly, in terms of paradigm, *eco-social intersubjectivity* is at the heart of the philosophy underpinning the research.

Design

The research questions indicated that a qualitative design had goodness of fit to the data type required, i.e. interpretable data with depth, narrative and particularity. In the fieldwork, I used semi-structured interviews, participant observation and analysis of participants' reflective course journals. I designed developmental stages within the research (Miles and Huberman, 1994) to avoid pre-determined bias, and to inform further inquiry and analysis (see Table 6 below). Using constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) allowed emergent themes to bear appropriate significance and relevance to the design, and enabled the flexibility to give greater attention to these themes as the fieldwork progressed. The role of the combined data served the outcome of multiple instrumental case studies (Stake, 2005), and was triangulated and verified by further participation.

Table 6: Developmental stages and initial interview topics

Stage	Timing	Topics (semi-structured interviews)
1	During training.	Participant background, reasons for training, perspectives on training and FS ethos (relationship with the natural world, child-centred play, risk taking and caring for the environment).
2	During initial practice.	An update and reflections on the challenge of taking training into practice. Discussion of an encounter, on which the participant had chosen to reflect, drawing out issues of import to the participant.
3	Phenomenological interview after observing a session.	Reflections on both the context and the session observed, with the potential for phenomenological recall. A focus on the observed spontaneous interactions between adult, child and environment, the resources (both inner and outer) the practitioner used and their sense of place. Final reflections on the impact of the training.
4	Member checking and follow up.	Requesting reflective journal coursework. Sending transcripts and case studies. Checking in with participants for any feedback for alterations & other responses.

In the following sections, I explain how I applied each of the methods and their purpose. I then reflect on how the different staged process informed the fieldwork. After that, I describe *Shared Space*, analysis, ethics and add further reflections.

Semi-structured interviews

I chose semi-structured interviews to gather coherent data across the sample, whilst allowing the freedom for the participants to reflect on their individual situations and what they considered of import. This approach allowed aspects to feature that I would not have conceived of previously. In pursuit of the practitioner's meanings and perspectives, the dialogue reformulated my questions, and one question was able to lead to another. Thus, the researcher became the prime research instrument (Burgess, 1984).

The interviews lasted between 30 - 90 minutes and were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. All the participants agreed to the recording with informed consent (see Appendix 6), knowing that they could ask to stop the recording at any time and they could review the transcripts at a later date. The recording allowed me to listen deeply within the interview and follow the participants' cues with greater sensitivity. Further, in comparison to the written transcription, I heard the nuances in expression, allowing me to better represent the meanings expressed. Based on my research aims, I established an initial framework of topics to be covered over a schedule of three interviews, following the pattern of the participants making the journey from training to practice (see Table 7).

Table 7: Schedule of research

Schedule	Data collection	Analysis
Aug - Oct 2010	Ethics approval and training centre consent	
Oct 2010 - March 2011 (4 courses with 2 or 3 day visits each)	Participant self-selection and informed consent process. Training observation (field notes) Interview 1 (recorded and transcribed)	Analysis of semi-structured interview and fieldwork data. Initial coding categories established.
Jan - Dec 2011	Interview 2 (phone)	Encounter interview. (sample in Appendix 8) Analysis of interview data. Coding review.
Nov 2011 - Sept 2012	Practice / setting observation Interview 3	Phenomenological interview on observed practice. Analysis of interview and field notes data. Triangulation with previous analysis. Coding review.
Sept - Oct 2012	Reflective journals	Text analysed and triangulated with previous analysis. Final coding.
Oct 2012 - April 2013	Transcripts, case studies and encounters checked by participants. Exit communications	Responses noted.

Observation

Observation of the sessions enabled a deeper understanding of the contextual processes of the practitioners' daily lives. In the visits, I aimed to observe:

- training, practice, context of work, social norms
- site relationship, type and use
- Contextual background to practitioner's practice and team relationships
- Evaluation standards, quality, values and attitudes in the setting towards FS
- Practitioner's interactions with adults, children and environment
- Practical challenges

With the objectives to:

- Witness a FS session in practice
- Gain a rich picture of perspectives and perceptions
- Discuss informally with setting managers and team members
- Access to the natural world and affordances (environmental and socio-cultural)
- Facilitate immediate phenomenological reflection on the session in interview 3.

•

Reflections on design

Using the interviews to reflect directly (on their role and practice in context, or on the FS session encounters) gave the practitioners an opportunity to reflect and evaluate their practice. Some practitioners reflected less than others and sometimes I struggled to access their meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). The interviews are examples of reflective discourse (Mezirow, 2000). Therefore, the research process had a potential transformative effect and may have impacted upon the practitioners' learning. Finally, I requested to read the reflective journal from their coursework and invited any further responses. My aim was to triangulate the analysis of the interviews and observation with their written text.

Relationship between the researcher and researched

At each stage, I engaged with the ongoing interactive relationship I was building with each practitioner. The data provided a multi-layered perspective on the practitioners' inner motivations, such as their own early experience, identities and interests. At times, the process was frustrating. As mentioned above, I could not encourage some participants to reflect deeply on certain issues, as perhaps their focus or interests differed to mine, or they had perceived my questions or aims differently to how I intended. I discuss this

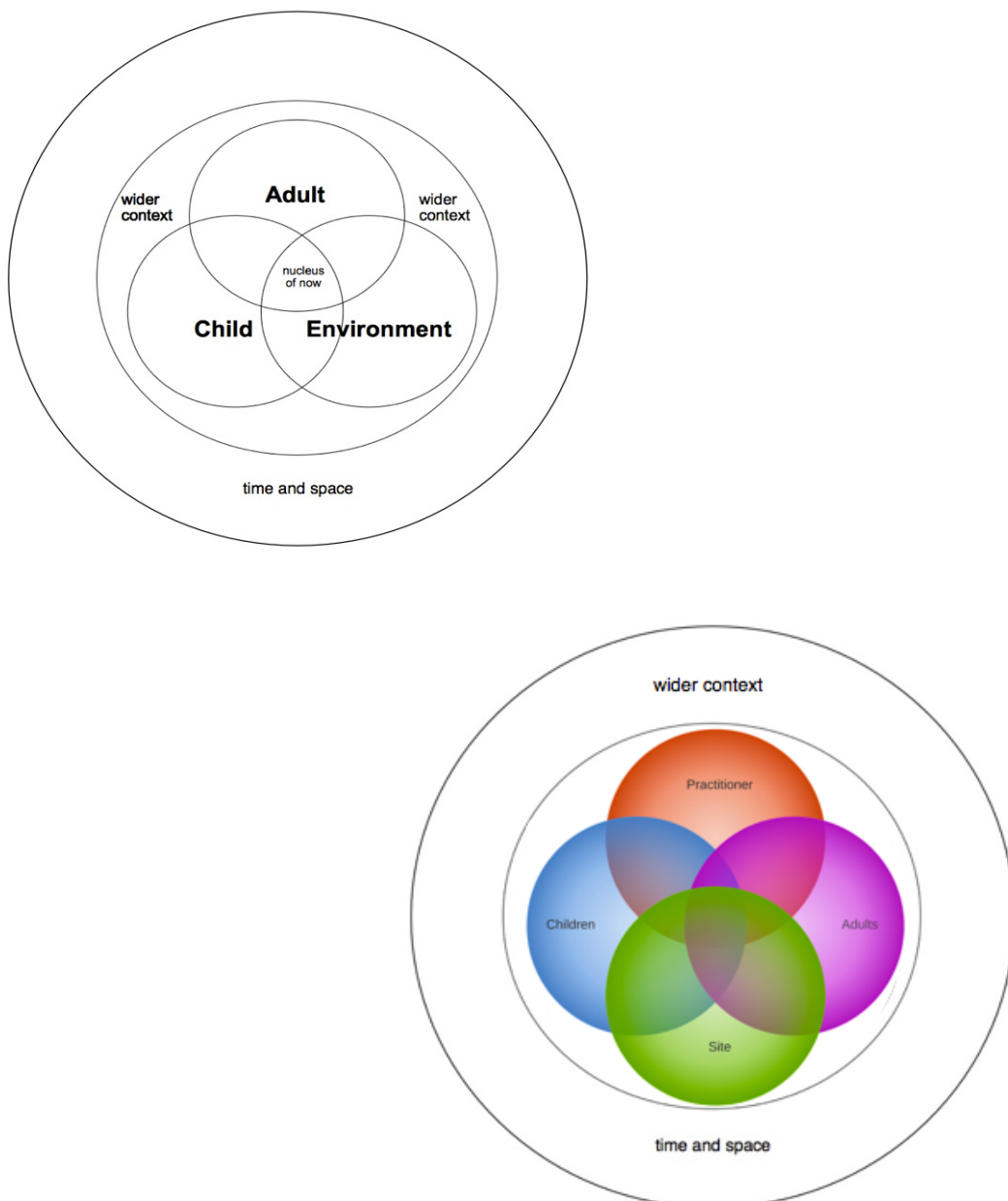
further in my notes on the encounter narratives (Chapter 7). As a novice researcher, to achieve clarity of aims and communication within the relationship was challenging and I learnt a great deal about myself from attempting to enact it as best I could. For example, in listening back to the recordings whilst transcribe, I felt that speaking too much got in the way of collecting the data. This had been on account of nervousness in my role, and I gradually became more assertive and patient. Focusing my questions better with practice, I then aimed to communicate clearly and to speak less, to be focused in my silence and listen actively. However, I used *both* what the practitioners said and did not say in the analysis. For example, based on the interview data from the first interview, I found that child-centred practice was both familiar and important to the participants, but that finding ways to talk about adult-child- environment interactions was challenging. The participants focused on some areas of interaction more than others. This gave me insight as to what was significant for them but left me with gaps in my awareness as to their views and approaches. In particular, I wanted to pay attention to the balance of interaction between adult, child and environment, looking at what interactions happened and what influenced them, physically, spatially and socially. To pursue this enquiry further in the second stage, I devised *Shared Space*.

Shared Space

I designed *Shared Space* as a reflective conceptual model and methodological tool, to frame ecosystemic relationships and agency, and it evolved throughout the research period. In the original model, 'ACE' *Shared Space* refers to three actors; the adult (A), child (C) and environment (E). An enjoyable 'ACE' *Shared Space* reflects an aspiration towards best practice. The model arose from a need for an explicit, structured way for participants to respond to my particular research focus. In the initial fieldwork, I found that open,

reflective interviewing was effective in revealing participants' considerations, but the specific research focus could be lost. Due to the ambiguous understandings of terms such as 'child-centred' arising frequently in the first round of interviews, a need became apparent to use precise terms. I sought to identify a particular way of working. The model helped me to communicate my intentions for the interview and gave a framework for analysing and presenting the results. I discuss how it evolved in Chapter 5's summary.

Figure 2: Shared Space models



Using *Shared Space* helped identify where a practitioner was located, philosophically and in practice. It assisted a critically reflexive view on role and relationships, including more subconscious, less overt or emotionally-driven influences. FS is different from most mainstream pedagogies as it places the environment and the socio-emotional aspects of relating as central to the experience (Knight, 2009; FS IOL SIG, 2012). FS could be, and perhaps is in some cases, an eco-social pedagogy that includes adult, child and environment equally. However, in many cases FS is not applied effectively or with this aim (McCree, 2013). *Shared Space* reflects a conceptual stance that assumes equality between the adult, child and environment as a baseline, and the model helps us to look at which actor takes the initiative for action. This stance differs from the often see-sawing discussions around child-initiated and adult-initiated play (Wood, 2007) as it is about observing practice foremost, rather than intention. The *Shared Space* framework enables reflection on the choices and possibilities explored, for example, how child-centred or child-initiated is the practice at a certain moment and how do we recognise and think about it? Battram developed a playwork continuum (cited in Almon and Miller, 2009) with ludocentric playwork as the equal balance, to provoke informed discussion on the role of the playworker, including child-centred or play-centred practice.

Figure 3: Battram's playwork continuum (2009)



Shared Space in theory and analysis

Within *Shared Space*, I drew on Goffman's theories on social interaction, including encounter and role distance (1961b), in-group principles (1969) and frames analysis (1974). Frames analysis theorises how conceptual frames structure our perception of society and how we organise our experiences and actions. Using the *Shared Space* model can help identify specific frames; what role we are playing, whose role, or which frames we are in at any given moment. Goffman further explained the idea of perception as a frame or structure that holds together the context of our everyday experience that we are trying to negotiate (Goffman, 1974). These could be primary natural or social frameworks, all operating simultaneously. Goffman frequently used the metaphor of a stage, investigating the performativity of roles and highlighting that as well as the stage, action is happening backstage, in the wings, in the audience etc. Frames analysis as a theoretical view holds allegiance with social constructivist theory and transformative learning theory of meaning-making and meaning-perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). I was inevitably influenced by ecosophy (Guattari, 2000) and ecological systems theory (Næss and Rothenberg, 1989; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which permeated all the analysis.

However, my regard of Bronfenbrenner's model was in part the impetus for the design of *Shared Space*. Despite the enduring popularity of the 'Ecology of Human Development' (EHD) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), I have two reasons why I would either adapt it or prefer to use another model. The main reason is that the natural world, or more-than-human, is not present within the model, simply subsumed into the wider context. Secondly, I wanted for the space at the centre to be *shared*, for a model to be truly relational, and the EHD model is based upon an individual in focus. These thoughts were helpful when designing *Shared Space*. I used improvisation theory (Sawyer, 1997a) and principles (such as accepting offers, saying 'Yes, and...') as a framework for *Shared*

Space analysis, in observing interactions and analysing the encounter narratives (see Chapters 7 and 8). There are key competences within improvisation that can be identified and discussed, that fit well with pedagogical and ecological theory. The term 'nucleus of now', at the centre of the *Shared Space* model, came from workshopping the model at the International Play Association conference (McCree, 2011), imagining the model as an atom. The nucleus is the very dense region at the centre of an atom. The closest representation of reality in the model is in this section, where all the different parts intersect simultaneously in space and time. The content outside of this section contributes to the present moment as perhaps the 'dark matter' in the atom. Etymologically, atom comes from the Greek "ἄτομος"—*átomos* ("to cut"), meaning uncuttable, or indivisible, something that cannot be divided further. The model represents an ecological worldview that acknowledges the inter-connectedness between the three actors and the wider context located in space-time.

Use of Shared Space in practice

The interviews used phenomenological methodology (Fonow and Cook, 1991), as an important part of my research approach. We might relate differently when we intellectualise or theorise about our practice, so an embodied way of reflecting helps us to recall and re-experience the feelings and sensations within an event. Focusing on an event allowed people to speak directly from themselves as the adult, and explore the imagined perspectives of the child and the environment (see Appendix 8 for an interview extract). As practitioners working with children, it can be easy to forget that we matter as adults, that how we act is significant and our actions transmit our thoughts, feelings, values and attitudes (Louv, 2005).

Emotional literacy is important for both the adult and child (Rose and Rogers,

2012b). As FS is a largely improvised, embodied experience, I emphasised the physical, sensual and spontaneous experience of being outdoors.

Within the fieldwork, I used the model systematically. The participant chose one encounter to explore. By first telling the story of that encounter and then reflecting on it, the participants filled the frame with their experiences, perceptions, thoughts and feelings. We identified how the space was shared within the different relationships; adult to self, adult to child, adult to environment, child to self, child to adult, child to environment, etc. I asked if they could imagine themselves in other spaces or actors in the model. What were the dominant influences and voices? Further, how was the wider context represented and expressed? Participants remarked that the model was helpful as a visual aid to structure the discussion. We explored a variety of different perspectives on their specific encounter. Beyond the immediate team setting, the inclusion of wider contextual influences helped to identify how the voice of policy, professional constraints, cultural or social norms might come through the different actors. Reflection sometimes highlighted predispositions to a particular worldview, and where the gaps were in the distribution of agency between the different actors. I used the model to discuss encounters, yet it has other potential applications. *Shared Space* could be used to plan or evaluate a session, to assess what is included and the dominant frames, including the intersubjective aspects of relating to the other actors, or to self and role.

No model can represent reality. The infinite influences and fluid complexities of human dynamics are impossible to lay out in a coherent two-dimensional diagram.

Relationships constantly change with each interaction, yet taking a snapshot of a particular time and space aided reflection, zooming in on a particular moment to gain specific insight. Using an actual encounter assisted phenomenological, embodied reflection, making explicit the complexity of different influences and allowing lesser heard voices to emerge. As a by-product of the research process, the implications for the transformative potential of reflective discourse are also worthy of consideration. As a final reflection on Shared Space, I found that in analysis the model had its limitations in that it showed a frozen moment in time, and that the focus needed to be more on the interstitial and affective relations than the individual actors for it to be fruitful. Since completing the research I have experimented, developed and come up with various new ways that *Shared Space* can be utilised, as a heuristic tool and form of analysis (See Appendix 9).

Analysis

In this section, I will first give an overview of how the analysis was conducted. Then in the following reflective sections, I detail my experience of the process as a researcher. The analytic process was composed of using constant comparative method (CCM) (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), a case study approach (Yin, 2003; Stake, 2000) and *Shared Space* method. Using CCM, I analysed and interpreted the data during and alongside the fieldwork, sorting the data into initial tag categories that emerged from transcribing and reading the data (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). The tag categories, such as view of self, others, child, world, education etc, soon became redundant. Following the sage writerly advice to ‘murder your darlings’ (Quiller-Couch, 1916, p. 6), I discarded them as more particularities emerged. As such, I began to inductively develop analytic categories, resulting from

the open-coding process (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I colour coded categories, which in turn encompassed several themes and cross-themes. For example, I looked for evidence of the impact of training within a category, in which a theme of support emerged. This theme was also present in other categories such as external influences, socialisation, setting relationships and early experience. Through re-reading and re-coding, my interpretations began to thicken up as I accessed deeper meanings, both my own and those of the practitioners. I experimented with 'folk categories' (Delamont, 1992, p. 150), using the participant's verbatim speech and classifications of language to assist categorisation. For example, when initially categorising role, the *connector* model emerged directly from the data, as many participants independently mentioned being a *connector* as a perception of their role. Other examples were sub-themes of the *'battle'* and *'just getting on with it'*, in the category of context role relationships. As part of the analysis, I wrote a reflective journal and memos to consider the emerging codes and themes. The collection, analysis and discussion of findings were not distinct parts, they interwove in a non-hierarchical process. This was the process from initial coding to theme generation, which informed the subsequent research. Once the fieldwork was complete, I then fused the whole data set; interviews, observation and reflective journals (both the participants and my own). Informed by the outcomes of applying constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), I built the case study narratives. Case study is a descriptive and qualitative account, demanding close attention to draw an interpretation. Each case was treated equally. Although eight cases was a small sample, there was inherent depth and variation (Yin, 2003). Where possible I used the practitioners' own words to tell their story, which enlivened the text, maintained accuracy and contextualised

their understandings. I made decisions to structure the narratives mostly chronologically for the ease of readerly understanding, yet the titles were also linked to categories from the early CCM analysis, including *thinking on FS*, *approaches and strategies*. Aside from this structural element, the case studies were largely not influenced by the cross-case analysis, as they were aimed to be a holistic view of each practitioner in their context. I wanted them to stand alone and tell their own story. Several further layers of interpretation emerged from writing the case studies, building on the themes across cases, which became the following empirical chapters on *identities*, *approaches* and *contexts*. I started to organise this material in a different way, shaped by comparative analysis evaluating across the cases. I undertook triangulation of the data by re-reading transcripts, related field notes and observations, and employed further layers of analysis beyond CCM, building case studies and then using *Shared Space*. I critically questioned my own analysis when generating themes, by re- interrogating the data, tracking the analytical process in reverse. Having grouped sets of verbatim quotations together under themes with their accompanying memos, queries and the emergent conceptual models, I went back to the data where the original quotes had come from, to check that I had accessed the practitioners' meanings and perspectives as much as possible, and that I hadn't taken quotes out of context. The resultant material was drawn into further narratives, theme discussions and conceptual models. For example, Chapter 7 and 8 use verbatim quotations to describe encounters. I used *Shared Space* to analyse and then represent encounter narratives. As a new model, the process is explained in the section on *Shared Space* analysis (p. 91). The conclusions, or insights, that resulted from the final themes were organised across the chapters, as a combination of verbatim exemplars of the themes, critiqued and discussed in relation to the

conceptual models of *eco-social identity*, *connector* and *Shared Space*. In these ways, the models helped to clarify the themes and contribute to an understanding of practitioner experiences in FS.

Reflections on analysis and interpretation

To clarify further how I analysed the material, in the following sections, I reflect on how I employed the methodology to derive my analytic insights and conclusions. I explore some of the dilemmas I faced as a researcher in the process of analysis and interpretation, and the process I used to ensure trustworthiness (Guba, 1981).

Reflections on using constant comparative method (CCM)

CCM is an iterative process, going back to previous data in search for meanings, that change the focus and refine the continuing research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Whilst in the field, the researcher-researched relationship, context and other unexpected data gathered by chance, informed the data collection. At times, the fuzzy many-layered design nature was confusing, with an in-built dialectical relationship between the fieldwork and analysis as a joint construction. Discoveries caused me to reflect critically, to place significant themes in the bigger picture. I gained insight from ongoing reflection, in preference to structured interviews and a linear pattern of collection- analysis-discussion. However, as this method was new to me, I began in a state of panic, read books about coding and got disheartened. The process that I went through as a researcher became a journey of trial and error, of persistence and acceptance. I would often read the data and feel that my coding was going nowhere, or if anywhere, round in circles. In order to think my way out of such a hole, I began to scrutinise the data by asking 'Why do I think these are the

emergent themes? What about them, is this what I'm looking to find, what I want to find, or is it what is *actually* there?' That's where CCM was most useful, as through the experience I got to actually understand what trustworthiness of data analysis actually means. I found different ways back in and out of the data, checking and rechecking any assumptions I'd made about what the practitioners were reporting, to access their perceptions and meanings of things. The themes arose from cross-case comparison and by reading the data set as a whole. So to assure myself of the dependability of the interpretation, I did repeated comparative processes, as the method states, comparing how the themes sat with the different practitioners, and whether the themes held up or not in the light of those examples. Finding that my original assumptions and categories were almost empty of meaning was scary but useful as it denoted progress. What helped was to be surprised, as that led to 'Aha!' moments, where I thought 'I wasn't looking for that. Brilliant'. It reassured me that I was on the right track with the analysis, as within CCM, there is very little in the way of concrete markers to go on, it is more a question of immersing oneself.

Reflections on a case study approach

Yin (2003, p. 1) notes that case studies can be an appropriate research strategy 'when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context'. Yin stresses the need for investigation to be grounded in context, relevant to both my research aims and philosophical position. For this reason primarily, it seemed an appropriate platform for the representation of my data. In-depth case studies give rise to 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973, p. 3) where many layers of interwoven influence and action can be considered. Case study

varies in form, and although both its definition and efficacy is disputed within the literature, scholars agree that it is an approach, not a method. Stake (1995, p. xi) defines it as ‘the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances’. The efficacy of the case study depends on *how* it is approached, on how the constituent parts of its particularity and complexity combine. Multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003) are the principal constituent parts, strengthening the credibility of constructs presented as a result of interpretation, and enabling problems to be understood differently in light of the data as a whole (Golby, 1993). A holistic view allows for patterns of interdependence, intersubjectivity and integrity to be revealed. With multiple sources and validity in mind, I decided to take further routes of analysis alongside the case studies, using the *Shared Space* model, which evolved from reflections on the fieldwork. Building a case study in a series of data collection phases allowed me to respond iteratively to the research process, and for the findings to challenge my original assumptions. Further, I waited until I had a whole view of each practitioner, before going on to make a cross-case comparison or find likeness. I allowed each case to first demonstrate how the participant’s thinking, practice and context related with each other. I tried in essence to tell a story that had a sense of flow about it, that made sense as a whole and that represented the practitioners consistently and as accurately as possible.

Reflections on interpretation

I interpreted the data from a post-structuralist and feminist standpoint (Fonow and Cook, 1991) using hermeneutic methods of analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Considering what a post-structuralist perspective brings to qualitative research,

Denzin and Lincoln state that ‘there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual... there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the world of - and between - the observer and the observed’ (2000, p. 19). Taking this standpoint, I questioned the authority of my own gaze upon the practitioners’ experiences, filtered as it was from my own perspective, gender and position in society. In interpreting the data, I brought my own preconceived ideas, derived from my previous experiences, bias, assumptions, values, knowledge and understanding of the research topic and life itself. Further, like anyone, my blind spots were challenging, if not impossible, to address by their very nature. At times this was an uncomfortable position and it was challenging to own my interpretation with confidence and assertiveness. Through the process, I sought to further own my subjectivity within the interpretation and to do this with methodological rigour by acting reflexively. During the struggle of making sense of the volume of data, Thomas’ argument on the value of case study (2011) was helpful in clarifying my strategy, in his distinctions between firstly, theory and phronesis, and secondly, generalisable knowledge and exemplary knowledge. His argument validates the real-life effort of constructing a case study and its purpose in research. In the process of interpretation, I often struggled to reflect what seemed like ‘everyday’ thoughts, feelings and opinions, whether there was any gravitas in my analysis, or any possibility of a special insight that the participant or another knowledgeable person in the field may not have had. This caused me to question myself as a researcher, finally to value my role as a critical conduit of understanding in the development of the case study narratives; a seeker of connections, nuances, surprises, consonances and dissonances. For example, as part of the analysis process, at the end of each case study, I gave a final ‘key frame’ review from my

own perspective. The technique I used to extract any sense of my own conclusion was based on the weight of what they had said, how this had settled within me, and what impression I was left with as a reflection of the summary that was in my own mind. The case studies were quite different in nature to each other as the practitioners. At this stage where relevant, there was a small amount of comparison with the others. I am aware that other readers will find other things of significance in their stories and that is as it should be, as my perspective can only be partial. I view my subjectivity as an integral part of the interpretive process as a researcher, and it was important to share my view at this stage, to help guide the reader as to where I had found significance in each practitioner's story and how this informed the further analysis.

Reflections on ethics and trustworthiness

Denzin posits that there is an 'art of interpretation' (2000, p. 313). As a novice researcher, I proceeded with caution, employing a clear ethical framework and checks for trustworthiness using Guba's four criteria for qualitative research, of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba, 1981), which are explored in the following pages.

Credibility

Regarding credibility (in preference to internal validity), the aim is to question how congruent the findings are with reality. Firstly, this was provided for by using the established method of CCM and a case study approach. I looked at similar studies of practitioner experience to assess what questions and methods were used and appraised my own in comparison. The process of designing the questions was my

first source of angst and I worked with my supervisors to evolve them appropriately. Seeking further design credibility, I undertook prolonged engagement over two years in the field (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The research participants self-selected to avoid any influence of purposive sampling and I ensured that informed consent was in place. I was open to discussing my views with the participants and assessed when this was appropriate or not, to minimise the impact on the participants' responses. The role and influence of the researcher is key. My intentions were to address the power debate inherent in the researcher-researched relationship, and minimise its influence within the study. This included discussion on how it felt to be researched.

There was a potential minor conflict of interest, as I researched in a centre with sponsorship of course tutors known to me. I was aware that trust relationships increased my subjectivity and there was potential of pressure for positive results from the tutors. I discussed with the tutors to ensure strict confidentiality around the participants' data and responses. The heuristic challenge implicit in my interpretive approach to research, from a feminist and constructivist standpoint, was that it was inherently biased. A conflict existed in the positionality between researcher and participant, the arguments could not be reduced tidily, and 'truth claims' were situational. The risk of positional bias was realistic and possible, so I actively anticipated it rather than delude myself that I held a neutral and objective position. I examined bias primarily within the ethical clearance for fieldwork and built checks into the methodology (see Appendix 7 for full bias methodology), in order to pinpoint and counteract any negative effects on the data. Acting within a strict ethical code in the fieldwork, I strove to be critically self-reflexive and

reviewed my approach and positioning. For example, I had practised familiarity with the culture of the research topic, having undertaken FS training myself, which had the potential to lead to further bias. My familiarity with the field from previous experience was both a blessing and a curse. My initial questions grew from this experience as well as reading the literature. My subconscious filters inevitably influenced how I proceeded and overall, my position shaped the interpretation. Being familiar with the subject under scrutiny is a crucial aspect of interpretive fieldwork (Burgess, 1984). I had insider knowledge and demonstrated an understanding of practice that helped me to build relationships and trust. Being literate in the terminology and common concerns meant that the interviews accessed a deeper level of inquiry. These benefits must, however, be weighed up against the need for critical reflexivity as a researcher. Did my position on adult experiences of FS change during the research period? I became critical of flaws in the approach and application, and familiar with common blind spots and assumptions in myself, the practitioners and other adults in the context. I drew on Bolton's (2010, p. 69) 'through-the-mirror' reflective writing method and Cameron's (1995, p. 9) practice of 'morning pages' to facilitate critical reflexivity, for example to explore exactly how my position influenced the interpretation. Throughout the research period, writing a journal helped me to identify my active subjectivity and aspects of myself (Bolton, 2010, p. 120). I strove to remain open to uncertainty, both in myself and in the data, and gave voice to a plethora of responses. I periodically reviewed the journal to draw out both meaningful insights and potential for bias. It was helpful to reflect after time had elapsed, affording some distance from the material and noting themes in my responses. There were many times of confusion and, eventually, I became aware that this is acceptable and

somewhat necessary in facilitating open enquiry. Pre-emptive clarity may well have indicated that I had a closed mind to the subject. Journalling was an important pathway through the confusion.

Finally, after a full triangulation of the data in the writing up process, the practitioners fully checked the transcripts, case studies and encounter narratives and I invited further responses (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Member checking was the most important part of seeking credibility, in line with Guba and Lincoln's view (1989). I discussed responses with the practitioners. I asked if they were described as they viewed themselves or differently. My interpretation was by definition different to their own self-view. I encouraged the participants to correct me where they felt they were not represented fairly or accurately, or where there were confidentiality implications. There were no corrections requested, beyond one instance of protecting the anonymity of other staff in one interview transcript. I reflected on whether researcher bias had coloured interpretation. This process assisted the quest for readerly meaning, intersubjective understanding and credibility. It impacted positively on the final process and both the participants' views of themselves and their practice. Writing a case study is a personal process. Reflection and intuition are required to read *into* the data, as equally important as a systematic reading of the data (Eisenhardt, 1989). I aimed to combine rigour with reflection, viewing both as necessary to encourage the left and right sides of the researcher's brain to work in collaboration.

Peer scrutiny was useful to me in order to gain fresh perspective. I regularly presented the research at seminars within the university and at conferences. As a

sole researcher, as a supplement to my supervision, the questions and reflections from other researchers were invaluable in pointing out places where I needed to question, clarify or substantiate my interpretation further. I presented my work each year at national and regional FS conferences, to both FS researchers and practitioners (and sometimes including the research participants, who volunteered to contribute). This was particularly useful as the audience had an intimate knowledge of my subject. I am grateful to my university postgraduate seminar groups, the playwork department and faculty for the many opportunities I have had to discuss my work within a wider critical community.

Transferability

Case study offers little or no opportunity for generalisation, and the emphasis on its particularity can seem troublesome if seeking a generalised theory in the manner of much traditional social science. Therefore, transferability (in preference to external validity / generalisability) is challenging within an ethnographic study, as the data and resulting analysis have to be treated as specific instances. These may in total illustrate a more general argument, both about practitioners and contexts, but from which only cautious generalisations can be made. Methodologically, case studies are criticised because of their small sample size. Grand claims cannot be made; the results are not generalisable, beyond what Stake (2000) calls naturalistic generalisations. What I sought in the exegesis of the case studies was what Bacon called 'middle axioms' (see Hirsch, 1976, p.18; Wormald, 1993): a middle way between too much distinction or too much generality. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 110) define generalisation as context-free. Yet, in the intersubjectivity of my participants', my own and the reader's meaning-making, the knowledge and

understanding gained from a case study can never be context-free. Therefore, I did not expect to make grand claims. By critiquing my assumptions, and interpreting the meaning of each participant's perspectives, experiences and situation, I presented 'exemplary knowledge' as a practical example, viewed through both my own and the reader's phronesis. In summary, there are methodological and theoretical challenges in writing up a case study and representing the data in a cohesive, effective form. A well executed in-depth case study allows the narrative to tell its own story. Careful interpretation can give room for the situated experiences to speak for themselves and point to the essence of each person's journey.

The context is detailed explicitly in the thesis and in presentations, to inform any audience of the bounds of the research and where any possible transferable generalisations exist. The resulting research must be understood within the characteristics of the contexts described. However, the experience was informative and gave insight as to where future research would be applicable as a development of this study (see Conclusion chapter). It is worthwhile to note that I focused on the practitioners and not their setting teams, which was beyond the scope of the study. I spent time discussing with the teams and I observed the practice in context, but I did not interview anyone apart from the practitioners. There is an issue here which affects the overall outcome of the analysis, in that I had only the practitioners' perspectives within the interviews. However, I have been mindful of how this might have affected the outcomes of the analysis. Much of the design and the research process was about understanding the practitioners in their contexts. I was careful not to make any assumptions about the perspectives of others in the setting teams,

other than to describe them as reported by the practitioners and then in turn to contribute my perspective from my observations in the field.

Dependability and confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that if adequate credibility is demonstrated in a study, the level of dependability is further ensured. As opposed to the positivistic term of reliability, dependability is challenging in qualitative work, as the interpretations within are tied to the context and situated subjectivities within the study, as 'static and frozen in the ethnographic present' (Florio-Ruane, 1991). I have strived to ensure that the present research could be replicated by fully in other ethnographic explorations of practitioner experience, by describing the design, implementation, fieldwork and reflective appraisal. There is potential transferability in the present research, in its questions, methods, approaches and conceptual models. Finally, qualitative confirmability relies upon the researcher as the prime instrument (Burgess, 1984).

Miles and Huberman (1994) consider the researcher's own admission of her predispositions as the chief measure of confirmability. In this chapter, I have acknowledged the beliefs and subjectivities that led me to decisions, methods and interpretations, and how I adopted checks and processes to examine them. The original contributions of the new conceptual models, and the theorising around that in regards to the interpretation, are all directly borne out of the data. The detailed methodological description helps the reader to determine whether the present research is acceptable, acting as an audit trail for the research.

Summary

Multiple qualitative methods were used in a four stage developmental design, including the contribution of a *Shared Space* model to frame the interactional relationships in context. Emergent ideas were built into the following stage and given room within the inquiry. Phenomenological methods encouraged practice to be observed and then discussed within the interviews. Different aspects of the data were reflected upon through constant comparative method, a case study approach and *Shared Space* analysis, leading to a variety of representations and approaches in the empirical chapters. Encounters narrated by the practitioners were written up as small vignettes that gave further insight into each case, using social interaction and improvisation principles to place a different filter on the analysis. Further ways of representing the analysis were devised in the use of continua to analyse the relationship between aspects of the data in each case and in cross-case comparison. The researcher role was explored and the dilemmas of analysis and interpretation were highlighted. Issues of ethics and trustworthiness were addressed through a rigorous ethical and criteria-led process. The transcriptions, case studies and encounters were sent to each practitioner for member checking and consideration of fair representation.

At this point in the thesis, it is time to leave the nuts and bolts behind, in effect, to close the bonnet on the engine of the research and enjoy the view from the window. The following chapter contains the case studies of the practitioners. It is a lengthy chapter but an engaging portal into the second half of the thesis, into the practitioners' worlds, and where possible in their own voices.

CHAPTER 5:

PRACTITIONER CASE STUDIES



Within this chapter are eight case studies, combining the data on each practitioner from across the research stages.

I hoped to show the journey the practitioners undertook, to highlight some of the challenges they faced and whether they overcame them.

I aimed to provide insight on each practitioner, situated with depth and specificity (Stake, 1995). Each case study is grouped thus: background; space; context; thinking on FS; approaches and strategies. This structure emerged partly from creating a chronological account and partly from the focus the practitioners gave within the interviews.

For confidentiality, the practitioners named themselves after animals or insects. They are: Ant, Caterpillar, Eagle, Lion, Monkey, Moose, Rhino and Salamander. I selected a quote to start each of their case studies, that I thought represented their perspective. At the end of each narrative are 'key frames', that were most present in my mind as a researcher after constructing the case studies. The reader may find other things of weight.

Ant's Case Study

'It is more about system change'

Background

Ant had previously worked as a sculptor and woodcarver, his work inspired by global travel experience. As a child, he spent *'a lot of time indoors'* but found that travel reconnected him to the outdoors. Before the FS training, he had no formal experience in working with children but lots of experience of the outdoors, with his woodcarving interest leading him into woodland-based practice, and a desire to work in education. At the time of the research, he was a mature student undertaking a degree in education studies. He found out about FS doing an environmental education module on his course. He felt he had reached *'this big crossroads...as to whether I was going to go down the woodland route or whether I was going to go into the education route'* and felt that FS enabled a *'reintegration of mighty passions; kids, education, wood'*. He attended the training as part of his dissertation research on FS, *'it's kind of ethnographic'* but *'because I love doing it as well, so I'm here off my own back'* and was self funded. He didn't have a *'specific aim'* for FS practice immediately, but was aware *'that my career is going to be very non linear'*, due to his critical view of the school system and his holistic systems theory perspective. Ant had a politicised world view which he expressed with fluency. He was ambitious to integrate his thinking into practice on his own terms.

Space

Ant chose to do his placement at his old primary school, which he knew well and was able to access. There was an established FS site in the grounds, with a diversity of trees spanning half an acre.

Context

Ant had a good relationship with the head teacher and was positive about undertaking his placement there. FS had run there for several years. In terms of support, he was glad *'the school has let me in...they were more than happy'*. This helped Ant's confidence to contribute. He felt his gender was under-represented, *'in my experience, primary schools like having guys around in some sort of capacity'*. He was positive about this difference and *'used to being the odd one out in terms of this kind of environment'* as his gender was in the minority on his education degree. He attended as a volunteer, one day a week. for eighteen weeks. Ant did not want to become a teacher in the state system due to his views, but was keen to get to know the context. He felt unjustified in commenting upon the system without experiencing it firsthand.

Thinking on FS

With a grounding in academic thinking, Ant was motivated to take a step back and regard the FS of place in the wider picture of education, seeing things from a systems perspective. Although he had a strong practical background, he was interested in FS theoretically and started the course with some reservation.

I'm surprised, actually I was really dreading coming on this course and being disheartened, by the kind of level of the grounding in theory. I was hoping that I wasn't going to come to a place that was ...wishy washy about what aspect of pedagogy they were coming from...what it was rooted in and whether they were aware of that [FS] has evolved and [the training experience] proves that they're very much aware of it.

Ant's initial view on child-centred practice was very open, as being a student, he didn't feel he had enough practical experience as an educator to comment. *'My biggest experience with child-centred play is purely theoretical'*. Based on his research, he thought *'it's of huge importance'*, making comparisons to the recent

changes in the Welsh curriculum for early years. He expected that practising FS would give him further experience of child-centred play.

If I'm lacking anything like a grounding, it would be working with kids in a child-led way. So that's the thing that I'm most concerned about.

However, he was critical whether FS was always child-centred when applied, due to the nature of social control within contexts of education and care: *'it's a negative freedom, it's creating a space which they can't go outside and saying they're free within it'*. He looked forward to the practical experience as he felt he hadn't got enough hands-on practice in his degree course. He saw a benefit in not being teacher trained, that *'I almost have the luxury of not being able to untrain myself'*. He criticised teacher training as *'teacher-centred'* and that a standard approach to learning was *'drummed into them'*. Instead, the *'comparative and systems-based'* academic nature of his degree gave him the opportunity to study pedagogical research first and then *'come fresh'* to FS for his *'first teaching practice experience'*. He had *'consciously chosen'* not to become a teacher in the UK state system: *'it just seems massively regressive to me, more so now the coalition [government] are in'*. Within FS, he was *'monitoring the way I'm phrasing things and the way I approach situations'*. He enjoyed the practical and health and safety aspects, although this *'for the most part in my experience is common sense'*. He spoke about the *'different levels of attention'* he needed, but thought he would be able to cope. *'It's not difficult... because these things are my passion... I can just forget that I'm supposed to be leading something and just get involved'*.

The challenge then becomes to remember that I am not a child because my abilities vary massively; and I've been stopping myself from doing things, whilst in a group of children who are playing in a situation, you know, that's learning afresh, because I haven't been taught to do that.

Ant was aware of his lack of professional experience with children and how this might affect him when he came to his placement. He was also aware of his socio-political motivation to work in education. His studies influenced his thinking about the purpose of education: *'I am very much getting into the kind of ecological side of things, and having learnt about, you know, the challenges that our next generation are to face, which is central to the next...wave of educational kind of input'*. In this way, he viewed FS training for himself as *'really important'* to make a *'parallel progression'* with practice. His *'connection with the outdoors is becoming a lot more theoretical'*.

Ant had a strong relationship with the natural world and strong opinions on nature-society relations, stating that *'we are at the outdoors' disposal, not us at its'*. Actively critical of the socio-environmental impact of technological culture changes, he felt sadness and loss within a dystopian view of the future.

To Ant, reflection was an integral part of defining FS as a learning opportunity. This demonstrated his emphasis on environmental education or systems thinking as his preferred function of FS, rather than wellbeing or personal development. However, he felt that *'very few people have that opportunity'* to reflect. He felt fortunate in his position as a mature student, able to take the time to reflect. He wondered whether school children could take on the full potential of what FS can offer, in terms of environmental or systems education, alongside working out what they were interested in and their direction in life, *'because they're not fully formed yet'*. He felt that *'kids at school, they don't have that time'*. To this end, Ant's focus was more upon the impact of FS training on the potential for training to transform

adults' perspectives in a holistic way, of their view of their place in society and the world. *'That's my... passion, and that's where I think I will take this, in what context [or]... capacity I don't know, or whether I stay with kids, but I think its important for adult education'*. Thus, Ant did the course to focus on his own development primarily, rather than for immediate practice.

Overall, on the training, Ant said *'I feel engaged with it and excited by it but not particularly challenged'* but *'on a very basic level it's massively fulfilling'*. He wanted depth: *'there's just not enough time'* to investigate the *'different relationships'* and the *'philosophical roots'*. He felt concerned about potentially making *'mistakes'* in tool use with children, *'because of that culture of cotton wool, and you know, the impetus on males in primary school'*. Yet those were his views before his coursework and his placement. At the beginning of the training, Ant felt the FS ethos fitted with his own *'absolutely massively'*, both personally and professionally. He said he was *'working towards integration rather than just fitting'*. Later, in the research period, he felt he had integrated FS through his practice placement and writing his dissertation on FS. After the experience of his placement, his thoughts had shifted significantly, in particular regarding his position on the value of FS. The experience caused lots of changes in his thinking and reaffirmed others, for example, his position in relation to mainstream education seemed more embedded.

The reservations I have about working inside the National Curriculum, and even in a Forest School context within that, you know they're pretty strong, and they guide a lot of decisions that steer me away from that course.

Approaches and strategies

Ant's placement allowed him to see the pragmatic aspects of FS applied in context. He did not feel aligned with the approach of the teacher or the school he worked with. He felt that FS was getting used in a *'very formulaic'* way, primarily as a behaviour management tool for the teachers. To Ant, the selection process was interesting and he felt that the choice was to select the children *'that would have benefitted the teacher from leaving the classroom were going'* although he added *'I can't say this happens all the time, because this is just from one experience'*. He noticed that the selection *'had a big influence on the outcomes of the session'*. He felt this had a direct effect on *'the balance between... as a facilitator and what you are able to achieve, and what the parameters of the development that you can expect within the session are'*.

It's easier if you've got a group that gel, and to some extent that has to happen I think, before you can get into any kind of deep learning, so if that's not there from the outset, then I think a lot of time is spent on trying to make that happen, and sometimes you just don't get long enough.

This was one of the compromises between his ideal approach and the reality of the contextual pressures of balancing FS within the curriculum and wider goals of the school. He felt that the pressures that the class teacher faced meant that the classroom based teaching was easier without the children who attended FS. *'I have the luxury of being able to stand back and criticise'* he said, noting the difference in his perspective to that of the class teacher, *'because I don't have the same kind of value as a teacher would on an academic subject, because I'm not under the same kind of pressure'*. Therefore he felt freer not to *'differentiate between kids in terms of good or bad, or naughty, or academically able'*. However, Ant appreciated *'there has to be some kind of order, because you can't do much with chaos either'*. He

didn't claim to have the answer to this challenging situation, yet he observed that his difficulties with it were based on his perspective on children's behaviour and the nature of classroom teaching.

I love working with kids that are perceived to be naughty kids in class, because I don't believe in a classroom environment essentially. So I don't see them as naughty, because I think that they should respond like that.

Ant enjoyed the practical aspects of FS.

I will happily go into the woods and start messing around, making sculptures, and tying things to things, making, I love that kind of thing and so... as a forest school leader, just going there and doing it with the kids, it's not difficult because I would get as much out of it as they do you know. If given a choice I'd always pick up some carving tools and carve....I couldn't put the mallet down!

Ant viewed FS as 'experiential education....but what you experience in there is another question isn't it?' He wanted to pursue the 'relationship between experience and...abstraction and cognitive processes'. After finishing his FS placement and degree, Ant spent a period teaching abroad as he didn't want to engage with the state system. He returned to full time study (Masters in Holistic Science) to put his views on education into perspective.

For me, it's more about system change, because if I can understand all those factors around it then I can understand better what's going on in education, where I fit into it, and what I want to do about it.

Summary

Ant may not return to FS practice but the training informed his thoughts on education. He held a critical and systemic academic view, rather than that of a practitioner, and his lack of experience in practice may have influenced his strong reaction to applying FS within a school context. His values fell into conflict with the norms of the school system, reflecting his perspective on the nature and purpose of mainstream education. However, his ambition to enquire deeply into the

effectiveness of FS as an educational model or tool was genuine and he was motivated to continue with his studies on education from an alternative perspective. His views on FS changed through the experience, regarding a deeper enquiry into the efficacy of FS to enact the declared principles of FS. However, he still viewed FS as a highly effective tool to engender connection and relationship between children and the natural world. This was central to his own values and beliefs on necessary goals in education at this time, and the inclusion of practical and experiential models valued equally with more academic or traditional models of education.

Ant's key frames

- Motivated to explore issues in critical study: systems perspective, academic view
- Critical of FS efficacy & focus on self esteem & wellbeing
- Valued practical, experiential learning
- Alternative educational values & goals
- Questioned political purpose of both FS & mainstream education

Caterpillar's Case Study

'You need that time to sit, look, listen'

Background

Caterpillar worked in a private nursery, leading the pre-school outdoor curriculum and play area. She had 9 years experience as an early years practitioner. During the FS training, she studied for a foundation degree in childcare and early years. She combined her interest in outdoor play and learning in her dissertation, surveying parental and staff opinion about attitudes towards risk.

In her own childhood, she recalled being *'outside all day'* and had a passion for insect life and a care for nature that remained strongly with her. A mother of two young children, she was married to an ecologist and shared a *'very outdoorsy'* naturalist passion within her family life. She was determined to kindle her children's interest and *'instill that respect for nature and environment'*. They had moved to the countryside, despite the commute, to raise children in a natural setting. She described their regular dog walk after school in the local woodland. She followed her children's lead to aid their sense of wonder, curiosity and discovery (Carson, 1956). She wanted her own children to have *'a special place outdoors'*. It was of no surprise that her eco-social 'contagious attitude' (Mathews, 1992, p. 326, quoted in Chawla, 2006, p. 72) was also part of her professional identity. Caterpillar was passionate about insects in particular, Coincidentally, the term 'contagious attitude', as a quality of attention, was coined by another insect-lover, Mathews (1992), in a study of amateur entomologists.

Space

The nursery was located in a town. Caterpillar worked outside most of the time. There was a dedicated area with a well-resourced outdoor classroom hut and garden, with a wildlife area, pond, den building area, mud area, sensory planting and other features. For FS sessions, they walked to the neighbouring old people's home through the 4 acres of gardens to a small spinney, mainly comprised of conifer and some established shrubs. The outdoor environment and FS site were in constant use all year round.

The philosophy of Montessori nursery practice affected how Caterpillar developed the outdoor area. Sensory experience was a clear priority. Caterpillar had removed anything extraneous. She had replaced plastic equipment with less processed, natural objects where possible. There were plants and room for gardening, with the children growing plants and saplings from seed. It was a lovely space to be in. The hut was resourced with wildlife information and child-level tools and equipment. The children had co- designed parts, including the reading area, painted as a shady wooded bower. She spoke of changing the dynamics of free play to reflect her child-centred ethos, by making equipment accessible and moving resources around or changing them regularly. She was keen to increase the playful affordances outside. Her vision for the design of the space was full of enthusiasm. She was involved with achieving funding and continued developments. She had worked on increasing the biodiversity, providing habitat for *'more bugs and species for children to interact with'*.

Context

Caterpillar's relationship with her setting team was strong and well supported. Outdoor play and learning was a key feature and celebrated. The nursery was distinct in that it had always had a strong outdoors focus, established by the owner. The manager stated that they strived to hit the statutory target of 50% time spent outside. Their FS provision had won a National Nursery Awards in 2009 and contributed towards their recent 'Outstanding' status by OFSTED. The nursery publicity reinforced an ethos that the outdoor environment supported and encouraged children's self-belief to develop into confident and enthusiastic learners. The nursery advocated a diverse free-flow learning environment to inspire and encourage imagination and motivation for learning. As a researcher and outside visitor I was welcomed and able to spend time talking with the manager and other staff as well as observing Caterpillar's practice. What Caterpillar had reported about team support was in evidence.

Caterpillar's role was clear and she had received good feedback from staff and parents. Before the research period, Caterpillar had spent her first year developing the outdoor area and curriculum. Funded by the setting to take FS training, she was in the process of taking over the running of FS from a previous member of staff.

However, there had been some staffing issues in this handover. Caterpillar introduced increases in both child-centred and nature-centred practice, which had changed the staff culture. In particular, Caterpillar felt that she had needed to make certain changes and this had challenged her assertiveness. As part of her job remit she felt justified: *'you have to do it'*. There was an ideological clash with staff who

had *'not got the free flow'*, having received a *'completely different training'*. The affect of a shared team environment on practice became apparent to her, in light of recent changes to the EYFS curriculum (DfES, 2007) and new early years practitioner qualifications. This echoed other research participants' experiences, in particular Eagle and Monkey (see below). Despite being diplomatic about some staff's choices, Caterpillar reflected that they were not interested in nature and their attitude passed on to the children. This had a practical knock-on effect in that staffing issues continued to disrupt full outdoor practice. There was a need to get the adult-child ratios up to take children out. Not everyone on the staff team was as willing as Caterpillar and a couple of colleagues, to go out every day whatever the weather. She felt well supported by one colleague in particular, who trained in FS at the same time and with whom she led the FS sessions. They shared a *'wavelength'* and a similar approach to practice. Caterpillar spoke of the strong support they shared, as well as the support she had from the nursery to practice as she chose.

Thinking on FS

The nursery funded her training but Caterpillar had *'wanted to do it for quite a while anyway'*. Caterpillar knew the training had affected her practice, by providing opportunities to think, read widely and reflect. It helped her to validate her own professional views and justify them to the team and parents. She stated *'it is making sense of what I do'*. Her approach did not shift greatly, but was validated. This had strengthened her sense of self in her role. She had a strong theoretical base in child-centred practice from her degree studies. She said she was confident that her instinct to start from the child's emotional state and relationships was backed up by theory, scholarly texts and best practice. Above all,

the training confirmed the value of the socio-emotional relationship that was at the centre of her practice. This was interesting with regards to her passion for nature and her strong motivation for increasing children's awareness and engagement with the natural world. Caterpillar spoke with ecological fluency about species diversity. She described and discussed the ecosystems and species present and reflected with specificity on the impact that the sessions were having on the environment.

I think, because of my husband's background and, you know, just my general interest...if I don't know something, I tell them I don't know and I go and look it up. Because I think that they should know that we don't know everything either.

She saw her role as nature educator as important in her overall practice, that children are not 'free range' to start with. Children needed encouraging to explore nature as part of their education and care. Her degree survey into parental and staff attitudes on risk had highlighted generational differences in increased risk-aversion. She saw the need for FS 'especially for children who don't go out a lot', and to give them 'time to be not do, life's too busy'.

Approaches and strategies

Caterpillar was focused and passionate about her role, 'I love my job', coupled with a strong work ethic, stating 'this is what I do' and 'I'm quite happy to be outside with the children all day'. It had been a struggle at times for Caterpillar to establish her practice, taking over from a member of staff close to retirement, who was trained differently and held different attitudes. Caterpillar tried to develop a more child-centred approach. She acknowledged the difference in attitude she had to some of the other staff members, saying that 'the outdoors is not for everyone'

and that some people *'just don't have an interest'* or an inclination to spend that time outdoors. Her levels of confidence and assertiveness increased over the duration of the research, and by the end she was making changes to the space and resources, offering more nature-centred practice to other age groups in the nursery and inviting them to use the garden area more. Caterpillar's levels of change agency underwent a marked yet subtle shift. She stated early on that she did not like conflict; *'I don't get involved in all the internal politics'*. Instead she focused on changing the space and increasing the natural affordances for the children, making her values known through her practice.

Caterpillar was deeply committed to a socio-emotional child-centred approach. Alongside the training, she was undertaking a Foundation degree and linked the coursework to her FS training. Her resources were organised at the child's level and accessible for *'them doing what they want within that safe environment. They have that freedom'*. For Caterpillar, standing back was not a passive state. She considered the *'tricky balance'* of when *'to stand back or to get stuck in'*, believing that she as the adult can be empowered to take the initiative when appropriate. For Caterpillar, the emotional relationship was key. She first needed to gauge their mood, to *'check out what they need'*. She viewed children as having innate natural curiosity, enjoying how they remembered details and used their observational skills to progress their own development. She felt she supported their sense of wonder by a combination of teaching, finding out when they don't know the answer, and supporting curiosity. She promoted UK wildlife with ID keys, books and posters, responding to their gap in knowledge about native species. She combined identification and recording nature data, noticing *'I started it but they carried on'*.

She felt that the level of ecological awareness and knowledge in practitioners has an impact upon children's experience. With support from her main colleague, her general interest and curiosity maintained her enthusiasm to share ideas.

A predominant theme for Caterpillar was about *'being'*, valuing the children *'just sitting, looking and being in their bubble'*. She appreciated the peace and quiet of the FS site, encouraging the children to pay attention to listening and using their senses, hearing the birds, feeling the weather. *'You need that time to sit, look, listen. People forget otherwise. You need to feel that connection'*. With the freedom *'to do their own thing more outside'*, she felt the children were also more imaginative, engaging deeper in role play: *'it just happens outside, they're more co-operative'*. Above all she allowed room for them to own the space: *'it's their wood, their time, their special place'*.

Summary

Caterpillar's work demonstrated how child-centred and nature-centred practice can be synthesised and applied outdoors to best effect. What marked Caterpillar out was both her passion for ecology and socio-emotional relationship. At the end of the research period, Caterpillar moved jobs to co-manage a nursery, working long office hours to establish standards of practice. However, she still prioritised going outside with the children. She was developing a neglected outdoor space for a new site. In the meantime, she negotiated with a local school to use their FS site for continued practice. This demonstrated her priorities and commitment to outdoor practice, and reflected an integration of her personal and professional identity.

Caterpillar's key frames

- Deep connection and relationship with both nature and children
- Choice and freedom for child
- Time, natural, unhurried, at pace of child
- Contagious attitude as naturalist
- Enjoyment and humour in a playful approach

Eagle's Case Study

'I think it's a fight'.

Background

Eagle was a nursery manager in a small town and changed jobs halfway through the fieldwork period. She undertook FS level 2 training, 3 years before the Level 3 training, as a joint choice between her and her previous employers, as *'they wanted to train somebody up'*. Eagle said she *'would have been here anyway'*.

Her choice to train was *'about my professional beliefs than it is my personal life'* because *'all the values and my beliefs, about how children learn and how they should be supported...that have come from my degree, really fit with FS'*. In her personal life, she enjoyed a little of her free time outdoors and in nature, *'camping 3 or 4 times a year, just for a weekend'* and didn't identify with FS in terms of her personal life. This distinction between her personal and professional values marked Eagle out uniquely from the other practitioners.

Space

In her previous job, she was challenged by space to practice FS, *'even right down to getting the site into a shape where I can use it'*. She negotiated with the owners about clearing the site, an interaction she referred to as a *'battle'* that she could not overcome; *'There are things which need doing to a site really before its safe to use, or before you can even call it a FS site'*.

I have practised FS before...in my previous setting. Although that was...very different, because they were using a local woodland area, so again there were different restrictions there on what we were able to do... This is like our own piece of land but it obviously needs some...work.

Context

The initial context was characterised by pressures of workload, negotiation and compromise. Eagle felt she didn't have any support from her employers to do the training: *'it's kind of left to me'* and *'I don't get time at work...things are so busy'*.

Her negotiations were over a clash in ideology.

The owner was a bit over protective...he wants to put things in there for the children to play and he hasn't really got the concept that actually you create those things with the children. You don't do them to the children.

Eagle was attempting to put FS in place, but struggled to find a compromise.

It's more of a battle at work cos, its like, ... my employers have got their own idea of what forest school is and what FS should look like and that doesn't sit very well next to mine, so its kind of like having to compromise a lot, and still trying to carry all what you know is the right way of doing things.

Having not been able to practice FS or implement her values in her previous setting, Eagle found a new job, leaving behind the *'battle'* where *'I just couldn't reason with the owners whatsoever, not just about FS but about all kinds of things, and it got to the point where I just couldn't stay'*. Within her new setting, Eagle felt increased support, appreciation and an improvement in being of a similar outlook to the people in her new team, who were *'up-to-date'* on child centred practice.

My nursery now is lovely...the owner's just completely different, she really appreciates what you're doing on the ground level, and she'll listen to you. If I was to say to her 'this FS site's not good enough', 'Yeah fine, let's do it' as opposed to putting up lots of barriers.

However, Eagle had to drop FS in her new job, and withdrew from completing the training at a later stage. The hurdles she now had to overcome meant FS was further down on her overcrowded 'list of jobs to do'.

The focus has really been on improving the nursery and improving the staff. Things that are kind of going on, on a day to day basis, as opposed to doing anything with FS, it's kind of just dropped priority because of OFSTED. It's very much been a case of putting standards in and making sure they're happy...So FS's kind of ... still going to happen...hopefully we'll be able to pick up and get the site sorted out. Because we haven't got a FS site at the nursery. However we are in the countryside, so it's a case of finding out who owns land nearby, and then getting permission, and sorting out insurance. It's really starting from scratch.

Thinking on FS

The tensions in ideologies in her previous setting dominated Eagle's thinking at the time of training, her main concern being that 'they've got all the control still', of budgets and power, reflecting in 'how constrained I feel that I am and that I know that I am'. She was glad to be on the training, but was conscious that 'the people that have really got the major control are not the people that are here doing the training'. This affected her so that although 'it's great for me to be here and yes, I know the theory and I know what I'm doing, it's how do you put that into practice within the constraints that you're working in, within the setting?' She felt this barrier was based on a lack of understanding and a lack of appreciation, 'because they haven't had the experiences firsthand and you're going back and arguing the case...but they're kind of reluctant I suppose to...they just get, they can't see it the way that you can really'. Having to negotiate over principles and approach brought up a conflict in values for Eagle.

Yeah, they want to see FS happening. It's just a case at the minute, the more that I'm hearing about their expectations of FS, I'm thinking, 'Oh dear that's really not what FS is.'

Eagle perceived FS training as a way to improve her child-centred practice.

There's really only two places that I feel that I've seen really child centred learning happening and one of those places was here at FS. So for me it's really a way of putting my professional values into practice really.

She felt 'disconnected' to the natural world 'because of work and all of the things which go on in life...the increase in technology really, you know, we spend so much more of our time with technology now than we do with the natural world'. She was focused on the impact FS would have on the children she worked with.

I look at it personally, and it doesn't mean a huge lot because I don't spend a huge amount of my time, in the natural world but, professionally, I feel that it's really important for children. And it's really, it has a lot of positive impact actually on their development and their, not their academic development really but their development as a person.

Eagle saw FS as 'part of the bigger picture...because of a big push in early years at the minute, or certainly since I've done my [degree] training, that things should be child-centred and learning should come from within the child, whereas previously that has been more curriculum [led]'. She felt a positive impact from the training week, 'I love it!', finding reassurance and validation for her thinking and approach with the other trainees and the FS ethos.

Because it's being with like-minded people which, when you're in the setting, I forget it's some of the challenges that can make you feel very isolated. So, it's kind of nice to have that kind of reassurance that actually the way that you do think about things and feel about things is, you're not on your own, you're not...sometimes you start doubting yourself and thinking, 'Is it just me? Have I like, just misunderstood this completely?' And then, it's kind of that reassurance that actually, 'No, you do think the right way about it, it's just the situation that you're in'.

She emphasised 'the support that you get here' and appreciated the 'back up...where you're thinking...it's not just me gone off on a mental tangent and turned

it into something that its not, this is right, this is the way things should be happening'. It is clear what a difference in values she felt there was between the training and her initial setting, and how she felt her position, as a lone voice in the wilderness, led her to doubt her own convictions. Eagle was amongst others such as Caterpillar who mentioned the impact of validation. Having practiced FS previously, Eagle felt she benefitted from the Level 3 training to *'have that recap'* and *'reminders of the practical skills...the safety aspects'*. There was a development in her thinking, *'looking at it from a different perspective where, in the Level 2...I was learning how to do it for myself, and now its thinking about how do I take that on board and teach it to somebody else, so its kind of taking it that next step further'*. However, Eagle felt she was in a frustrating situation, where she was *'qualified to work with children at a higher level but because of that, has taken up a management position and works in an office'*, reasoning that *'the people that are best trained to work with the children, because of the financial constraints, end up working in positions where actually they're not working with the children'*. As well as her immediate context, Eagle was negative about the position of early years in UK society, partly inspired by a recent field trip to Denmark. Her feeling of under-appreciation extended to *'the whole early years approach'*. She despaired about the future changes to the early years curriculum and felt that policy makers did not listen to the research.

And you wonder really, what's their level of understanding of the situation when they're making these...because you think, you know, the professionals that were consulted when the EYFS was brought up and how widely that was really researched and how many opinions were taken into consideration, for them to now be pulling the rug and be looking at it from a completely, well, what seems to be a completely different viewpoint.

Approaches and strategies

As the manager in her previous context, Eagle perceived herself in a battle with her staff team, where she was trying to ‘*establish a FS approach to underpin the EYFS, as it’s outdoors, play based and child centred*’. She complained of arguments with her staff, who seemed reluctant to update their practice and take on board a new approach such as FS, or even the EYFS; ‘*their sort of attitude towards it is ‘Oh yeah yeah and there’ll be another one in a few years*”.

I’ve got the conflict of the staff because obviously they’re doing things in their way and I’ve seen things my way but then I’m getting the battle on the other side from the owners as well as to how they want things done and I’m very much in the middle, kind of fighting it from both directions...it’s a fight, both against the people that you’re working with and...your superiors...and those people who have done their training before you have and have done it in the old way and then you’re saying ‘No actually we don’t do things that way now, we need to do it this way’, and kind of getting them to lose that whole ‘I want to sit a 3 year old down and teach them how to do something’, I’m going to teach them how to write their name and....really what you want to be doing is observing them mark making and giving them opportunities to do mark making... there’s that whole fight... forest school is just a part of that fight.

As a strategy to implement an up-to-date child-centred ethos in her setting, Eagle saw her role as manager ‘*to tackle those beliefs*’, feeling that the practice was ‘*a long way off*’ how she saw it should be. It was difficult for her to know when and how to tactfully intervene and discuss aspects of practice with team members, feeling that ‘*you’re having to go back 5 steps and get it right down to the basics*’.

I kind of look for opportunities where they’re saying things like ‘Ooh, this really isn’t working or I’ve got this child and they’re really struggling to do this and I’ve tried this and I’ve tried this and I don’t know what else to do, and then I’ll kind of hop in and go ‘Oh, well why don’t you try it this way?’...without...then I’m not really saying to them, actually what you’re doing is completely bloody backwards and that you really shouldn’t be doing it that way. It’s more looking for the opportunities where you can really tap them and actually, not offend them and actually find it, lead their practice really.

Summary

The support Eagle got from the training was essential to her feeling validated and reassured in her viewpoint on the benefits of child-centred outdoor play. After the support from the training group is over, she struggled to maintain a focus on FS practice. She was on her own in that she did not have other people to practice FS with in her new setting. She was not part of a wider network of FS practitioners in her local area. She felt isolated and unsupported in her past position, dealing with 'battles' in her context. She wasn't sure where her training or job development would end up, and it was no surprise that, during the research period, she left to start her new job. However, this led to Eagle not being able to complete the training and starting in a new nursery, prioritising standards of practice over FS sessions. She was happier to be more aligned with the principles in her new place of work, but felt the everyday pressures of busy life of a nursery manager. She stopped practising FS, in contrast with Caterpillar, for example, who maintained FS when undertaking a similar job move. Eagle had little outdoor experience in her family background. Her professional view aligned with the FS principles because of its strong child-centred ethos and approach to play. She had a politicised viewpoint on the status of early years professions and felt undervalued. Her view on FS set her case apart, approaching FS for professional reasons alone.

Eagle's key frames

- Strong child-centred ethos yet struggles with battles in contexts over ethos
- Values play and FS as an approach to learning and development
- Feels disconnected personally but connected professionally
- Advocates for the raising of early years status in UK
- Heavy workload, less contact time with children and FS, isolated and frustrated

Lion's Case Study

'We need to take more care.'

Background

Lion had 10 years experience as a teaching assistant. At the time of the research she had worked for 3 years in a rural primary school, with Reception and Year 1 children. She ran FS with 2 class groups on a weekly basis, outside for 30% of her work time. She resigned from her post as the research came to a close. In her personal life, Lion was an active dog walker and enjoyed the countryside where she lived *'I like being in the woods, but I'm really not that adventurous...I do enjoy being out all the time. I'm not an indoor person at all.'* She was vocal about the effects of development on the rural countryside and articulate in expressing her views. Strong memories of childhood outdoor play influenced her view of FS.

I lived on a big council estate, in a town, but the difference was...it's a cul-de-sac, and surrounding 3 sides of it is woodland. As a child, I used to spend all day, every day, in the school holidays and at weekends, out in the woods. That is what my childhood was based on. So for me to do FS, it seems natural, because that's what I grew up with. But I think that if you didn't grow up with that, to some people, it's very difficult to understand.

It was not Lion's active choice to do the training, although she was happy as *'I'm probably one of the few members of staff at school that enjoys being outside'*.

One of the teachers that did FS... left and they asked me, I tend to do all the outdoorsy stuff, 'Would you be interested?' So I said 'What does it involve?' 'Oh it's a week training and a 3 day practical'.

She had a shock on the first day of training, as the coursework was more than she had expected.

'If I'd known what was involved, I wouldn't have done it...I really didn't know anything about FS and to be honest with you, even when I went on the training, I still didn't know what it was all about'.

Space

The school was in a rural village, which she described as '*affluent*'. The FS site was on the school grounds, next to the school driveway. It was a small site, with a few trees, one of which was climbable and had rope ladders attached. There were wild corners, and an area where children gathered around a big tree by the road. The children had roped off an area that they had decided needed conservation. The impact of regular sessions was in evidence in the mud, erosion and the well-used fire pit.

Context

Lion's awareness about FS had grown though gradually becoming involved at work. The school had delivered FS for 5 years; '*I didn't know anything about it... on Fridays, we go and do FS and I was like 'OK', and 'Bring your waterproofs' etc*'. At the time of the training, she was working as a '*teacher assistant based one to one*' and felt dissatisfied with her role, that it was just about '*policing*'. On the training, she reflected on her role in school.

It's all about behaviour control and policing and just making sure situations just don't go off. So after what I've done this week, open freedom, being creative...to go back to a policing role, I'm just dreading it.

Thinking on FS

On the training course, Lion said FS '*in our school isn't what we're doing*'. She criticised prior practice in her setting. From the experience of the training, she was '*quite shocked with the differences*'. Her analysis was that her school's FS delivery was out of date and had little attention paid to it.

The FS leader at the moment did her training 5 years ago...we have very basic tools, buckets, little shovels, tarpaulins and ropes...I did understand that it was children learning themselves and exploring and we're there to

observe and the help if they ask for it. I understood that part of FS, but nothing moves on. It's the same every week, we don't have the fire pit...so although they are learning, there's no extension to the basics.

Lion pointed out the effect a different training provider had on her's and the previous FS leader's outlook.

I don't know whether they did all of the things that we've done [on Lion's training course], all of the practical skills...I don't think it's a case that she doesn't want to do things, I think she just doesn't know how to do it.

Lion felt that FS delivery had not been handed over in the changeover of staff when she began practice; *'I'm not convinced that all of those skills had been shared'*. She also felt a gap between her and the other staff, on attitudes about childcare and risk. Her attitude to risk-taking was *'something that I would not normally do, and it's out of my comfort zone'* yet she was aware of the benefits gained from the challenge of the emotional journey.

Anxious, excited, a whole range of emotions...you think 'I really don't want to do this', but you're determined to do it....it's self-gratification when you've done it. Feeling proud, elated, and 'I never thought I could do that'.

Lion bemoaned contemporary risk-aversion towards children; *'they're trapping them in cotton wool!'* She saw the limits to adult experience now.

If they didn't do it, then they wouldn't naturally think, what enjoyment is my child going to get climbing a tree, when they've never done it themselves! They've never taken that risk so they're not going to pass those on are they?

She was critical about parenting that created *'molly-coddled children'* and made links to economic background, relating a story of the estate where she grew up:

You've got these kids on the council estate, some of them have not a lot. But they're doing all of the things that I did as a kid...it's just demographics. If your parents have got the money for play stations and Wii's...you're going to sit in front of a...screen...all night. If your parents haven't got that, you have some imagination to entertain yourself....do they embrace going out, have a better imagination and prepared to take more risks?

Lion had a strong relationship with the natural world, with a politicised view:

It's being able to identify cause-and-effect....not just what my actions are, but everyone's actions. Because we still want a world for the future...so we need to take care of the world that we've got'.

She was critical of a selfish modern view, of not 'looking at the bigger picture' for 'future generations'. This related to a perspective that 'we need to take more care of our natural environment...I think people are all too eager to dig up a green field and put a slab of concrete down'. She was conscious of the erosion of green spaces within an economic context.

It's another piece of land where children would go...a natural habitat, that's now been removed from them, and replaced by something man-made, that they can't access unless they're willing to pay for it. So they've taken away free resources, and put something there that a privileged few can use.

Approaches and strategies

Initially, Lion hoped that the child she was working with could do FS.

He likes to be outdoors, so I was hoping that I could learn skills...that I can take back and that if he's not coping in the classroom, I can go outside and use some of the skills I have learnt, and yes, he can lead the way, but maybe he'll get something more educational out of it? Rather than just looking for spiders all the time. He might be inspired to do something else...how can I help this child access school life easily?...The classroom is completely claustrophobic...its a major stress level situation for him, whereas outside, he is very different...FS can really be a way for him to calm down, an environment where he's not ready to explode all the time, and just...be able to do and to achieve.

Lion was a strong advocate of child-centred outdoor play. She was critical of the practice she had observed in work settings: 'don't they just take them out, and they give them the Little Tykes cars to go and play in?' To Lion, child-centred play meant 'the child going and doing what they want'.

If I'm the child...not being told 'You must do this'. 'There's the space; go do whatever makes you happy.'...if it's coming from them, they will be happy. Whereas being told 'Right today, you've got 4 sticks and this string, I want

you to do this with it'...if there's a bit of string and 4 sticks there, and I go and I do something that I want to do, I'm happier about that. And then how proud am I, that I've produced something? That maybe nobody else can see, but I know that that is a little house with a goblin in it...rather than somebody saying 'Well what's that? Oh no I don't see it.'

Lion understood the process of scaffolding in small, achievable tasks and the impact it had on the children, *'because if they're doing what they want, they're happy...that raises their self esteem and their confidence. Because they're now thinking 'Ooh I can do that'*. To Lion, the role of the adult involved facilitating child-initiated activity, that was something to be determined with the child, within *'a grey area, and there's no right or wrong'*. She noted that the rule-bound nature of the setting affected how child-centred practice worked in reality. Within FS, she aimed to give clear boundaries that enabled a sense of freedom that was different to the nature of the rest of school life. *'So it's motivation for them, just to be themselves'*. She noted that *'some children are just put down all the time, whereas in a FS environment...they're not going to be put down, so it raises their motivation, their self esteem, their confidence'*. Lion had a number of strategies she used in her role to enact her beliefs.

Go with the flow of the child. When they're talking to you about what they're doing, encourage it...stay positive with them all the time...praise specific things. 'You did a fantastic job with those two sticks'...ask them open-ended questions.

After the training course, Lion began leading the FS sessions. She noted the difference it made if the teacher was present in the sessions due to a change of staff. The previous teacher used to attend and take an interest, taking topics outside and bringing aspects of the FS experiences back into the classroom. The new teacher had not been on a session. Lion felt that the teacher was missing perspectives on the children: *'the teacher; they never see it'*.

If I was a class teacher then I would want to know. Now the class teacher last year..their topic was pirates and the stuff they did in FS as pirates was fabulous...they were using pirate language, the whole thing translated into FS and it was fantastic.

Lion used story and imaginative prompts within her sessions, which she reflected was a springboard for free fantasy play.

For the age group we're with, story is a fantastic thing, to sit round, give them a story, whether its about a tree, an animal, anything to do with woodland, and then let their imaginations go and lead the play.

By the second interview, Lion was happy with the way practice was going, after ‘a long, hard struggle’. She had the ‘right number of helpers and another first aider with me, so everything was there, in place’. Lion reported it had been difficult to maintain the FS ethos and promote the new requirements to the school staff. She wanted to use more tools but hadn’t convinced the school team. Despite this, she was pleased about the changes she had made to provision. She held ambitions to promote FS further, as she saw that ‘there’s an opportunity to take it right through the school’.

The other teacher [FS qualified]... said ‘Can I ...observe your practice, because it's changed so much from when I did it?’..the school have noticed a change...whereas before it was just hide and seek or a mud pie.

Lion reported that the previous FS leaders had not had adequate policies and procedures in place, and that other staff had a different attitude and awareness of FS. For example, Lion knew from the training to have a first aider on the session. She ran into conflict with another teacher who had said ‘Well, we’re on site and there’s first aiders in the office’. However, Lion felt the absence of senior support and was insecure about the future of FS in the school.

A new head... goes for creative curriculum and outdoor learning, but I'm not sure where he stands on FS. I'm kind of at the view that we need to really back it and put some focus and importance on it or why are we really bothering?

Lion suggested parent visits and initiated various strategies, but found the head was 'not interested'. This marked a turning point as Lion then encountered other ethical issues she was not happy about in the school practice. She felt that she was a person with a 'conscience' and acted on her own judgement 'when you know it's not right'. An OFSTED visit raised issues where she felt her professional judgement was being undermined for the sake of 'going by the book'. She felt in 'a moral dilemma...about making the right choice'. In the final interview, Lion said she was resigning from her post, dissatisfied with various factors in the school's practice.

We keep being told we're here for the best interests of the children, again it's double standards. It's in the best interests when it suits the staff.

By the end of the research period, Lion had not completed the FS coursework, but felt she had done the best she could within her workload.

I still haven't finished...The handbook is up to date...I'm not having anyone say anything about me once I've gone because there was no handbook.

Summary

Lion had a shaky start to the training, due to a lack of communication and within her school team about the commitment involved. She felt inspired by the course and made improvements to the practice in her setting. The challenges she encountered paint a picture of isolation and separation, with little crossover and understanding. FS did not seem valued by the staff team. The impact of changes in staff was significant. Overall, Lion was faced with disappointment due to a series of missed opportunities.

Lion's key frames

- Child-centred play advocate
- A bigger picture view

- Story and imagination
- Politicised: aware of economic context
- Valued natural resources
- Conscientious & attentive to safety

Monkey's Case Study

'This is why we're doing FS.'

Background

Monkey was an early years practitioner working in a pre-school in the rural village where she lived. It was her choice to do training as the setting wanted FS in place. FS already happened for Reception class in the adjacent school. She was a busy mother and community member. Her husband had a background in environmental science and they lived quite a green lifestyle. Monkey went outdoors often with her youngest child. Her pace of life was faster than she wanted, with work and family commitments; *'my time is spent just being a taxi chasing round, because we live rural'*. She was very family focused; *'my life is ...all geared around the family'*. Both her children had attended FS and her husband supported her training. *'I felt guilty studying but that's gone now ... they know that Mum has to do this'*.

Space

The settings shared a FS site on the adjacent school grounds, a five minute walk through the school playing field. There was a copse of established trees, a fire pit, stacks of logs and a digging pit. Within the copse was a tree with a low branch, designated the *'climbing tree'* when supervised by a pre-school practitioner in the

FS sessions. The site was on a slight slope that the children enjoyed rolling down. Situated in a rural area, the site had views of fields, woods and hills surrounding it. Monkey brought firewood onto the site with the help of a parent. She also brought water on site. The school stopped her using water from the nearby outside tap, complaining about the 'mess' of the puddles.

Context

Monkey took two groups out for FS on a weekly basis, outside for 30% of her work time. Her supervisor wanted a whole class out and Monkey had an initial challenge asserting how FS had to run, in terms of ratios and her 6 week course placement, which required the same children to attend for observation.

It's very difficult ... my supervisor's got her view of how she wants it to operate. I'm looking at it from a purely practical point of view, the space that we've got, and the children that we've got...she wants everybody to go.

Monkey's second concern was about parental involvement, which was necessary if she was to attempt to meet her supervisor's request;

We struggle from a setting point of view that we don't get a lot of parental support. We do ask for a parent helper to come in on every session, but we just don't get that. That's the problem, so I think that unless we can convince the parents, which is obviously going to be my job to sort of call a meeting and say to parents. 'this is what we're going to do and its going to be great and your children are going to benefit because'...and get them fired up that way. I doubt that we'll get the parents to support it'.

Monkey's hunch was right and she struggled throughout the research period to get parents involved. She also struggled to get support to go on the training at first.

The FS ethos kept cropping up in various discussions with either other practitioners or tutors. It was something I wanted to do and thought, 'Yes, it's a worthwhile thing'. And I approached my supervisor...but we are committee run and we are very governed by whoever is in that committee'. So, if we have a supportive committee great, they'll fund things, well, obviously if they've got the money. But then you have others who say 'No its not acceptable', or 'I don't believe in that', so it just doesn't get off the ground.

There was a lack of understanding about FS within the entirety of Monkey's context, from her supervisor and colleagues, the teachers at the school next door, the parents and the committee. Monkey had tried and failed to gain support; *'as members of staff we don't get to go to these committee meetings, so we can't voice our opinions, you know, we have to put it through the supervisor'*. She had also tried to build relationship with the school teachers who practiced FS already, reaching out and being rebuffed, characteristic of her interactions with other adults in the context.

Thinking on FS

The training was important for Monkey in many ways. At the beginning of the course, Monkey was anxious; she wanted to be able to study and prepare herself first and did not know what to expect. *'My husband said, you always panic, always, every time you start a course'*. When we spoke at the training centre, Monkey was overwhelmed by all the things she felt she had to learn and do.

There's so much; new things that we're learning... so much new stuff to try and take on board...it's just getting your head around what's expected of you...it will be different because...this is a different way of learning for me...I tend to...pore over the books and I make my notes, rather than this, sort of, get out there, hands on...it's almost like I'm still holding back.

Monkey would have preferred to have absorbed the theory first and felt challenged by the experiential nature of the training, concerned about tool use, reassured by her first achievements. She had a cautious and conscientious nature, needing time to absorb new input so she can consider it seriously.

It's not something I'm going home thinking 'Oh, what am I doing? I wish I hadn't said yes!'...That's a positive, but... you want to succeed...I've always been that if I do something I want to do it to the best of my ability, that's the way I've been brought up you know, you don't just say 'Yeah ok, I'll turn up'...obviously there's work involved...but it'll be worth it at the end.

During the week she was able to relax in the convivial atmosphere and found the level of support useful. She appreciated that *'you are very gently led'*. She liked being part of a team, *'so if you're struggling, maybe someone will say 'Oh, you've got your hand the wrong way'...that sort of helps you through it doesn't it?'* This was the ethos Monkey had in her approach to practice too, always on hand to help either adult or child. She found it upsetting that others didn't see the needs around them as she did.

Monkey embodied a traditional female role; caring for others and always putting them first. Being such a strong advocate of child-centred and child-led practice as well, I found it hard to always distinguish whether she was still in semi-mother role or being an example of excellent facilitation. These roles were, in some ways, indistinguishable from each other and certainly cannot be divided within the self. Monkey was a dedicated and attentive mother, an active parent who supported her children to engage with nature: *'My youngest...is always out collecting things and 'Come and see what I've found under here'and great, that's lovely'*. It was natural that her practice resembled her whole self.

Perhaps another parent might not see it in the same way that I do. I just from my view, I think that these little people are so amazing, you know they grow up so quickly, you know you've got to capture as much of this early on as you can... But I think well, it's only by going and watching the children that you feel these things, don't you?

Concerning her relationship with the natural world, Monkey was a passionate nature lover, yet struggled to find the time to indulge it.

We all lead such busy lives that very few of us actually take time to stop and sort of step back and go out and appreciate...we can walk down country lanes and we can see a little bit of wildlife...I know some families don't have that benefit...even for us we don't always appreciate what's around us, we

sort of go, a little bit like yesterday when we were blindfolded in that activity, all of a sudden, you lose your sight, but your other senses sort of compensate, and you start to sort of smell things around you and take in different, different senses.

She made a useful analogy here, of how losing sight increased sensitivity and that the same sensory process happens when appreciating nature around us. Her experience was that her senses became more engaged.

Regarding risk, Monkey took a firm child-centred approach; *'I am a believer that we've totally gone far too far the other way. These children are being wrapped up in cotton wool'*. She advocated for children's need to explore and discover for themselves, giving an example of supporting her boy's learning curve in climbing trees.

He climbs the tree... and then he falls out of the tree...so he learns by that you know, it's awful, but they have to sometimes take a tumble to understand, ah...so next time...and he doesn't do it now, you know, he does it, not my way, but he does it in a better way.

In her role as a carer and FS practitioner she had considered her position.

I think it's only by taking risks they learn to manage risk...if you say to them, 'No, you can't do that', they never learn it...It's a tough one because obviously society now is you know, you want to protect the children, but have we gone too far? I think...we have.

Finally, child-centred play was central to FS for Monkey; *'just letting the child go, with an idea, and you give them the props if they want them, to expand that play'*.

Having had previous early years training, she felt confident, like Caterpillar, in her reasoning for her actions.

I do tend to sort of, step back now...the benefit of being educated is that you don't need to do that, just let them go with it, you know.

She observed that she used to act differently and be more directive with children before her training, *'Oh, why don't we just do this'*. Yet through doing observations

and paying closer attention to the child she saw their play in a different light. She watched her colleagues going through the same process. To enable child-centred practice, Monkey used a tactic to overcome her colleagues' approach; '*Sometimes you can kind of distract, it's awful, but sometimes distract the adult, you know, that just leaves them to carry on*'. Resorting to covert tactics was a creative approach and one of Monkey's few successes in the interactions with the other adults.

Approaches and strategies

A year into her practice, Monkey was thrilled to be finally leading the FS sessions, feeling able to set up the practice as she intended. Monkey's main approach was to support child-centred imaginative play, with resources, encouragement and facilitating choice. She was aware of the developmental power of the imaginative worlds that the children inhabited in their free play, and spent time observing and documenting their experiences and language.

I find myself bobbing here and there and trying to catch snippets of things and find myself saying to the staff 'what did they do earlier?' It's hard to try and pick everything up as we're doing it. Usually on a Tuesday night I transcribe what we've done and what have you ready, make all my observations up and pass them on to various people.

Dedicated observation was at the heart of her practice, but this was not a shared passion within the team. The other staff made observations, then Monkey collected them and reflected privately, in part because that's how she preferred it, and in part as she did this in her own time for her own interest.

I'm not getting a lot of feedback, and I'm finding that a little bit frustrating. So you know I might have to say 'Look please, I'm giving you this notepad, please write in it and let me have it at the end of the session.' ... obviously I can't be everywhere. So you know I am worried that if I end up spending more time with this one particular child, cos obviously he is going to need a little bit more supervision, a little bit more maybe support and understanding, then what else am I going to miss with the other children?

Trying to enlist team support for her approach to FS was Monkey's overarching theme throughout the research period; *'you can't force your beliefs or your enthusiasm onto other people... it's very hard...trying to get them to move to that next stage and sort of embrace that kind of ethos, even if it's just in part'*. Her enthusiasm for going outside, for the FS ethos and for close observation was met with resistance and a lack of interest; *'we started the sessions...and neither member of staff came with their clothing'*.

I do think that she thinks that actually 'we're going outside, all I've got to do is make sure they don't hurt themselves, I don't need to do anything else with them'. And you know there's me sort of 'Oh I wonder what we might find in there'. She'll just sort of 'Well I'm watching them tree climb, that's it'. ... she did say about somebody...I said 'What's he been doing today?' 'Oh he did some tree climbing.' 'Oh, was he confident?' 'Well no not really, I had to lift him in the tree and lift him out.' I said 'Oh we don't really lift them in the tree do we?', I said, 'They have a go themselves, we give them help, we give them a bit of support but... maybe...perhaps he didn't feel comfortable being lifted in the tree'and I thought 'Ooh, how am I handling this?' So I'm starting to sort of question my sort of leadership role to a point, you know, and I'm thinking at what point do I need to sort of step up a bit and say 'Now hold on a minute'? I mean I've done information packs and sheets for the staff which set out how we do our questioning, and how it's all child led, and we're all stepping back. But I'm thinking, 'How many of them have really read it?' It sounds really be silly, but...

Monkey talked about having to *'step up'* and assert herself, not a position she is naturally comfortable with, to *'say 'This is what I really need from you. I can't do my job if ... I can't be here there and everywhere, you've got to be my eyes and ears, and you've got to write it down for me.'* She was frustrated by the lack of feedback and attention that the adults had on the FS sessions.

I don't know how I'm going to get it from the two I'm working with...they're just not giving me that support I need right now. And it's how do I go about it without rocking the boat, and sort of upsetting people in the bargain. I'm finding that quite challenging at the moment...that's my challenge.

'Stepping up' was made harder by the fact that Monkey did not have a higher status in the pre-school. Despite being the trained FS practitioner, she felt not taken

seriously, as they tended to ignore her requests.

You know, the only other way I thought of dealing with it, is next week present them with little notebooks and pens. And I'm thinking 'How more obvious can I make it?'

Anybody that's coming into FS, I would like them to actually read the handbook. Quite honest now, that is not going to happen. It just isn't. Because they're going to say 'I'm not going to sit and read all that. Why do I need to read it?'

It may be difficult to be around someone who has enthusiasm and persists whatever the odds. Maybe her documentation urge was perceived negatively, or challenged other peoples' values in practice? Yet the adults in the setting and those in the school next door seemed to thwart all Monkey's attempts at developing both the wider FS programme and the FS site. In the school, she reported being blocked when offering improvements and resources for the site. The school complained about mud and keeping children clean. They showed a lack of interest in planting and using the grounds in a different way. Because of this, Monkey felt she couldn't develop a deeper sense of place by engaging with the space, and she didn't get a chance to reflect on her relationship with it. The committee did not fund a tools budget, reacting to the implied level of risk without informed knowledge of how the tools would be used. They had no interest to visit the site or *'to find out what is really going on in FS'*. Monkey said FS was *'just a badge to promote the nursery rather than another whole ethos of practice'*. The dangers of this rhetorical, tokenistic approach show how FS can be undermined by the adults in the setting, even those not present at the sessions or in the immediate environment. Monkey was challenged by her lack of agency to make change, her low status in relation to others, communication issues and clashes over pedagogical values. One example she gave showed some a glimmer of hope in a positive connection with another member of staff.

'Oh yes' she says, 'I can't believe he's done that, he's never done that before.'
'Ah well he's outside now, and this environment... he's much more relaxed
outside'. I mean there was one that was actually her key child....she was quite
gobsmacked. 'Come on, please see now the positive, and the importance, and
this is why we're doing FS.'

She made the point at the end of the research period that:

We all want the same thing, for the children to develop and progress and grow,
to nurture them...We don't seem to be all kind of singing from the same hymn
sheet, if you get my drift.

Summary

An able practitioner with experience and training, Monkey was making the best of limited opportunities to practice in the way she wanted. Monkey, despite her positive attempts, was disempowered in her role. The team didn't share her enthusiasm for FS, or the benefits she saw regarding child-centred outdoor play. The staff team attitudes, modeled in a reluctance to go outdoors, to get cold, to observe, to recognise her skills and collaborate over the space, stopped them from engaging with Monkey's value of FS or child-centred natural play.

Monkey's key frames

- Child-centred natural play approach; supported imaginative free outdoor play
- Prioritised children's needs
- Valued observation
- Promoted safe risk-taking and child-led reasoning
- Conscientious: strong sense of duty and care
- Strong identity as a mother
- Pessimistic view of team and context, based on obstacles
- Enthusiastic supporter of young children's creative exploration
- Disempowered and undervalued in setting: top-down hierarchy affected practice.

Moose's Case Study

'How amazing it is!'

Background

Moose worked at a residential environmental education centre as the education co-ordinator. She spent the majority of her time in hands-on delivery, in addition designing programmes and liaising with schools. Moose had worked at the centre for 9 years, initially part-time as her *'relaxing job'*. Moose experienced frustration in her previous job as a political campaigner, which led her to working full time at the centre. *'I just thought life could be simpler'*. She was both busy and self-fulfilled in her role. At home she was a parent and home educator, and felt that *'it's not separate, I don't go home and have a different lifestyle... with my parenting or with my work, it's the same'*. She felt her work and personal life had always run this way, and connected this with her experience of the outdoors, having spent *'loads of time outside from a child, and then I've travelled, so I've lived outside for a long time... I love being outside'*.

Space

The centre was located in 14 acres of rural landscape with a large house and gardens, play spaces, sports spaces, woods, meadows, animal paddocks, campfire circle and willow labyrinth. The programme took place mostly outside in grounds that were wildlife-rich with a variety of habitats and many quiet places to go to. The woodland was planted 20 years ago and specifically designed to increase natural play affordances for children, with diverse species of tree and shrub.

Context

The centre was founded 40 years ago, as a residential environmental education centre with a spiritual focus for children. Moose said that every morning, when walking through the grounds to work, there was a team challenge to find something amazing to share. This distinct and unusual start to the working day described the nature of the team ethos and practice. The centre ran independently on the income from programme participants, with no outside funding. The staff had low wages, but Moose felt that they were compensated in other ways, through job satisfaction and a positive team ethos. There was an emphasis on care and nurture both within the staff team and for participants. Moose advocated that the ‘whole team loves working there’. I got a distinct impression of this on my visit; of a group of sincere and committed people, that focused on their team-working and communication, and on developing a distinct socio- emotional ethos. Crying in the staff room was positively encouraged, for example, sharing the often rollercoaster ride that working with children can be.

Thinking on FS

The ethos of the FS training fitted squarely with Moose’s personal ethos: *‘I know it’s not some kind of hierarchical teacher-student thing, which obviously goes for our school as well, it’s a thing that I really want to avoid’*. With a background in political campaigning, she engaged easily with political concepts and empowerment in her educational work. The following monologue explains her position on how she conceived her role and aspirations as a child-centred educator. It begins by her describing the level of power and control she felt adults should exercise over children, as part of a professional children’s service.

How many teachers do you hear saying, 'I don't want to police this any more'?...and how many teachers feel that, loads, because I speak to them all the time, and yet they allow it to happen....And so, my allowing children to be free and child centred is the same as I think it should be for everybody...They need to discover it for themselves. I believe that if we give that to children, if they make their own decisions they're going to grow up doing the same thing. And if they can make their own decisions and realise that they're powerful, as powerful as the next person, then maybe they'll make those choices themselves and go 'Actually, you know what, we aren't going to teach our children like that any more. ...We're going to make a change, we can do it', rather than 'No, everybody feels so disempowered', and the reason adults feel so disempowered is because we take it away from them, at a really young age, take away the power. They're the most powerful things in the world...it's about empowerment...it's about non hierarchy, it's about being and making our decisions together; rather than having our decisions made for us.

To Moose the distinction between an adult and child was minimal. She aimed to enable empowerment in both the children and the adults she worked with. Her position was from outside the mainstream, working with children outside of the school system, therefore she was able to engage with the school groups on her own territory and agenda. She was clear that she felt fortunate to be in a position and a context to be able to do so. Throughout the research period, she placed great emphasis on the validity of children's right to speak and be heard as much as adults, encouraging children to lead their own experiences, reason and assess their own risk. There was a distinction in Moose's practice between child-centred and child-led. This was articulated in a fluency and expertise of practice, reiterating the awareness she displayed about the constant negotiation of power and choice between adult and child.

Child-centred means what you're delivering, you're in a moment together...you would set up an activity for them...or be doing something to bring them into that moment. And once they're there, they're in it, you're child centred, you're around them, 'Where are they at, where are we going? Ok, next step'. Then you give them something and it's them and you're with them but you're still gently leading it in a way or delivering it, facilitating it to go in a certain way, but in a child centred way, so you're not dragging them, but they're coming along with you, you're doing it together. It's centred around the child,

so if they're not getting it, you can re-look at it and check exactly where they're all at with it, making sure their needs are met but you're still in that moment, knowing where you want to go with it.

Whereas child led, who knows! It can go anywhere, cos you're being led and you have no idea and there's a real 'let go'. But child centred is also really difficult, cos you know that you want to get what you want to get across and that can be really hard if they don't necessarily get where you're going with it. Its a real knack to be able to use theatre and drama and moment-gatherers to get them to go with you, without being a teacher. Without it being adult led. So for example I might do an activity like that, and then head off to another area of the woodland to do another little activity on the way to just release that little bit of centredness into 'off you go' and then let them go. So that's a great way of processing that information, and then they can come back into centredness, so there's not too much of that, like two 40 minute sessions of child centred within a whole day of child led.

In this she explained how she saw the delicate path where an adult practitioner 'gently leads' in a child centred way, balancing the children's needs against the aims of the session or the moment. It's a dance of power, to 'let go' of power into child-led, then use her own power, or 'knack' to intervene again, to lead without leading. Moose valued the self-chosen, experiential and embodied processes, in herself, and this connected to how she viewed her practice. She was in touch with her own sense of wonder at the natural world (Carson,1956)and valued the primacy of direct experience. Her ethos was influenced by her own experience of education and she valued the FS training, because it fitted her own ethos so well.

The problem that I'll probably have with this course is that I have a block with academic stuff, because of my schooling...why am I having to listen to some other person-who's-academically-studied-something says?...I don't need to listen to that, I know how I feel...which is a real block for me in many, in many things, I have to fight that.... I was talking about this with somebody...this morning, and then I suddenly went into one, it was a way about the whole, how a tree works, you know, how it takes up nutrients, how it sort of brings down the sugars and how amazing it is!

To Moose, caring for the environment meant 'the responsibility we have as being part of the environment', something she hoped to impart through her work. She was aware that, as an activist 'I do take it a little bit further than maybe some

would'. Moose's beliefs linked to her practice very clearly as a sense of mission, to teach environmental education within FS, increasing understanding and care for the natural world, by blending a child- and nature-centred approach.

To this end, Moose had a clearly defined and established *eco-social identity* that was active in her practice, shaped by her life experience as an activist and professional experience in attempting to impart environmental values in her work. She felt that FS needed a clearer position on environmental education: *'I feel that it might be missing...the ecological concepts'* but she recognised the value of FS in building relationship *'with the deep emotional connectedness with the natural world'*. *'I think what FS does is get you out there, get you loving it, getting you going 'Yeah! This is pretty amazing!'*"She wanted to follow on from an emotional basis by grounding it in teaching about ecosystems from an Earth Education perspective. *'That's how you coppice, that's how you do this, but how's it all work and what does that mean?'* She felt that the division of subjects in schools, such as limiting ecosystems to the science discipline, removed learners from the actual experience that could be gained from engaging with the topic outside, *'doing it practically'*. In her view, she preferred a more joined-up approach; *'You do a little bit of it out in the woods and it's carried on at school and your home'*. Later in the research process, she spoke of her struggles to engage within schools to do follow-up work and her plans to build programmes using both experiential and in-class practice. Moose was eloquent on the subject of environmental education and its lack in FS, a lack investigated to some extent in the literature (Maynard, 2007b). However, she was clear to point out the limits of an environmental education approach, *'that's not for everybody either is it?'* She balanced her own needs to

teach, *'it could just be me and my training'*, with the needs of the child. *'There's some kids that you've got to get out and they've got to have just that, you don't wanna go too far with it, you just want that fun in the woods'*. She tried to judge when the FS participants are ready for a deeper investigation of ecological concepts, *'where everybody's at with it'*. Further, she acknowledged that feeling responsible to increase environmental understanding was *'one of my demons'*. She felt a sense of urgency; *'if I don't give this person this thing that might be the spark, might be that tiny seed, even if its one out of a hundred children, then somebody else might not, so I've got to do it!'* Her feeling of responsibility to her team, to take the training outcomes back, was somewhat tempered by being able to relax on the training, before going back to her everyday work pace.

You're so busy, you stay at that level whilst you're going 'aAe you alright? Are you alright? Are you alright? Ok let me watch you, yeah that's great, dadadadah'...you know, feeding back from them and changing and developing from what everybody feels, as your team gets bigger. Everything changes because we work on that level, we all go together, so it's really nice for me to come and be able to sit back and listen and connect with things and, and just to develop me, come back into me.

On the training, Moose appreciated learning more about the neuroscience of child centred natural play. Echoing most of the practitioners within the present research, looking at some of the neuroscientific theory validated her own beliefs in using a natural play approach. Moose used the training in part to develop her relationship with her co- worker, observing *'there's been a lot of inner development between our relationship and knowing what we're gonna go forward and do'*. She was aware of her own learning process as a cycle.

I think its like a whole spiral that I keep going through of getting so connected that I want to do something about it and then the things that I'm doing about it take me away from it more...and then I go back and try and make it simple again.

Approaches and strategies

By the second interview, Moose had experienced a shift in her approach. Having been keen on the training to fuse the teaching of ecological concepts, the experience of practice had allowed her to deepen an understanding of the FS process. She was letting go of her need to teach and observing how the children absorbed the experience.

I remember one of the things I said to you was that there wasn't enough environmental facts, in terms of how Earth Education runs for example. I'm not sure if I feel exactly the same way now.....having had more groups on a regular basis...you have more of a chance to get those environmental concepts in. I have one group I've been working with for over a year, and I know that the concepts that I have done with groups in a week, they still haven't got yet, but they've got so much more on other things...they'd be able to tell me more about the use of the things around them and it's a different kind of education...The emotional and the social side of it is just amazing, and you have to let go of that more academic side I suppose, which I didn't realise I had, as much of it or how important it was, or maybe my ethos and maybe it's cos of the way that I am...that I want them to understand these concepts, so that they can go forward and do something with it. And I do with FS, some children really connect with their environment and really go forward and learn from it, and others need a safe place for themselves, they're not really connecting with the woodland in the way that others would, in environmental ways that I'm talking about. And for them, I would like to go 'No no no, let me just show you these things!' Let it all blow you away, you know, how this seed goes Pffff like that and grows into a plant, without it coming up in a child-led way, and it will take a lot longer for some of those children to get to that point. And others get it really soon and it's a process of me letting go and going with that, finding that on a personal note... I feel ...it's me not them.

FS in Moose's eyes had become a place where environmental education can happen, but the practice has given her a more accurate handle on the nature of the FS experience and how the learning took place. In this shift, Moose recognised more fully the flow of interaction that she is able to attend to in FS, that things 'come up' rather than planning to teach about soil, air and water. Moose was learning to let go further into the moment, to let go of her agendas and to realise when her impulse to act was dominating the moment. There was a deep level of self-awareness and

reflection at work here. Moose had previously shown great sensitivity towards a child-centred approach, yet her practice-based learning showed that she was constantly engaged in this process, and was able to adapt her practice and make subtle shifts in her attitudes based on her ongoing experiences.

Moose's key frames

- Sense of place and sense of wonder
- Environmental educator and activist
- Strong eco-social identity and beliefs
- High job satisfaction
- Supported by team and setting
- Motivated to increase environmental knowledge and care

Rhino's Case Study

'Being willing to live with a question'

Background

Rhino was a volunteer home educator who had co-founded an early learning home education centre for families with young children in her local community. During the FS training, she established the use of a site and set up one FS day per week for the group. A self-starter, it was Rhino's own choice to do the training, challenging herself and funding the course herself. She felt responsible as a parent and home educator, wanting to bring outdoor opportunities into her children's lives, hoping they could learn to care about the environment through the experience. She felt she *'invests'* time in getting outside even though the *'pressures of modern life'* make it difficult. She did not self-identify with being an *'outdoorsy'* person or

environmentalist, but stated '*I become a different person outdoors*'. Rhino was also a dancer and dance teacher. She had worked professionally with children as an artist-in-residence, where she had explored ideas about child-centred play, and brought this experience and insight to her FS practice. She was familiar with practising improvisation, and drew parallels between her creative practice and FS, particularly in terms of the relationships between adults and children. Rhino presented as very self-aware of her own responses and reactions, reflective and comfortable with exploring and questioning. What stood out in Rhino's case was her considered views on the adult role, and her ability to reflect deeply on the process of interaction, response and child-centred play. In her practice, she engaged rigorously with her ongoing inner debate on shared power, decision-making, choice and possibility. Working independently without supervision and free to create her own programme, she offered a unique view from outside of the mainstream.

Space

Rhino negotiated the use of a new site with a local farmer, who owned a stretch of old coppice woodland with mixed deciduous trees. Rhino chose a space within the middle of the woods, with the potential for expansion and exploring on all sides. The group spent a few days clearing the space and making benches around a fire pit area. It was a 15 minutes walk from the car park on the farm, yet the walk was not seen negatively by her or the group. On my observation visit, they enjoyed the walk and shared the carrying of equipment between the adults and children. The distance of the walk added to the feeling of being immersed in the woods and there were no passers-by. The group brought water, food, tools and equipment onto site.

The impact of the visits on the site was a point of interest for the group. The changes they made to the space, and the active use of tools for coppicing, was a focus for some of the older children, who expressed a feeling of care for the woodland that had grown over the period of visits. They observed that the coppice stands were mainly rotten and had not been managed for many years. The children wanted to take responsibility for coppicing the woodland. Rhino expressed that the children had really enjoyed the space and had responded well to it since the start.

Context

As a volunteer home educator, Rhino was aware of the ideological differences between herself and other mainstream practitioners. She had made a conscious choice to opt out and become pro-active in providing an alternative. She chose to be responsible for most of the teaching or facilitation within the group, and there was a freedom for children and adults to pursue a broad range of experiences and learning opportunities. As a home education group, they had different priorities to mainstream education, following an emergent curriculum led by the children's interests. There was no formal ethos stated within the FS sessions, except that the children's learning and development was viewed holistically by the parents, who expressed their positivity about the FS experience. The group was friendly, accessible and accepting of Rhino's role as a lead practitioner. Many of the parents were involved in FS, as all the children's parents attended, with a ratio of approximately 1 adult: 3 children. The children were aged between 3 and 10 years old. Parents often attended to their own children's needs. The parents were actively involved at times and relaxed at others and there was an informal air about the interactions, as one might expect from a group of families who knew each other

well. The group spent from 10am to 3pm in the woods, sharing their packed lunches and cooking communally around the fire.

Thinking on FS

Rhino was keen to train and get qualified, seeing FS as useful in home education practice and for her own professional development. She made links with her previous arts-in-education practice. She was initially cautious about tool safety and enjoyed the practical aspects of the course, becoming confident to teach safe tool use to children at the FS site. She wanted to learn some outdoor skills based on a concern for the future, *'it's so fragile, our artificial environment'*, it *'sits on a knife edge'* and she did not feel secure within the frame of the modern world with its *'fast pace of life'*. She expressed an underlying fear that natural resources will run out, and expressed her concern that children learn to take care of them. She believed children needed repeated time in nature and special places, to become familiar and relaxed; *'they need to forge an emotional connection in order to care for the natural world'*. She observed that outdoors, *'at first they may not know what to do but with time will play for hours'*, that, like her, they needed time to relax and *'become the person that they are outside'*, where *'time seems to slow down'*.

Rhino believed children bring *'wonder of the world, imagination and creativity'* and that *'the seed of an idea may come from the children'*. Rhino was ambivalent about the term child-centred play, stating her experience of 100% child-led process as *'manic'*. She thought critically about the adult role and aspired to be child-centred but in a *'genuine'* way as an adult, forging genuine relationships and honest interaction, stating *'I'm fascinated in how to facilitate collaboration between adults'*

and children, where they're both on an equal level'. She had a strong focus on the adult journey in supporting free play, with the adult supporting the child's interest. To her, sharing her own interest as an adult was as important as the child's interest, to build a genuine relationship with children, and that genuine child-centred play needed adults to be interested and involved. She conceived of the FS space, or any play process involving both adults and children, as one where adults could play alongside. She did not see play as a separate child's activity. There was room in her philosophy for unsupervised play between children, but she noted how adults could bring new input and help a collaborative relationship to build. She had an overarching question about the nature of adult intervention that coloured her thinking, how being fully in the play as an adult, generating it with the children, the timing and nature of adult intervention was crucial, sensing and judging when to stand back and when to intervene.

Rhino found the FS training inspiring, challenging and enjoyable, agreeing with the child-centred ethos, in the flexibility of interaction. She saw FS as a process with collaboration, conversations, responses and relationships at the heart of it. She made a '*conscious choice*' to do the training, partly as a way of '*trying to combat*' a sense of separation that she felt from the natural world and to make time and space outside available to her group. Finding and establishing a site was challenging for her, she felt solely responsible and that '*it's a big hurdle to jump over to get outside*', but that '*there's something about making yourself go through that process*'. There was an ambiguity she wrestled with in her relationships with the other adults in the group, who could be both colleagues and friends. Within the informality of the process, she expressed concern at the beginning of the training

about ensuring that the parents would read the FS handbook and take it seriously. The parents were used to taking the children out, but Rhino wanted to share with them the wider potential of FS, that *'there's all this we can do as well'*. She felt that *'handling that in the right way'* and being responsible was the biggest challenge in setting up her practice. She appreciated the support of the training group whilst on the course, initially fearing a certain *'backlash'* of response when sharing that she was a home educator, not a schools practitioner. She felt the theoretical side of the course helped to *'keep you in context'*, grounding her *'in terms of what you're learning and why you're doing it'*.

Approaches and strategies

Improvisation was at the heart of Rhino's practice and philosophy, both in FS and her other work as an artist and educator. This took the form of her looking for *'springboards'*, cues or offers in the children's behaviour and play cycles, or providing her own and then building on that collaboratively. She discussed an initial session, where she had started from an adult-led suggestion to collect hazelnuts, using a group focus as part of her strategy to help the children become familiar with the new space. She shared her openness about the outcome and the multiple influences that she takes into account.

I'd gone there a couple of days before, and the [hazelnuts] were everywhere. But it was just having something that we would do all together and then springboard off that. So it's how much do we need that something that we do all together, and then it can springboard in whatever order it happens...that touchpoint? That's what we can go and do, if that's the point that we get to, because you never know how they are going to be when they get in...and making the choice like what the environment was like that day, and how the children responded or if they came up with something that we then followed, or actually did they need the 'Let's now all go and look for hazelnuts?'

Using the natural resources present was part of Rhino's strategy, *'it is an adult choice to take something in, I suppose, that doesn't belong in the wood'*. She saw providing resources as part of her role, in that they acted as a physical springboard. The hazelnuts became props for imaginative play, *'to make into miniature stuff, for their dolls houses and bowls and pans'*. She observed a *'theme going on with that small world stuff'* and listened out for their interest and motivation to inform how she responded next. Rhino was adept at picking up and following what they did, supporting it with resources.

They leap into imaginative play really, especially the younger ones, that particular group. It's usually when they make something, I find it's because it's part of a game...and if it's a part of their imaginative game then it works, the motivation.

I don't know if it's skill [as a leader] opposed to them ... going ... allowing that ... recognising what is for what it is and allowing it to happen and develop I suppose, because they're doing all the work, it's their thing...It's more about providing the space for them to go off and do that. I don't think I've done much adult led apart from pointing them towards the resource.

She perceived her role as fluid, *'it's quite free flow'*, enjoying the interplay of decision- making in the improvisational flow of the play and their imaginative journeys together. She described herself as a *'verbal processor'* and found this useful in her practice, feeling that working with children involved *'always processing information'*, and that talking with others increased collaboration; *'you do it with other people, so they tend to come on the journey, rather than somebody just processing inside their head'*. To this end, she was open to different outcomes other than her own, *'being willing to live with a question'*, with *'no end product in mind'*.

When it works and they connect, and it springboards, I think it feels quite empowering, to know that it connected, though I suppose you probably question and go 'Is there a way I could have waited? Had it come from them?'

She felt empowered by adult intervention when it succeeded, but her main concern brought caution about when it's *'right'* to intervene and what impact it may have. She reflected that this was *'part of the process'*, *'the unknown'* and sometimes she had to *'do it anyway'*, trusting her instinct and intuition as well as her skills, *'thinking on your feet'*. She was comfortable with her own level of risk, knowing that she may well feel discomfort but that she could communicate when feeling it and share the challenge. She was honest in saying she made some decisions for herself as well as the children, *'staying true to yourself as an adult'*.

I'm always looking for the moments, and at some point...you're in that moment and everything's like a question mark, in 'what's going on?' and 'What am I doing here?'

'Choice and possibility' was a frame that Rhino used to guide and structure her facilitation, illuminating some of the inner mechanics of her moment-to-moment interactional process. This frame came from previous research she had done comparing child-centred practice to improvisation.

I think the possibilities start to close down at a certain point, if a choice isn't made. If a choice is never made and you just have a whole room full of possibility, you don't move forward.... You explore those possibilities and you generate them for a period of time, but do you then stifle the moving forward if you never make a choice in that?

Looking at how sessions *'evolve'*, she aimed to own her own choices, to see the children's, and to see them all reflectively and critically in a dynamic cycle.

You have to make a choice to open up new possibilities and it opens up a myriad of possibilities, but you then have to make another choice to move on. And why do you make a certain choice, who knows? Sometimes it's the child that makes the choice and sometimes it's the adult that makes the choice, I think... Sometimes it's environmental choice, because of how the environment is, or what's going on in the environment. I think they all need to be potentials for the choice: the environment, the child and the adult, and not just one of them. Because I'm thinking things could get stuck.

I looked backwards at a session. We started to look at my instinctive moment of choice that happened, and reflect on why...it might have been that I saw a child make a choice, so I backed the choice up. It wasn't always my choice, but in a sense it is possibly my choice because I supported that child's choice, I was also making a choice...Which child's choice am I going to support? That's me making a choice ...but it's like that, if you don't go in, you can't go out...I've had whole stories evolve, improvised stories with children ...if there was never a moment of choice they would have never evolved.

Rhino compared how the parents behaved to how a group of volunteers or teachers might. They could be actively involved but not always 'looking for moments to facilitate and support the children...because sometimes they just want to take a break. They're chatting as parents around the fire, they're not there as an education'. Their informal parental role affected how they behave.

I keep an educational head on, but they don't ever...there are some parents who will view it with me, and they'll do something if I ask them... take responsibility for stuff, but they won't be looking for the learning moments. But they have a different perception...way that they see the group...I think they come in and out. Sometimes an adult in the group will offer something to another child and not just their own child. And they'll find something and they'll come into this and then they go out and they're the parent again...and it often depends on the parent's confidence, and where they're at that day.

Rhino felt that she was constantly alert, seeking the next thing; 'I'm asking more questions I suppose, but maybe I should stand back now'. She maintained questions for herself too; 'I'm constantly learning about how to be with them as a group, but then I want to bring that all into the wood, that ethos of working ...together as a group'. Based on her observations, she focused on developing teamwork and choice through her interactions. Again this chimed with her theme of equal interaction between adult and child. Rhino spoke about a time when she involved the children in an observation of the parent-child dynamic. The children noticed that they went to their own parents to ask for help. Sharing this observation led to a greater mix of adults supporting other children and children

being confident to ask other adults.

Rhino began running the new FS delivery and by the end of the research period, Rhino was flourishing with her group approach and interaction with the site, but challenged by logistics of pay and the structure of their FS visits. The sustainability of FS practice in her context was threatened by her voluntary role. Rhino had not decided what to do about continuing running FS for the group in future, but noted that her free time and energy for the group was subject to her family being economically stable and whether she needed to undertake other paid work.

Summary

Rhino handled the challenge of enacting a professional role in an informal setting well, with a sense of responsibility and down-to-earth engagement. Her ability as an improviser meant that she adapted well to the FS process of moment-to-moment interaction. Her views of industrialisation, of a need for time and connection in nature, linked with Moose, who also worked with home educated children. Her experience as a dance teacher was qualitatively different to other pedagogic roles, giving her a different perspective to other practitioners in the research.

Rhino's key frames

- Collaborative conversation processing choices and relationship as verbal play
- Springboard process of exploring and problem solving.
- Adults in equal balance and playful, genuine relationship with children
- Disconnection with natural world a motivation
- Repeated time and familiarity in natural world
- Engendering care for natural resources.

Salamander's Case Study

'A child is about being in the moment'

Background

Salamander was the strategic lead for a local authority play service. She had been in her current post for 4 years. When Salamander took the training, she had 24 years of experience; 12 years in early years education and care and the rest in all age groups from 0-19 years. This included working in the play sector, as an early years workforce developer and in a nursery setting with a strong focus on outdoor play and learning, inspired by pedagogy from Scandinavia and Germany. She was the most experienced practitioner in the research participant sample.

In her personal life, she was a mother, married to a farmer and had previously also worked as a riding instructor. Salamander was an active participant in the outdoor life and deeply valued what the outdoors offers to children and society. She had a direct and personal relationship to nature, as an integral part of her identity. She remembered her own play in childhood, being free to roam and explore.

Salamander undertook the FS training for strategic reasons, along with a deputy colleague. She needed for them both to be confident as trained FS practitioners, to initiate and manage a large scale programme developing FS across the entire local authority. They researched and selected the FS training centre carefully from the national training provision, conducting an interview with the tutors before making their decision. This approach was typical of her character, with unflinchingly high standards and clear aims. She stood out as passionately driven with a profound sense of service and capable of implementing change on a large scale.

Space

The local authority where Salamander worked was a sprawling area of joined districts on the edge of a large city, an urban population with many low-income families. The team's work was spread across multiple sites; in parks, woodlands, nature reserves, schools, play schemes and clubs. Using mixed settings, they instigated various FS sites into development. Although not responsible for the management of school ground FS sites, Salamander had the role of advising the schools and the trainees in this process. Salamander was instrumental in setting up two collective FS sites in established woodlands within the local authority, working in partnership with community groups and the local authority, so the sites were available and accessible to all.

Context

The play service had a broad output of free play opportunities, in centre-based and playranger schemes, school lunchtime play projects and a scrapstore. FS was a new development. The service ethos valued child-centred play and the broad aim was to make it accessible to every child. This included communicating the value of play, not just to families, but across education and childcare. Salamander's values about play and access were synonymous with those in the organisation, as due to her leadership position, Salamander was able to lead the service how she saw fit. However, she needed more time to develop the strategic side of her role, communicating at a higher level across the local authority. Throughout the research period, she was overstretched to the point of exhaustion, covering for staff gaps and delivering sessions four times a week. Her position as manager of an incredibly busy team gave extreme workload demands alongside her strategic role.

Having been able to develop and implement strategies for the service's survival, Salamander positioned FS as a new income generation scheme, as much as a new direction as for quality of provision reasons. At the time of her training, Salamander reflected that most of the play delivery in her service had become centre-based indoor provision, and there was a need to do more than the usual summer outdoor play schemes. She wanted a greater outdoor focus within the play service, and recognised that there was a gap in the market for this delivery. New income was necessary, as harsh government budget cuts had reduced her team from 16 to 5 staff members, with only 2 as full-time. A year later into implementation of the FS programme, due to the play service's increased financial security, they had 4 more casual practitioners and were able to recruit a full-time post, one of the few services in the local authority able to do so. Salamander was cautious about the amount of space in the service for FS, ensuring that it didn't impinge on other play offers. The programme had been very popular with immediate take up by schools and had the potential to expand, limited by the capacity of the service. Over the course of the research period, Salamander's output snowballed in size. In under a year, the programme Salamander implemented included:

- the training of 16 other Level 3 FS practitioners within local schools in Year 1.
- 10 schools taking on year-long programmes in FS on their own grounds
- another 10 to start in the coming academic year and further training
- establishing a FS network group for the local authority area.
- a regular FS play scheme running 2 days per week in school holidays for 12 children with emotional or behavioural disorder needs (EBD), with free access enabled via referral through the local authority system.

This was just the FS output, not the full schedule of the service. Even in light of her aims and position, this was a high achievement, with the programmes running successfully and still expanding as the research ended. It is interesting to consider how this was possible, starting with the core beliefs and values in her thinking.

Thinking on FS

At the heart of Salamander's thinking lay a strong commitment to child-centred play and the value of regular access to outdoor settings. Firstly, her child-centred ethos came from a deep passion for what she regarded as the essence of childhood, that *'being a child is about being in the moment'* with the space to simply be and discover yourself without the constraints of adult agendas. Yet in reality, this could be difficult to implement and she was aware of the challenges.

So one of the problems that I've found is the adult-led provision is actually, when I've been out to visit, and even with some of the practitioners that I employ now to deliver, it's that balance between child-initiated and adult-initiated and it's very easy for them to go into adult-led, because they're kind of wanting to speed that journey up for those children.

'I could talk for years and years about child-centred play!' she said when I first asked her about the topic, and shared her *'playworker's perspective'* that play was *'innate within a child'*. A child deprived of play would not be able to develop wholly and a child-centred approach was necessary to allow them to make choices and decisions and *'unleash their creativity and play freely'*. Further, it *'enables children to make sense of the world, through their own learning, as opposed to being told how it should be'*. She placed great emphasis on the need for adults to understand the importance of the child-centred approach, which fuelled her sense of mission to communicate and operate a wide-reaching partnership strategy with a *'whole range of professionals'*.

I think we have a duty to ensure that they have the opportunity to explore their own self, who they are and what they aspire to be. We're all too very quick to create citizens of the future.

Her sense of mission was underpinned by her belief that '*childhood's a really important stage and as a nation we devalue it and that's unfair*', also that '*we are not very good at allowing children to be children*'. She valued the child's experience of awe and wonder, amazement and beauty, reflected in her aim to enable children the potential to access these experiences through play, particularly in nature (Carson,1956). She believed in the theory and principles of FS as one way to redress the balance.

I find it very sad as a society that we need the FS philosophy and ethos to be able to support children and young people to access the outdoor and the natural environment. And I think that's...a clear indictment of where we're at as a society, not valuing the natural environment, not allowing our young people to become a part of it... to be immersed in that awe and wonder that happens every day...our adults and society doesn't allow us to let our children do that any more.

To Salamander, FS gave the children the freedom they need, away from walls and adult- led structure, in particular those children who don't learn or manage effectively in schools or centres. She saw the relevance of a nature-centred approach for children with emotional or behavioural needs in particular. Further, she saw FS as a force for changing the culture within the school and that communication with key school staff was essential to this process. In the first year, Salamander undertook a survey of FS and outdoor learning in all the schools in the local authority borough. She spoke about the need to communicate well with the head teachers, to explain the ethos and values behind FS, the need for child-led delivery and how this worked in terms of alternative curriculum provision; the far reaching applications across a child's (and school's) development. To her, the prescribed culture of education limits the opportunities offered to children. This

showed her combination of a child-rights based approach with a nature-centred approach, enabling and enculturing both ecological values and independent learning. To Salamander, the natural environment afforded the key aspects of self-development she viewed as necessary for a healthy childhood, one that she felt she had experienced herself. For her, aspects of outdoor and survival skills were important for children to learn, helping them to understand natural resources as necessary to their own being and continuing in the world. She saw it as crucial that children understood how to value nature, be part of it and look after it, so they could pass on those values. This started from awe and wonder at an early age.

But if this [FS] is the only way that we can support our children and young people to actually gain that sense of awe and wonder, then yes there is a need for it. And if this generation of children that have accessed FS, then become parents who really value that experience, then we will perhaps get out of that cycle of not needing them any more.

She was down-to-earth about the perceived need for FS in this way, and actively expressed a preference that FS wasn't needed, as an argument for a nature-centred and child-centred approach to be the norm in everyday life. However, she was well aware this wasn't the norm, and part of her sense of mission derived from her wish for it to be so. She believed that we were in danger of losing a connection with nature by not keeping children and young people in touch with nature, *'because it's generation on generation of an urban lifestyle'*. She found it frustrating to talk to other professionals when their values were different, when *'they don't see the value or benefit'* of taking children and young people outside.

Her perception of the need for FS was Salamander's imperative for immediate action. Yet, in the course of action, she felt the impact of her training most keenly in a sense of practical responsibility, to ensure safety and standards of practice. She

set up part of the service's role as advisors, helping head teachers to realise how and why FS can be applied. Salamander also monitored the progress of the FS practitioners and was on hand to advise, maintaining quality of provision, ensuring a strong child-initiated focus. She felt responsible not just for the play service, but for FS practice across the borough. As the strategic lead overseeing practitioner training and new FS practice, offering advice in the establishment of new delivery, she felt in the role of watchdog, in particular concerning health and safety and risk assessments.

I'm responsible, for someone could turn around and say, 'Well, [the local authority] FS initiative advised me to do that'. Well we're not necessarily the voice of the local authority because it's only advice, they don't have to take it, but we need to make sure any advice we're going out is the correct advice and up to date and in line with legislation.

She felt that this aspect of responsibility needed to be reiterated in the FS training more, to ensure that practitioners were aware that *'they are accountable for whatever happens on that FS site'*. Fully understanding the implications of this accountability was therefore an essential part of the job of delivering and overseeing FS for Salamander. The consequences of a badly-managed accident could result in *'mud-slinging'* and reverse the process of culture change she was initiating, that of encouraging schools to practice safe risk-taking. She took this responsibility seriously, for example working in partnership with local authority health and safety and fire offices to ensure schools allow fires on school sites and other types of high risk activities. She felt the new delivery and programme *'made us up the ante in terms of the risk-benefits-assessments...explaining to schools, officers, site managers, the implications of not having that in place'*.

Despite her experience, Salamander felt she had learned a lot from the FS training course, that it *'has enabled me to consolidate some of the learning that I'd done previously and refresh that'*. She had a positive learning disposition and had *'loved'* undertaking the training; *'I believe that you should go into any situation with open eyes, waiting and willing to learn something'*. She appreciated the practical aspects of the course, working with tools and tasks. The in-course discussion had given her *'a different point of view on things'*. She used the course time to prepare her for her programme, *'picking up clues from trainers about how you actually pass that knowledge and experience onto others, so that they remember it'*. Salamander's case exemplified how someone well-qualified can benefit from CPD and apply it directly to their practice to highly successful ends.

Salamander felt supported in undertaking the training from higher levels at work and from local schools who were keen to receive the new FS service her team would then offer. Yet she omitted to mention any personal support, line management or supervision. Salamander spoke of support for FS in her position as a strategic remit, belying her aims for the training but omitting the need for personal support. She didn't seem to consider that she herself needed support, being more concerned with supporting others. She succeeded in dramatically changing the culture and landscape in the play and education sector in a whole local authority's provision but became burnt out through the process. Despite ensuring the sustainability of the service and advocating passionately for FS and play opportunities, her own personal sustainability and work-life balance was in jeopardy.

Approaches and strategies

A sense of duty was a pervasive aspect of Salamander's approach, which came across as a palpable sense of mission, coupled with passion. She spoke often of duty and responsibility, to oneself, to each other, to the world and future generations. On the subject of a duty to enable children to be children and have access to opportunities, Salamander was passionate that *'I'll fight their corner'* as an *'advocate'*. Working beyond her own physical limits, she remained dogged in seeing through her aims; *'we have a duty to extend that experience and offer these opportunities'*. To this end, she worked in partnership across the borough, positioning herself in a network that she actively created around the service. Partnership working was the keynote of her strategy and approach, revealing her pluralistic and systemic view.

Her strategic aims arose from both her passion to encourage children outdoors and an entrepreneurial approach, keen to sustain the service under the government cuts; *'I see the gaps in the market and I fill them'*. She targeted the work to where she felt it was most needed, ensuring that vulnerable children had access and that schools, practitioners and groups had the support to enable their FS delivery to succeed. She implemented a Robin Hood policy, using the income-generating FS schemes to ensure free access play provision across the borough so that the most disadvantaged children can attend. FS was part of her master plan.

My aim was when I took over the play service 4 years ago was in 5 years time to have free play opportunities embedded in all main stream services. We're not there yet, I think it will be 6 years as opposed to 5 years.

Such a transformative aim seemed reasonable and possible to her. It was a huge undertaking to work towards a situation where *'every setting that is working for*

children and young people has a play policy and a strategy that underpins everything they do' yet she was very close to achieving it. Further, she was not doing this for her own ends or career development, saying that if she achieved her aims then *'I've done my job and there's no need for a play service. It's a bit like FS'*. If the desired socio-cultural shifts took place and nature-centred child-centred play and learning become the norm, she would be happy looking for work elsewhere. She was already thinking ahead to the next strategy, *'developing the whole outdoor learning curriculum in schools [in the local authority]...widening the approach...to enhance the offer'*. FS was *'opening this whole gateway to outdoor learning'* in schools, which Salamander saw as the next step. Her long-view approach revealed her deep commitment to socio-cultural transformation and a tenacity to pursue her aims come what may.

Her values, self-expectation and her sense of duty or mission related to her high standards of practice. She spoke highly of her own team, praising their *'fantastic'* work. She was rigorous in ensuring their training and knowledge of their role was in place and they knew the *'handbook inside out'*.

They know their stuff in terms of play work...and they know what's expected of them and actually, at the top of their mind, is all the time, look around, Health and Safety, what's going on and despite the fact that they're engaging with the young people, they're very good at keeping their eyes open and on the ball the whole time.

Her view of her staff team was in contrast to how she perceived some other staff that attended the FS sessions. She was opinionated on the need for practitioners to be both supportive and self-aware.

If you're there to have an impact on children and young people's lives, then you have a duty to be as emotionally literate and understand yourself as much as you possibly can.

She said *'I've got baggage but I don't bring it to work with me and I don't unload it on the children and young people'*. This sense of boundary extended to her style with the children, encouraging them to manage their emotions through *'low level interaction'* and often *'non-verbal'* support where she acted as a witness and container for their process, communicating an expectation of good behaviour. Her respect for the children's emotional process was evident in how she perceived the adult role.

If I see staff sitting down and even if they're not my staff, I will direct people to other places, because actually, what's that showing the children? They're not really bothered about what the kids are doing and they're not interested and actually, when you're in FS as an adult member of staff, you're there to show the children that their experiences are really worthwhile and valuable. And that doesn't happen by sitting on a tarpaulin chatting with each other and drinking water.

Where she found *'dodgy practice'* Salamander was unafraid to act assertively. This can be a demanding aspect of the FS practitioner's role when working in other settings where differing attitudes towards outdoor practice may prevail and adult-to-adult relationships are new. Her valuing of the adult's child-centred responses was evident. However, she accepted that FS was not for everyone, *'you have to accept that some children are never going to engage with an environment like this because they don't want to and that's fine'*. What she emphasised instead was the key quality of the facilitative role, *'what our job is to engage with what works with that child'* and if that did not work, then to *'signpost or support them to do it elsewhere with somebody that can'*.

Summary

Salamander presented as someone who had taken the opportunities in the FS training to an extreme level. She showed the potential inherent in FS to enable

systemic change and an increase in quality of provision. This was possible, perhaps only, with people involved who were committed, competent and knowledgeable, working in a systemic and ecologically-embedded way.

In terms of her learning journey, Salamander came with vast previous knowledge and experience. Salamander acted on her ability to refer FS up the agenda to senior levels, achieving highly but modestly. As she put it, *'it's all gone a bit crazy'*.

Perhaps the most notable aspect of her experience was that, with the ability to make change happen at higher levels, her job description could be endless. When someone is this driven, there is an energy that sustains them that can seem impossible from the outside. Salamander achieved transformations and new areas of work, which demanded a lot from her inner resources. Her sense of mission seemed to give her inner strength, focus and tenacity. This became clear when we talked about identity in the final interview, when Salamander was deeply over-worked while still buoyant and salient. She rarely used *'I'* in the interviews, responding with *'We'*. Her sense of self was inseparable from her professional identity; *'I don't have an identity'*. The mission dominated her personality and in part it subsumed her identity. I wondered how much support she actually felt she needed, or whether she had become inured to a high level of demand and *'firefighting'* in her everyday work. Salamander spoke in the last interview of seeing the end in sight, being able to resume an ordinary workload. Yet I wasn't sure if that would ever be the case, and this caused me to think about what happens to highly skilled and passionate people working in sectors where there is always a greater need to be met, to improve children's lives, facing socio-cultural barriers of generational change, decreased access to nature and cultural barriers to play. Her

passion demanded not just change in the rearranging of provision, but deep cultural change across sectors and community life. Inevitably she was *'not satisfied'* and the responsibility weighed heavily on her as *'mental tiredness'*. Her story highlights important aspects of the adult role in FS; the benefits of partnership working, the centrality of emotional literacy, the potential for pedagogical transformation implicit in the FS approach, and the need to take care of one's own capacities and limits.

Salamander's key frames

- a) Passion, duty, responsibility and service
- b) Emotional literacy
- c) Advocated for child-centred play, freedom and time to be in childhood
- d) Awe and wonder within nature
- e) Awareness of safety and risk management
- f) Socio-cultural and pedagogical transformation
- g) Partnership working

Summary

The case studies used informed observation to represent the practitioners' individual situations as fairly and accurately as possible. I integrated aspects of interpretive analysis, alongside my own reflections as a researcher, to give a coherent narrative of the practitioners' journeys. There were myriad issues raised within the case studies, and to address them all was beyond the scope of this research. Inevitably, the ensuing analysis honed in on issues related to my research questions, focused on the adult experience. I excluded any further enquiry into the impact of FS on the child, beyond how the practitioner approaches adult-child-

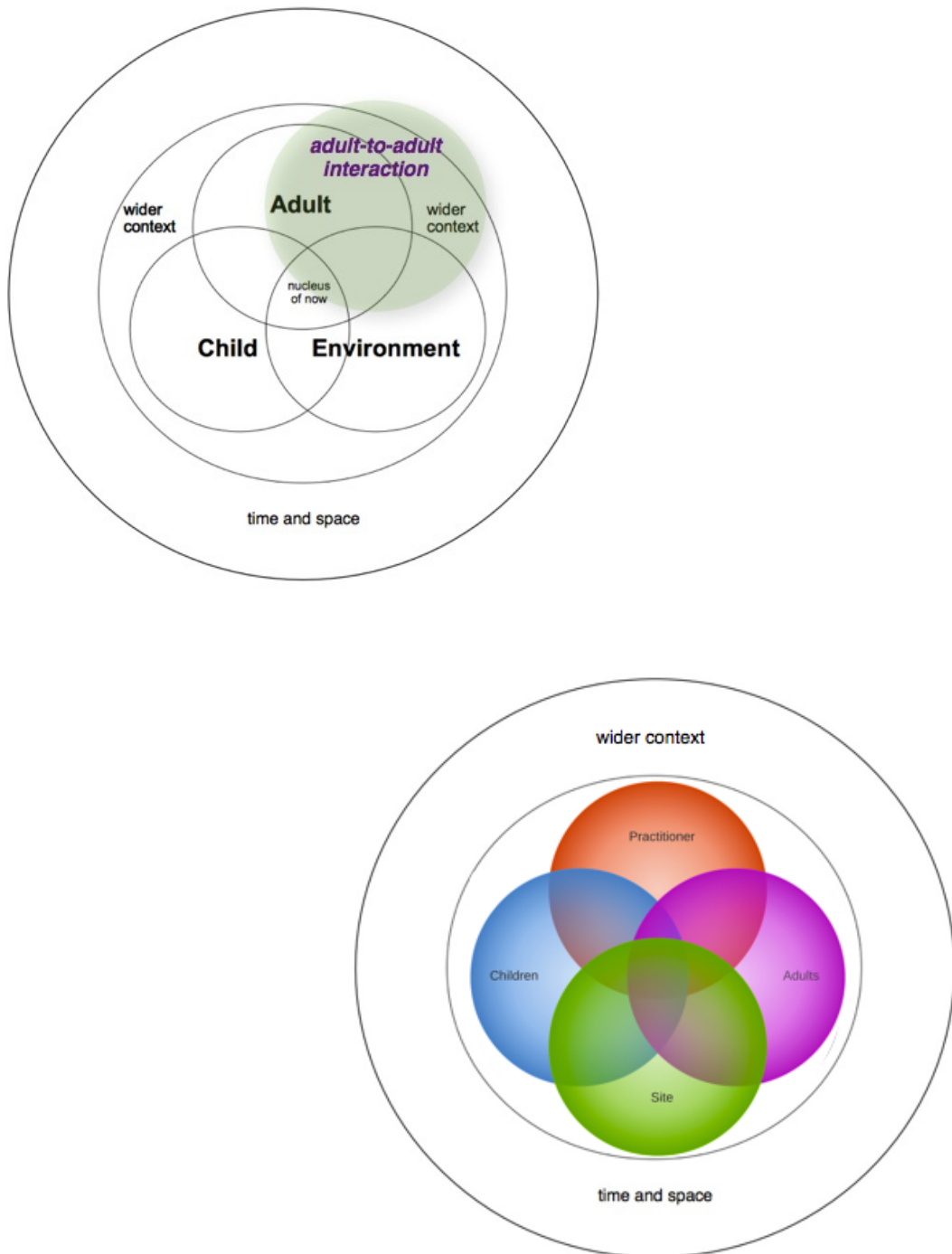
environment interaction, and the impact of their approach on role perception.

Following what emerged from this stage of the research, I focused on how the practitioner role and experience was shaped by adult-to- adult interaction. In making sense of the data, emergent themes provided a broad frame for exploring the FS adult experience in the ongoing analysis. Firstly, a sense of the practitioners' role and *identity* perception was clear, central to the main research aim, to start from the subjective self. My research questions necessitated a strong enquiry into the impact of training on the practitioners' thinking and what internal factors, such as identity and life experience, contributed to being a FS practitioner. Secondly, role enactment and the impact of training upon role, became framed as *approaches*, following on from the internal focus on how the practitioners put their thinking into action. A conception of adult-child-environment interaction became possible.

Finally, to address the external factors the practitioners assimilated, and how they adapted and responded to their experiences, another layer of analysis became framed as *contexts*. This final frame situated their experience of their role, following an ecosystemic approach to analysis, and facilitated an analytic focus on adult-to-adult interaction. as shown in the original Shared Space model (see Figure 2 in Chapter 4 where the process is explained) where the shaded area zooms in on the active area (see Figure 4). Other adults were located in the original model in the area of wider context (of team, setting and social world). The focus on the adult-to-adult interaction led me to revise the Venn diagram model, to include adults in a fourth circle and make them more visible in the representation. The impact of adult-to-adult interaction is discussed in Chapters 8 and 9. This is an

overview at this stage to help guide the reader. Subsequently, the model was also developed into a linear map to show movement within the interactions (see Appendix 9).

Figure 4: Shared Space with shaded adult-to-adult interaction



Some general insights from the case studies can be drawn at this stage before moving onto the further analysis chapters. Following the analytical frames presented, the summary is divided into practitioner *identity*, *approaches* and *contexts*.

Identity

There was a unanimous feeling of passion for practice, with varying interests such as child rights, connection to nature, alternatives to mainstream education and child-centred practice. The training validated the practitioners' beliefs and encouraged a sense of change agency. For this reason, and for the reason that the training had enabled them to exercise a widening of their professional identity, overall they valued the FS approach and ethos. The practitioners voiced clear concerns for children's wellbeing, in that outdoor play opportunities had decreased. A minority of the practitioners reflected on this lack in their own childhood experience. The other practitioners demonstrated varying levels of *eco-social identity*, feeling part of the natural world over their life course. Whilst not everyone identified as an 'outdoorsy person', they all constructed their role with a sense of purpose towards what they perceived children needed, in relation to eco-social justice and generational change. As the following chapter continues to discuss, this strong link between their own life experience and their relationships to nature and society contributed to their passion for practice.

Approaches

FS enabled the practitioners to bring both child-centred and nature-centred practice together. Many of the practitioners talked about child-centred and nature-centred practice in similar ways, helping to define what FS could be described as, using

their examples. There was a theme that free time in nature could meet children's needs to be themselves, explore at their own pace, make their own discoveries and be expanded by their experience. There were other links between child-centred and nature-centred practice that fused in their approaches, such as between flow and natural time, how time in nature needed to regular and repeated for the benefits of the sessions to be felt. Some of the practitioners talked about a sense of place, giving voice to the site as a form of adult-child-environment interaction. A minority wanted to make links with environmental education more clearly, but felt that FS brought a difference of approach to the same aims. Not all practitioners agreed that FS succeeded. I conceptualised the fusion of child-centred and nature-centred approaches as the practitioner being a *connector* between the child and the environment, explored further in Chapter 7.

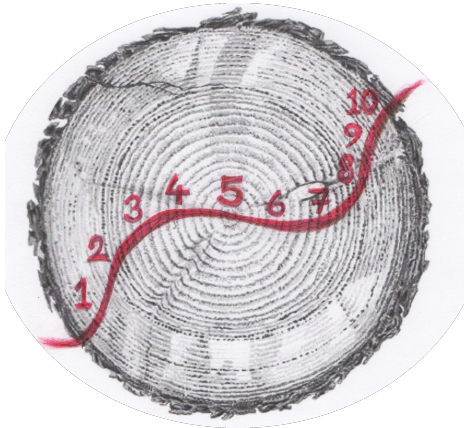
Contexts

All the practitioners spoke of how they needed to adapt their role, often within busy environments and restricted timescales. Apart from that, experiences varied greatly across the cases. There was a strong disparity of experience in being either supported or limited by their contexts. This manifested in various dilemmas for the practitioners, that had to be resolved within the team or a body of wider support. Their experiences also demonstrated the variety of different social spaces and physical environments in which FS takes place. There were different levels of change agency that were exemplified and made possible or restricted by the contexts. This was connected with how FS was framed in the contexts, whether FS or outdoor practice was valued or not, whether wonder or imaginative play was valued, and what links were made to the curriculum. The qualities of the FS

approach and the practitioner approach fused or didn't with the context, which led to variance in implementing FS. As a result, there were some outstanding successes and some quiet failures or demisals. In the following chapters, I will draw on examples from individual cases, and make cross-case comparison on practitioner *identity, approaches* and *contexts*.

CHAPTER 6:

FRAMING PRACTITIONER IDENTITY



In the case studies, I focused on the practitioners' thinking and approaches to FS, including how they perceived their own role, the function of FS, the impact of the training, the location of FS within their philosophy and, importantly, how all of this translated to practice within the influences

of their social contexts. Several of the practitioners experienced difficulties in beginning FS practice, that they approached in different ways. In this, and the following three chapters, I move towards a more theoretical explanation of the adult role in FS practice. The four chapters are separated into practitioner *identity* (this chapter), *approaches* (Chapters 7 and 8) and *contexts* (Chapter 9).

In this chapter, I explore the idea of the practitioner as a person involved in an ongoing construction of their self and their professional practice. I view practice not just as individual skills and knowledge, but as both dialogue and activity combined, 'as complex socio-material accomplishments, multi-dimensional, situated, embodied, and fundamentally relational' (Lee and Dunston, 2011, p. 483). Therefore I locate the practitioners within spatial and relational frameworks (Kraftl, 2013; Ingold, 2011; Bronfenbrenner, 1979), including the relationships they hold with themselves, others and the world. I make connections between common choices and perspectives in cross- case comparison and highlight the differences.

My enquiry into the influential factors on the practitioners' thinking leads to analysis of how aspects of their life experience merge within the self and are expressed as values, beliefs, bias or life choices. Themes in the research arose from looking closely at how the practitioners viewed their lives, investigating how they relate to their sense of self, identity, life experience and role. In the first section, I look at their early childhood experience related to their adult choices. In the second section, I re-introduce the frame of an *eco-social identity* (ESI) (discussed in Chapter 3) to investigate the idea of the 'situated self' (Goffman, 1961b, p. 85). In the third section, I widen the lens to look at the practitioners' current experience of the world through their feelings on societal and generational change, which was an unexpected emergence in the research. In the fourth section, I consider where passion, ownership or ambivalence are expressed concerning eco-social practices and investigate to what extent it is possible to ascribe these feelings to previous experience and identity constructions. To this end, I enquire into the affective roots of pedagogy in professional practice, drawing on the practitioners' reasons for FS training and how they perceive the meanings of their life choices and experiences. I explore the wide range of different motivations and understandings presented in the eight cases. In the final section, I enquire into the experience and impact of FS training; the nature of learning and development taking place for each practitioner and the ripple effects into initial practice. Of note is how the training relates to initial practice and what aspects of the training the practitioners regard as impacting and valuable. In the quest for provisional knowledge I hope to illuminate the significance of situated identity construction within the personal journey of FS training, deepening an understanding of how best training can prepare practitioners for the realities of practice.

The value of early experience in forming identity relations

The case studies detailed the backgrounds of the practitioners. Out of a total of 8 practitioners, 5 continued their FS practice throughout the study: Caterpillar, Monkey, Moose, Rhino and Salamander. Continuing practice requires initial commitment and conviction, and these 5 expressed stronger identity relations with FS and the natural world than the 3 who didn't continue. Interestingly, all 5, plus Lion, expressed childhood memories of free range unsupervised play in natural environments and a greater range of independent mobility than they observed in children today.

We used to go poke fires and we'd be outside all day. My friends had a garden that backed onto an area of parkland and we just used to jump over the fence...they'd call us back in for our lunch or tea and that would be it. But we probably wouldn't do that necessarily with our own children. I tend to be, even though mine are out in the woods and stuff, I'm there, or I wouldn't let them go... even I feel a bit like that and I think that because of all the legislation that there is nowadays, you've just got to be so careful. (Caterpillar 3)

When I grew up, I lived on a big council estate in a town, but the difference was...it's a cul-de-sac... surrounding three sides of it is woodland. As a child, I used to spend all day, every day, in the school holidays and at weekends, out in the woods. That is what my childhood was based on. (Lion 2)

Caterpillar highlighted how her own attitudes towards her children have changed despite how she used to play herself, which I consider later in terms of generational change. Moose, Caterpillar and others gave the example of formative experiences of natural play in childhood as a reason why they value similar experiences for children now and why they choose to practice FS. Some practitioners had spent a continuity of time exploring the natural world throughout life. As Moose stated 'I've always spent loads of time outside from a child...I love being outside'. Caterpillar's environmental knowledge stemmed from a childhood

interest she had maintained and pursued into adult life. Caterpillar talked fondly of memories relating with other species in her early childhood play: *'I was always in the garden chasing hoverflies and bees and stuff so... it's a big interest of mine'*. She in particular had a passion for ecology that came through in her FS practice.

Previous research by Chawla and Hart (1995) made links between personal backgrounds and lifepaths into environmental professions, showing that significant early experience of time in nature and positive environmental role models are influential upon choices made later in adult life. The study found that social as well as environmental concerns can form an entry into taking environmental action. This helps to explain the influence of our mental constructions and social attachments on how we feel and behave towards the environment. Chawla and Hart (1995) suggest that people who participate in responsible environmental behaviour on the 'small scale' share some similar background experiences to the more committed educators and activists in her study. Further research (Chawla, 2007; Waite, 2007; Wells and Lekies, 2006; Ward Thompson *et al.*, 2005; Fjørtoft 2004) compounds the formation of a caring disposition towards the environment beginning in childhood outdoor experience.

Outdoor play deprivation in adults

I asked some FS trainers about how they discussed nature-society relations with FS trainees (McCree, private correspondence, 2012a, 2012b, 2013). Horseman stated that now she does not ask about outdoor play memories, as she has found fewer younger generation adults have had natural play experiences as children. Play memory sharing is a phenomenological method often used with adults in play or pedagogical training (Waite, 2011a; Sebba, 1991). For example, considering how

you played as a child and your responses to different play situations as a responsible adult e.g. unsupervised, risky or natural play. In Waite's research (2011a) the values that emerged from pre-school practitioners considering their own memories of the outdoors included: freedom and fun; ownership and autonomy; authenticity; love of a rich sensory environment and physicality. These values were employed as a framework to analyse data from case studies, observations and interviews in the pre-school settings where outdoor play and learning was taking place. The present research included open enquiry questions on what the practitioners wanted to share about their own lives in childhood. The topic of our own personal play memories can raise a number of questions such as what each person finds acceptable or not and indicate a wide range of values, attitudes and differences in childhood experiences within a group of adults. Formative childhood experiences can be enablers or disablers in our adult attitudes and perceptions towards nature (Chawla, 2007, 1988; Waite, 2007; Wells and Lekies, 2006; Ward Thompson, Aspinall, Bell and Findlay, 2005; Fjørtoft 2004).

It is interesting to see how the sharing of memories in the present research draws a parallel with these other studies. In the interviews, I asked the practitioners about their relationship with the natural world in their personal lives, yet I did not prompt them to speak of their early experience, which was instead freely associated and volunteered. Table 8 (see below) represents the positions of the practitioners, showing the connection between their stated significance of their early experience in nature and their sense of ecological relationship. The two are strongly linked with a sense of belonging, or feeling part of nature, was at a high level for seven out of eight practitioners.

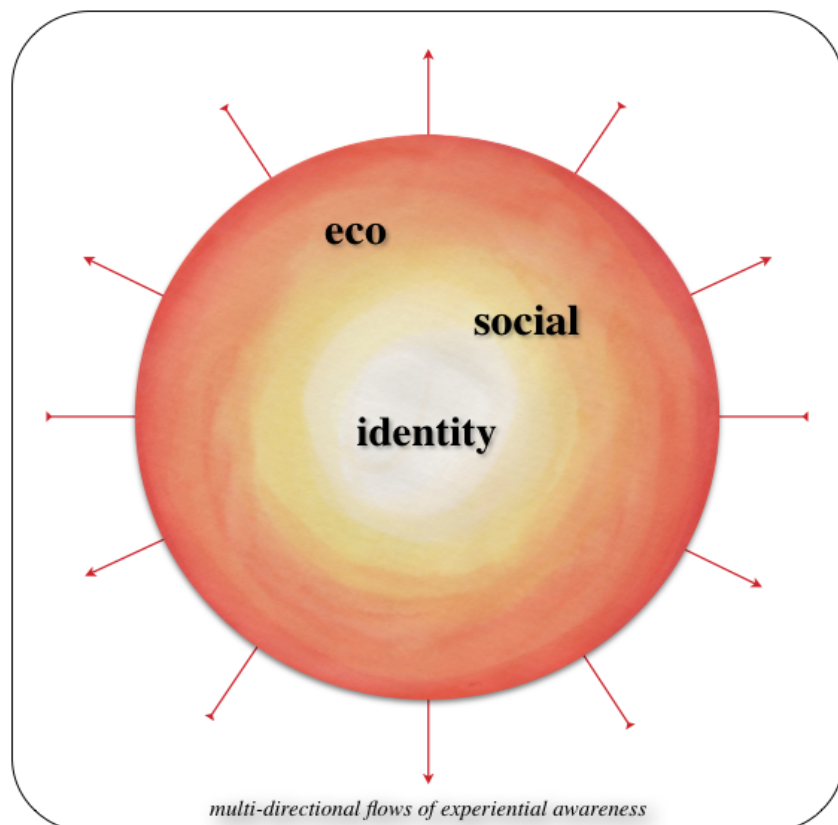
Table 8: Responses on early experience in nature and ecological relationship

	Early experience in nature: None or not stated	Early experience in nature: Significant memories
Weak sense of belonging and disconnection	Eagle	
Strong sense of belonging and connection to the natural world	Ant and Rhino	Lion, Moose, Salamander, Caterpillar and Monkey

We cannot draw from the previous combined research that such formative experiences categorically go on to sustain a love and bond with nature throughout life and compels one to ongoing environmental action, more that they inform our choices. As individuals, committed action comes from complex sources in our selves and contexts and our lives are shaped by a multiplicity of choices and chances. Chawla’s research (2007; 2006) shows the significance of positive role models, yet later in life we are surrounded by other role models and influences upon our adult lives. The three practitioners in Table 8 (Ant, Rhino and Eagle) who either didn’t state any significant early experience or had none, came to FS training and an exploration of their relationship to the natural world due to influences in their adult lives. They found meaning in a sense of professional purpose, mission and responsibility. Ant did not state any formative early experience, explaining instead that *‘it’s travel, for me, which reconnected me to the outdoors’*. Connection with the environment was something he felt was important both personally and academically; informing his choice when he returned to college as a mature student. Eagle’s motivation for practice was professional and she did not identify with FS on a personal level. Her motivations for FS were because she felt it was *‘really important for children’* as a child centred approach that *‘has a lot of positive impact...on their development as a person’*. Within her own life, she did not state

any significant early experience. She said she felt *'disconnected'* from the natural world, that she did not feel a strong sense of belonging, due to not spending enough time in a natural environment, not having any outdoor hobbies apart from camping holidays and being predominantly indoors at work and at home: *'we spend so much more of our time with technology now than we do with the natural world'*. Rhino had not stated any early experience but had formed a clear purpose in her role as a home educator to take the children outdoors. This was very different to the rest of her professional life as a dance artist and educator, yet she held strong views about the impact of modern life and felt a sense of imperative due to her concerns for the future. From these initial findings, I became interested in the ongoing formation of identity as one way to understand the choices surrounding FS training and the impact of training on the practitioners.

Figure 5: Eco-social identity



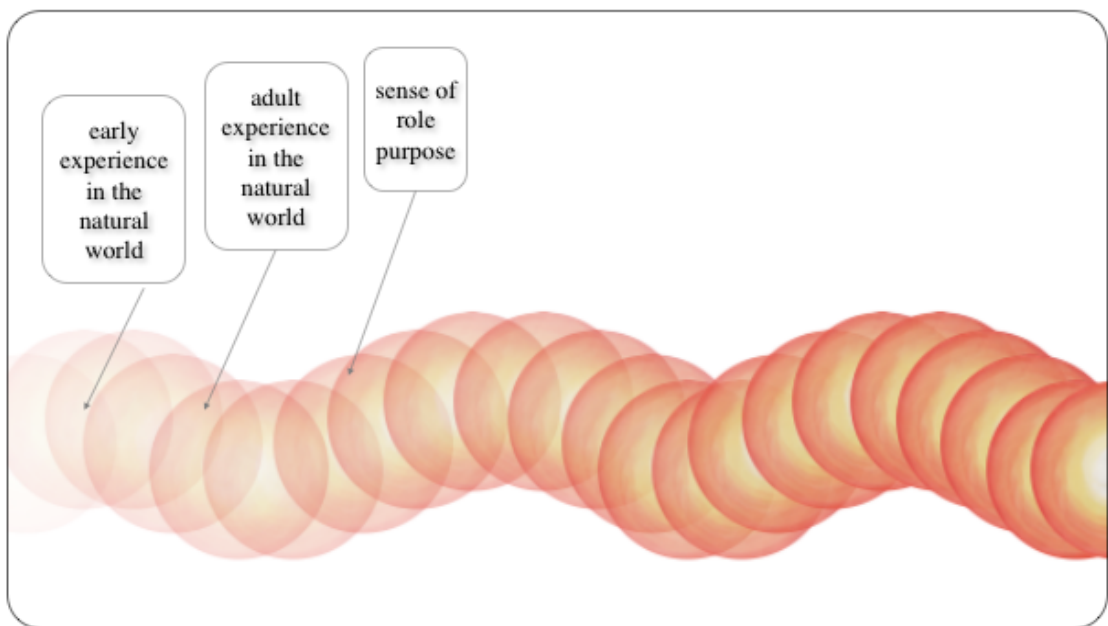
Using *eco-social identity* as a conceptual model

Figure 5 above represents *eco-social identity* as a momentary cross-section through a human lifeline. The model reflects the ongoing formation of identity as a series of situated subjectivities across space-time, formed in multi-directional flows of experiential awareness. It is a spatial, phenomenological model that synthesises the ecological perceptual learning of worldly ‘inhabitation’ (Ingold, 2008, p. 1804) and the social processes more traditionally associated with identity formation (Mead, 1934). Within the discussion in Chapter 3, in which I laid the theoretical foundations for *eco-social identity*, I rejected either / or notions of an innately ecological or social self. With this I also rejected the related dualisms such as nature / culture, in favour of a position that conceptualises shared processes and blended awareness of our biological nature within our unavoidably anthropocentric perspective. The colours blending represent this position. There is no essential self, only the ongoing processes, and the edge of the circle does not represent a fully enclosed edge of the self, it is instead a shorthand for the long fade of an unbounded, relational self. For the reader’s sake, the current representation is used in favour of an infinitely more complex diagram. In *eco-social identity*, constantly changing levels of implicit and explicit experiential awareness are present, as a basic constituent of being alive, of the processes of materials and forces shared with others (humans and more-than-human), be they physical, affective, social, or any form. These awarenesses are projected outward and received inwards (and any other combination of exchange or movement, as represented by the arrows). The model is in some ways the starter for a metaphysical template of life-itself and a further experiment in representing the non-representational. It is useful to the present research, as in order to build my analytic interpretation, I needed a way of

expressing my ontological and epistemological position from the ground up.

Secondly, along with *Shared Space*, re-conceptualising *eco-social identity* helps to locate the practitioners' situated subjectivities, acknowledging the role of diversity in identity formation. However, as a cross-section, it is hard for this model to show movement or change in identity, the temperate nature of affect, or how the situated subjectivities are absorbed into the self and continuously adapted. Recognising the ongoing nature of identity formation, *eco-social identity* can also be shown as a lifeline, or red thread, representing life experiences running along space-time.

Figure 6: The lifeline of ongoing eco-social identity



In Figure 6, the previous themes are shown up to the point in the practitioners' lives discussed thus far in this chapter. The following sections investigate what helps to further form a sense of *eco-social identity* and to what extent these formations contribute to becoming a FS practitioner. The impact of generational change is considered, and then practitioners' motivation for a pedagogical role.

Generational change and socialisation

A surprising emergence in the findings was that generational changes featured strongly for all the practitioners, highlighting further the affective dimensions that influence our decisions (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007). As a sociological category, a generation is only one of a number of ways in which a society is stratified or differentiated, such as race, gender and class. These other striations have obvious bearing on the subjects of the present research but they are not the focus, and only emerged in the case of the one male practitioner, as discussed in Ant's case study. Theory on generational change is undervalued in research and today, Karl Mannheim's theory of generations from 1923 is still the most systematic and fully developed treatment of generations as a sociological phenomenon. According to Mannheim, generational change designates 'a particular kind of identity of location, embracing related 'age groups' embedded in a historical-social process.' (1952, p. 367). Mannheim theorised that people are significantly influenced by their socio-historical environment and notable events they are involved in, that predominate their youth and form social generations. The people in that generation in turn can become agents of change and give rise to events that shape future generations. On the subject of forerunners: Mannheim said (1923):

It occurs very frequently that the nucleus of attitudes particular to a new generation is first evolved and practised by older people who are isolated in their own generation (forerunners), just as it is often the case that the forerunners in the development of a particular class ideology belong to a quite alien class.

Mannheim's view of forerunners suits the profile of some of the practitioners in the present research. FS practice is an alternative provision and inherently challenges the culture of schools and settings. In order to identify with a professional role that

is rooted in an alternative, the practitioner needs to be resilient to negotiate an alternative position within prevailing social norms. I discuss the challenges inherent in context socialisation in Chapters 8 and 9, yet the point regarding identifying or acting as a forerunner is worth making here. For the purpose of the present research, it is interesting to note which generational changes the practitioners themselves saw as significant and how they expressed this in terms of their identity, or related situated subjectivity. The changes included environmental degradation, nature-society relations, increased urban lifestyles, the experience of childhood, education, risk and the experience of time outdoors, within an overriding theme of loss. Here follows some of the practitioners' views and a discussion on the different variations on the theme.

Themes of loss

There was an overarching theme of loss to the data in the research regarding generational changes. Environmental loss was tied into a fear of the future and a nostalgia for the past. Moose's beliefs linked to her practice clearly as a sense of mission to bring ecological concepts into education. She located her reasoning in how generations have changed in their perception of the use of natural resources.

After the 2nd World War everybody thought they'd fought for it and they had the right for it and actually it's this generation now and our future generations that are paying for that...And I'm not saying that's the only reason why because obviously its corporations...I've a real thing about electricity and energy at the moment... and the way that we just use stuff and don't even know where it comes from. Most kids don't even know where electricity is, most adults probably don't even know how electricity is made, or how much they use, how much they waste. (Moose 1)

Rhino was motivated to do the training in part by a sense of past and future loss of natural resources, a modern day eco-survivalist view concerned with the next generation.

I always liked the idea of knowing how to actually do things in the natural world rather than being just in a completely artificial environment where it's all kind of done for you, cos I think, it's so fragile, our artificial environment... it seems an unsafe place to me, to not know how to do certain things out in our world, if we ever had to. I think that our modern world actually sits on a knife edge. I know, perhaps people feel quite secure in it, but I don't, I look at it and I go 'Well, so what if the oil supply wasn't allowed through so then everything like fell apart and nobody knew how to do anything anymore?' It's not actually ... that far away, you know, it wouldn't take very long ... the supermarket would be empty pretty fast I think. And, you know, also I think about, there's a whole environmental thing about children being so separate from it that they have no appreciation for it and not take care of the resources and then they will be gone, you know, that kind of connection. (Rhino 1)

I think it's crucial that children understand how to value their natural spaces, how to look after them and how to be a part of them. Because they're the next generation that has to pass that on to their children and so on... if you don't create that sense of amazement and beauty, then it's not going to be valued and we will lose it altogether. (Salamander 1)

The problem discussed in the above quotes, where each generation has an increasingly degraded environment to measure as the normal or non-degraded experience, is a psychological phenomenon that Kahn has coined as environmental generational amnesia (Kahn, 1997; 1999), or adapting to the loss of nature. To halt the pace of change in children's experiences is a motivation for these practitioners. Most expressed a wish to help children to realise the value of the environment; our interdependence with natural resources. Ant and Moose shared a motivation to use FS to enlighten participants about current environmental problems. In this way, these practitioners and other environmental educators hoped to counteract the 'forest of forgetting' (Hand, 1997, p. 11) that crosses generations and to safeguard what is left. Hand's paper concerns how present day Scottish people, living in one of the most deforested countries in the world, have little conception of how at one time the whole land was covered with forest. There is an interesting crossover with the word 'safeguard' here, as again care plays a role; care for both children and environment enmeshed in the same emotive frame of motivation; for child- *and*

nature-centred practice. All of the practitioners in the present research saw the potential for the environment to enhance wellbeing, health and wholeness, tied to the rubric of biophilia (Kellert and Wilson, 1993). Building a relationship early in life can help to do this on many levels, on the very least, adding to a healthy lifestyle and at best, forging a deep, caring relational identity within the natural world.

A romanticised view of the past is often present when people talk about how things were ‘when I was a child’. This is the case in much of the current rhetoric surrounding the need for natural childhoods in the 21st century, framing the childhood of previous generations in a golden age of freedom and healthy outdoor activity. Yet Kahn (2002, p. 113) believes that a romanticised view of the past is acceptable if it is engaged, showing and investigating with children how the landscape around them has changed over the generations and helping to restore it. This can counteract the effects of environmental generational amnesia. In Rhino’s practice, engagement is evident in how the children expressed an urge to want to coppice the woodland, as they grew to understand the historical purpose of coppicing through learning how to do it, cutting poles for dens and firewood. They witnessed the abandoned coppice stands rotting in the woodland they played in and Rhino followed their interest. However, Rhino did not romanticise or proselytise, simply the children found their own way to this engagement through their direct experience, growing a sense of place and finding their own place within it.

There were other senses of loss, including the morphing of professional services. Salamander spoke about play service changes and how she identified a gap in the market for outdoor play and FS, transforming practice within an entire borough.

We have to kind of look at other ways of generating interest and maintaining what we do...it's great to be outside and validate... what we used to do when we were playing out years and years ago... Play work's moved from being... very outdoors...then it kind of morphed into this kind of centre-led kind of activity, and so [FS training] is allowing me to go back to the root of it and actually why I came into the service and into playwork. So you know, for me, it's kind of we've come full circle. (Salamander 1)

Interestingly, there's an element of history repeating itself, which can be seen theoretically as generational conflict, or a cycle where things move in and out of fashion, in opposition to the previous generation. Free-range childhood is currently in fashion in the UK, and children's losses were also felt.

There is this culture of kids being indoors and I was one of those kids you know, I had computers and I spent a lot of time. I'm the kind of cross-over generation you know, where computers were introduced in schools. (Ant 1)

From the child-centred perspective of the practitioners in the study, children have been constructed in different ways by society over time. The effects of their contemporary lifestyles are played out in FS, with the practitioners stating how they need to help children to 'settle in' to the environment of a wood, as many are unaccustomed to being in the natural world, in particular with the freedom to choose what to do and only the loose parts afforded by the environment to play with.

We are not very good at allowing children to be children. We create children to be citizens of the future, and we don't think about the here-and-now. And if we lose the here-and-now and they don't have that awe and wonder in their childhood, and are allowed to take risks and play, and be a part of the environment and be a part of the world that they are in, then actually they lose their sense of belonging, and who they are, and so they're never going to be a well rounded adult. (Salamander 1)

Children's free time was perceived as lost also. Practitioners made the contrast between structured time versus natural time to be and the impact that has on wellbeing.

Children these days...have so much pressure on them. (Caterpillar 1)

It's all supervised now isn't it? This school, this activity Monday, that activity Tuesday, that activity Wednesday. It's all so structured and regimented, there's no free time. (Lion 1)

[Society] is not built for taking the time out to be able to look. Its not built for people to come on this course....very few people have that opportunity to take time to think....kids at school, they don't have that time. (Ant 1)

Here, Moose extends the loss of free time to the routines of adults, as a psycho-emotional loss, and how this in turn structures children's lives.

There's so much stuck feelings... with adults. People get stuck with stuff but they're unable to shift and they just do the same things, go to work, stay inside, watch telly etc...I think its the same with children especially more and more now as we're living in a world where they're doing the same, they're going to work though they call it school, they're going to work, they come home, they put the TV on, they put the computer on, they do more work, they take that work into work and they come home and put the TV on and start to cry...I wonder how many people actually go for a walk? But if its been part of you as a child, and you can appreciate those shifts and those moments, then you make it more of a priority in your adult life and if you do that then you're bound to be happier and maybe you don't need as much stuff. (Moose 2)

The practitioners reflected on how things have changed from our own childhoods to now, in terms of indoor culture, affluence and technology.

In this country we don't see hardship do we? ... They've got too many, what we class as everyday things, but in other parts of the world they're absolute luxuries and I don't think they appreciate what they actually have... But they've got a Wii... a Playstation 3. And it's still never enough. But does it really make them happy?I don't think it does. (Lion 1)

Both Lion and Ant mentioned the impact of globalisation. Ant felt that *'technology has just transformed things so quickly, that, you know, I don't think people have had the time to catch up'*, stating that an indicator of this process is *'the way our food is produced now'*. He felt that, in the short term, the way society operates has changed very fast and so reconnection and education about the natural world are imperative for the present generations, *'all of them'*. Yet he believed that this won't happen

until there is a greater conflict in society, an increase in the *'battle between technology and the environment'*, that will *'change the way that everyone's thought about it'*. There was also a perceived loss of knowledge in the shifts in technology.

There is this ... indoor culture and it's been researched and researched and stated and stated but I think it's driven by industry, it's driven by the economy...[We need to connect with] people who are older, to be able to pass down their experience, because essentially they're the people that didn't live with this technology and can remember. (Ant 1)

The future

Most practitioners perceived that the human relationship with the wider natural world has changed within their generation, lessening in importance. They expressed fear, uncertainty and a gloomy outlook on future possibilities, with a continuing sense of loss.

The relationship with the natural world is about not only this generation but the generations alive now, all of them, reconnecting and learning what's important. And, you know, I think that the transformative process for them is... going to be a realisation through something terrible...or through an attempt by man like...geo- engineering or bio mimicry or that kind of thing? ... we're going to get to the point now as this battle between technology and the environment...they're going to clash... and something's going to happen and its going to change the way that everyone's thought about it. (Ant 1)

We shouldn't be selfish ...It's a world for us all to share, and I think we should look after it for everyone. And if we destroy forests and woodlands, what will future generations have?.... we look at it and we say 'well that's now extinct' but then what impact does that have on other food chains? (Lion 1)

To summarise the impact of generational change upon the practitioners, the impacts of consumerism, globalisation and industrialisation were keenly felt. Loss, anger, fear and future concerns or a feeling of responsibility, in particular for children as the inhabitants of the future, featured strongly for many. The affective motivations from their responses to such changes have had a significant influence on their decisions to undertake FS training.

Experience, passion, values and the roots of pedagogy

Being a FS practitioner involves an everyday deepening of the human-nature relationship through direct contact, both for the practitioners and for their participants. The focus and goal of FS practice is largely upon the impact upon the participant, rather than the impact on the environment beyond the immediate FS site. Therefore the human-nature relationship, or the social aspect is in the foreground. In this section, both the ecological and social identity constructs of the practitioners and their embodied values are considered. A sense of belonging to the natural world was seen as important by most of the practitioners, as something they wanted to share and impart to the participants.

I think it's so important...we went outside with the children and instantly we all just went 'aahhhhh'. It was peace. It was so quiet and we couldn't hear anything other than the birds up above and them just chattering about things in the wood and that was, for me, what it's all about. They're in tune, they're looking, what plants are coming up, there's buds coming up now, making things with sticks...and just them getting in tune with the woodland really...there's still that respect for the natural world, and hopefully that's part of what it's about isn't it? (Caterpillar 1)

Caterpillar was especially passionate about the natural world, based in part on her early experience. Ant had not had such a strong early experience yet stated '*in my past I haven't chosen to build on that kind of connection but I was always aware that it was there*'. He chose to train in FS to reinforce a connection for himself and others.

I think that everyone's just got an intrinsic connection with the outdoors, whether they're aware of it and choose to build on it. (Ant 1)

Ant thought that reconnection was a more accurate term than connection, that we innately belong to the world: '*I think intrinsically people belong there you know, they always were there and we've evolved essentially from that place*'. Salamander saw developing the human-nature relationship as part of her professional role.

I think in a professional capacity, we have a responsibility to support our children and young people to understand how we can maintain our environment, and how we can take it forward and be sustainable, in a way that they can understand it. (Salamander 1)

Most of the practitioners chose to train in FS based in part on some concern for the future. Moose's motivation was primarily emotional: *'I get really angry that we just use up as many resources as we want to'*, locating her reasoning in how generations have changed in their perception of the use of natural resources. Her passion was self-evident and embedded in how she viewed her place within the world.

I feel really connected to the natural world and again, always have done...It's the feeling of being part of the whole... It's understanding how everything is connected and I feel it down my spine... I don't feel that there is a border and a boundary between me and an actual world. I don't feel apart from it, I feel part of it... which is why I'm so passionate about it. (Moose 1)

Moose's view was passionate, yet seven out of eight practitioners shared some of this sense of feeling part of nature (see Table 8). Making a choice to train in FS could be seen as an act of passionate defiance in Moose's case, or as a conscious choice to improve practice for Eagle; a way of personally redressing an eco-social balance and making an impact upon the future. Connection was a recurring theme for all of the practitioners, expressed variously in terms of a loss, of a disconnection and of finding it again, of reconnection. It was also expressed as a primary motivation for why they are training in FS, in order to facilitate the opportunity for children to connect.

That's what I think is important about FS and what its doing... it can be a fantastic route for people to reconnect, and that in itself is an important thing, for people to go on to understand that you know we're not, that, the outdoors isn't at our disposal, its you know, we are at its. (Ant 1)

This last sentence highlights the importance ascribed to a holistic view of the self by the practitioners, as in a dialogue with the rest of nature with a priority of care

for the world which houses the self. FS was seen as an important agent for reconnecting to the whole, for practical, conservative reasons.

It's generation on generation of an urban lifestyle. Actually going out to the wood is a treat, or something that you do as a past time, as leisure time, not as something that has any value attached to it. Whereas I see it as part of being, and surviving and being part of it, and the world continuing and going on. (Salamander 1)

From this perspective, nature-centred practice was a conscious choice as part of working with children and young people. Further reinforcing a sense of ESI was their professional purpose and motivation.

I think it's strange, we're all very good at talking about it, but actually doing it is another thing. I think if we all made a little bit more of an effort...it's about being part of it and taking responsibility for it, but taking responsibility for other people as well. (Salamander 1)

I think the major contributor factor is, not fear of being sued, but actually apathy. Of not wanting to go the extra mile to allow it to happen. And I'm hoping that we are coming back full circle now, where with things like FS..the Play Strategy, although nationally the coalition government aren't really recognising it. But, it's actually to put that kind of thing out there in the open...it's been out there, and people have started to talk about it, and those people that are really passionate about it will continue to take that forward, I think. (Salamander 1)

If you're the kind of person that has the foresight to look 20 years down the line, 50 years down the line, you know its, its just imperative that people are aware of these kind of systems that are happening around them. (Ant 1)

Advocacy for children and eco-social justice stemmed from passion in many of the practitioners, expressing strong views on pedagogical theory and policy. A common theme was a sense of socio-emotional values. Some of their previous professional experience had contributed to a building up clear ideas of aims and what is necessary for childhood justice. At this point I want to emphasise that some of the practitioners had between 10 and 25 years of professional experience in the field, with enough time 'doing life' to form considered views. Salamander emphasised the need for a cohesive partnership approach to childhood.

...a whole range of professionals...unless they understand the real importance of that child-centred approach and children have to be free to make choices and decision-make, then we're going to have...children who've got no common sense, who can't make decisions...can't look after themselves, have no sense of safety or accountability or responsibility. And this child-centred approach enables children to make sense of the world, through their own learning, as opposed to being told how it should be. (Salamander 1)

Moose's politicised view on child-centred practice extended to her world view.

And so, my allowing children to be free and child centred is the same as I think it should be for everybody. So, if I think I should be like that for adults then how can I go into a group and tell them that that's the way its supposed to be? They need to discover it for themselves. And I believe that if we give that to children, if they make their own decisions they're going to grow up doing the same thing. And if they can make their own decisions and realise that they're powerful, as powerful as the next person, then maybe they'll make those choices themselves and go 'Actually, you know what? We aren't going to teach our children like that any more'. (Moose 1)

The affective roots of approaches to pedagogy ran deep for some of the practitioners such as Moose. Before that in this chapter, some of the practitioners' situated subjectivities have been explored in the themes of; early experiences in nature, generational change. These themes all had an influence on the practitioners prior to training, helping to form a sense of *eco-social identity*. The following section evaluates the impact of training and revisits *eco-social identity*, building upon the model to theorise on how the practitioners carry forward certain shifts in subjectivity from their previous life experience, into the training and then into practice.

Evaluation of the impact of training

Returning to Waite *et al.*'s (2006b) observation that the FS 'process can be used on the practitioners themselves', this section describes the impact of the training on the practitioners in the study. It was challenging to isolate what exactly this impact may be. The impact of training as a discrete factor in the research findings was not

so obvious for a few reasons. The challenge was to separate the impact of the training course rather than the implementation of training in practice. As practice is a key part of the training course, this felt like a false division, and certainly it was not one that the practitioners easily made in their reflections on the impact of their training. Within the first interview at the training centre, I asked the practitioners to talk about how the training was impacting them. In response, some aspects of the training were noted but the practitioners focused largely on the challenges of preparing to establish FS in their settings, which I hadn't anticipated.

My decision to use the phenomenological *Shared Space* approach to the second interview was in part based upon a desire for the practitioners to be able to reflect directly about their approaches, in order to tease out some further insight about how they viewed their own FS practice after the training. However, when I asked again in the third interview, the focus they gave to implementation made sense, as they were well into practice by this stage, and the memory of a week or so at the training centre may well have become less immediate. The training impact was absorbed into the process of implementation. Even when asking the practitioners directly what impact they felt, the causality of the impact could not be located in many specific experiences. Rather, the impacts were felt in shared affects and actions across the time-space of their experiences. Any shifts in subjectivity that the practitioners felt were highly situated, with the practitioner adapting in response to social experiences. It is hard to separate these responses in the process of analysis. I'd encountered some methodological challenge in the fieldwork process which had set the scene for this more holistic view of the impact of training. There are established methods and instruments for evaluating training courses within the

canon. However, these were not in the present research design. Using semi-structured interviews and constant comparative method, led to me explore meaning where I found it in the full gamut of practitioners' responses. Given that findings on impact of training are therefore fuzzy around the edges, within the analysis I tried to frame some before and after snapshots of the practitioners' journey through training. During fieldwork and coding, I noted the practitioners' journeys throughout the training experience, which helped to give an overview of perceived shifts or impact (Table 9, p. 197). Following this, in reviewing the whole data set from the fieldwork and case studies, clearer themes emerged from their responses - skills and knowledge, experiential process, values and support. The following analysis highlights the situated nature of the training process, as this is fitting to their responses and to the conceptualisation of *eco-social identity*, in situating the self in its process of continuous relational formation. Given the way that training impact is viewed as absorbed by the practitioner, the following chapters (7, 8 and 9) help to contextualise the challenges and shifts posed within this chapter. Indeed, the absorption of impact raises its own insights about the nature of FS training, and of perceiving FS as a distinctive rather than contextualised approach within a setting, an issue which I return to in Chapter 10.

Table 9: Summary of journey of practitioners throughout training

Name	During training (int 1)	During practice (phone int 2)	After assessment (int 3 and check in)	Qualifies Y/N
Moose	Very sure of position, aims from training, links with previous experience.	Glad to be fusing FS into earth education work, good results from groups, supported.	Affirmed in position, flourishing in team, shifted in thinking re environmental education.	Y
Monkey	Not sure how it would fit in and whether could apply.	Challenged by other adults in team, clash of ethos. Happy in delivery. Poor budget for resources.	Stressed by team and context clash, but enjoying FS work. Unsure re sustainability.	Y
Lion	Strong view re NC and imaginative play. Not happy with FS practice in own setting.	Happy when delivering and clear in own approach but conflicted with other adults and setting.	Resigned over clash in principles and values. Coursework not complete.	N
Eagle	Keen on FS but clash in setting. secure in EY background exp.	New job, not doing FS, stressed by work demands, not engaged with research.	Withdrawn from training.	N
Salamander	Strong position and clarity of aims from training. Links with lots of previous experience. Connected to rest of team programme.	Unprecedented amount of expansion & success of FS delivery. Keeping eye on CC aspects of practice in others & contextual strategy. Too busy, burnt out.	H&S, risk assessment, feels responsibility, overworked, victim of own success. Coursework not complete.	Y
Rhino	Keen to get qualified, sees FS as useful in home ed practice, links with previous experience / arts practice. Unsure re tools.	Involved with running new delivery, clear aims of teamwork and choice, impact of site – changes in new space and resources.	Flourishing with group approach and site, but challenged by logistics of pay and structure of FS visits.	Y
Ant	Interested to see links with his degree study and approach to education, keen to use practical skills.	Critical of FS ethos vagaries and setting, influenced by degree dissertation research. Not sure what will do next.	Open prospects on return from abroad. Possible practice. Coursework not complete	N
Caterpillar	Strong eco values and CC position, secure in EY background previous experience.	Flourishing but finding hard to fit it all in – other EY studies. Site developments. Ofsted ‘Outstanding’.	Validation of experience and thinking. Reading theory. Confidence and assertiveness. Coursework not complete.	Y

Abbreviations:

CC = child centred / NC = nature centred / FS = Forest

School EY = early years / H&S = health and safety.

Skills and knowledge

Most of the practitioners emphasised both the practical and affective skills and knowledge that they were encountering on the training course. FS training equips a practitioner to be able to take action in real life, with tools and safety procedures.

Many of the practitioners expressed concern about tool use and safety whilst on the training. All of those still practising by the end of the fieldwork period had progressed in their autonomy, confidence and knowledge from the grounding in skills and theory. Rhino writes in her reflective journal: *It has given me a base to grow from, in my own and other settings.* For Salamander, constantly updating her and her team's knowledge of health and safety was her most pressing concern and she felt that it should feature more prominently in the training. Knowledge such as identification and woodland management was noted by Moose, Rhino and Caterpillar, demonstrating a 'contagious attitude' (Mathews, 1992, p. 326, quoted in Chawla, 2006, p. 72) by delighting in learning more about the natural world for themselves and sharing that joy and curiosity with children.

They find something that they're interested in and you look at it together...all my ID sheets are always in my trolley so...when they do want to it's there for them... I know that that's how I learn, I don't learn from reading a book... I start doing something and go 'Oh that doesn't work. I need to change how I'm doing it'. Or 'what's that, why is it sticky or smelly?', or 'why has that squirrel remembered where it's buried it's nuts?' You know, you have those moments with yourself as well as with the children. (Moose 2)

In terms of affective skills, all the practitioners placed a strong emphasis on the socio- emotional relationship in child-centred natural play. This relationship between practitioner and participants is within the FS Principles in following a 'learner-centred pedagogical approach' where 'play and choice are an integral part' (Principle 6, FS IOL SIG, 2012) and was successfully focused upon and developed in the observed training.

Experiential process

If experiential education engages the learner emotionally (Proudman, 1995), what emotional journey did the practitioners take? FS training is a long undertaking and only five of the practitioners qualified. Coursework was a strain on some of the practitioners, not just because of the intellectual demands. The process extended over months and years, often juggled with a busy workload and home life, requiring setting support.

During the training course, the time for participants to simply *'be'* themselves in the FS setting and the focus on the relational bonds formed between themselves and the environment were significant aspects of this theme. Values took on a personal dimension when the practitioners engaged and connected with aspects of their own identity. The training afforded time to reflect in the natural world, which affected half of the practitioners positively: Caterpillar, Moose, Monkey and Ant. The other half did not mention it, so it is not assumed they took it as significant. Monkey had a significant encounter with self-acceptance whilst sitting quietly in the training centre woodland, experiencing a connection with *'who I really am under the masks'* of mother, partner and employee. The reflective process of connection and relation with the self within the woods models the FS process of experiential learning. Observing this process first hand inspired the creation of the *eco-social identity* model, to frame and more deeply understand the situated subjectivities of the practitioners, such as their ongoing self-and- world constructs that the training had impacted, the ecological perceptual learning, and the sense of mission or purpose that many expressed. Like Monkey, some reached greater levels of self acceptance through the experience. Practitioners mentioned the inspiration,

enjoyment, fun, reassurance, bonding and support within the initial training group, helping to combat a sense of isolation and allowing time for themselves, being not doing.

Personal and professional validation was found by many practitioners in learning and discussing theory about a range of subjects; woodland management, child-centred practice, alternative curricula, the need for play, and insights from neuroscience on the value of early years development. The blend of theory with affective and practical skills was a successful part of the training. Ant was passionate on this subject and felt that the combination of experiential and theoretical learning helps the trainees to make connections between different ways of learning for themselves, that *'we're being led up to it almost'*. Theory was applied in practical activities, which Ant saw as a *transformative opportunity*, facilitating meaning-making at a deeper level.

This course is transformative....I think it widens the perspective...the content...doesn't fit into an academic category. It's many...take today for instance, we were learning, we were looking at the brain and then we were making a mallet...it's got context, because it's real and you're put into a situation where you're going to use it, it takes on a whole new importance....and when you place importance on that and then carry it through...then go and realise it for yourself as a student and then as a practitioner...trying to pass it on, and that is the stage of the process which I think is transformative. (Ant 1)

Moose, Ant and Salamander considered whether the training process was effective at empowering people to take pro-environmental action. Was this part of FS for the practitioners? Did the time in the training help them to form a personal and critical relationship with environmental values (Orr, 1994) encouraging the potential of eco- social change through education? Moose, who had an activist background, stated that to some extent the FS training initially challenged her to *'let go of that'*,

her attachment to delivering environmental education, to engage with the socio-emotional benefits of FS experience, for herself initially *'to feel it on a wider level, you know, come to terms with... it's ok to go out there and kind of just, just be'*. This emphasis on simple *'being-ness'* echoes many of the other research participants experience of the training, yet considering it from an eco-social justice perspective takes us into a realm of politicised potential in the relationship between emotional and ecological literacy. Ant thought that a sustainable society would not happen until people have *'the time out to be able to look'*, and that society was *'not built for reflection and realisation about our place in the bigger picture'*. He felt that the FS training afforded this opportunity, in *'time out'* to be able to reflect on one's own life, that *'people go through it themselves'*. Within Ant's view, the FS training was serving a wider role than preparing people to practice education, but *'whether or not people will take away that message'* was debatable, due to the pressures of practice, ergo *'if you're working with early years, it might not be the message that gets rammed home because you're too busy keeping everyone at the fire circle'*. However, he felt the chances for environmental education could be greater afforded *'if you're working with older kids'* where there is more chance of reflection, both for the practitioner and the participants.

Values

As the previous section demonstrates, the experiential process, coupled with a broad range of theoretical learning, afforded some reflection on the values the practitioners held, and what they thought about the purpose of FS. The values of the practitioners on entering the training were congruent with the FS ethos, and in this way the training served to validate their values and reinforce held beliefs in its

affective content and philosophy. As Keichtermans (2005) states, sometimes personal values can impede the flow of change. Within the learning community of the training cohort, there was a safety to express and debate values and an affirmative affect where those values were shared. In beginning practice, the two-way process of the practitioner meeting the values of the setting led to some challenges and dilemmas as well as consensual negotiations. Ant felt that his values shifted through the period of practice, questioning the purpose of FS in the school setting and feeling more critical of FS as a result. Monkey, Lion and Eagle also found disparities between the values they wanted to implement in practice and those of their settings, leading to disappointment and frustration. Eagle moved jobs and Lion resigned over the difference in values in her setting. Lion's principles, not solely about FS but about aims and standards in education, were so strong that she could not bear the compromises made in school and the lack of value ascribed to FS. Having attempted to make changes, she felt depressed frustrated, and angry at the staff team. Salamander found that working on values in order to implement culture change in schools undertaking her FS programme was fundamental to maintain the standards of practice being established. Eagle was comfortable with embracing the values of FS on a professional level, whilst not constructing herself as an 'outdoorsy person' (Maynard, 2007b, p. 389). This construction suggests that congruent personal values are not a prerequisite for FS within the training course itself. Eagle perceived that other values could be freely expressed and discussed on the training. In contrast, in the settings where practitioners came into conflict over values, expressing differences to the setting values became a desocialising process (explored further in Chapters 8 and 9). Eagle's experience had an impact on her professional values too. Her work pressures influenced her to drop out of the FS

training course and to stop FS practice, although she hoped to come back to it. On the training course, she had appreciated the group support, stating that *'in the setting I forget it's some of the challenges that can make you feel very isolated'*. She had very little support and felt like FS was a *'constant battle'* for her, indicating the challenges of her current professional life. I discuss Eagle's case further in Chapters 8 and 9 when looking at the ideological tensions in her workplace context that compounded her struggle to practice as she desired.

Lion, Monkey and Eagle reported that FS itself was not valued highly within their settings, having a knock-on effect on their motivation and the quality of the experience for the children. For example, Lion spoke of how follow-up from FS sessions in class had stopped with a change of teacher, disconnecting the FS experience from what was valued as learning in the school. Finally, a level of personal autonomy to continue to deliver FS became a dilemma for those without the support or status to make the changes necessary. Many of the practitioners spoke clearly about *'conscious choices'*, to work within an alternative rather than the dominant model, in their lifestyles, social worlds and practice. The effort to sustain an alternative was interwoven with the affective dimensions of passion and conviction.

Support

Relationships with other adults in the settings were present in all the above categories, highlighting a potential need in training to consider the handling of relationships in the contexts. Personal strategies to create support was discussed. Monkey was challenged to find parental support. Support within the context was a vital ingredient to sustain practice and relieve stress. The practitioners sought

support in a multiplicity of ways. Salamander's strategy of partnership working had led to a successful outcome of her ambitious programme, yet her level of personal support was low, leading to exhaustion. Caterpillar and Moose felt the benefits of being part of a caring, supportive team with shared values and their practice flourished, whereas Lion, Monkey and Eagle did not have the support to develop. Rhino had the support of the home education group but no financial support, which challenged the sustainability of her practice. Where the training was undertaken together by two colleagues, FS practice was successfully integrated within a whole team approach (Caterpillar, Salamander and Moose).

I asked the practitioners some questions for written reflection for triangulation. The qualities or experience they felt a FS practitioner needs in order to flourish included being '*able to continue learning*' (Rhino), '*freedom, a love for nature and a wish for equality*' (Moose) and '*openness / flexibility / playfulness / belief / trust*' (Salamander). Some similar qualities or support that they needed from their team and context were '*love, openness and trust*' (Moose), '*good reflective skills and ability to problem solve*' (Rhino), '*for the whole team to understand the programme and the roles*' and '*willingness to learn, take risks and experiment / thinking outside the box / critical friend, creating an honest relationship with both practitioners and more senior officers*' (Salamander). Limits were also mentioned: '*historical practice / narrow curriculum / resistance from practitioners who are told to be there and not choose to be there*' (Salamander). The practitioners indicated that it would be helpful to have more training content on; safety procedures; a focus on maintaining connection, support and relationship in their contexts; and discussion of values in their contexts. This implies that further

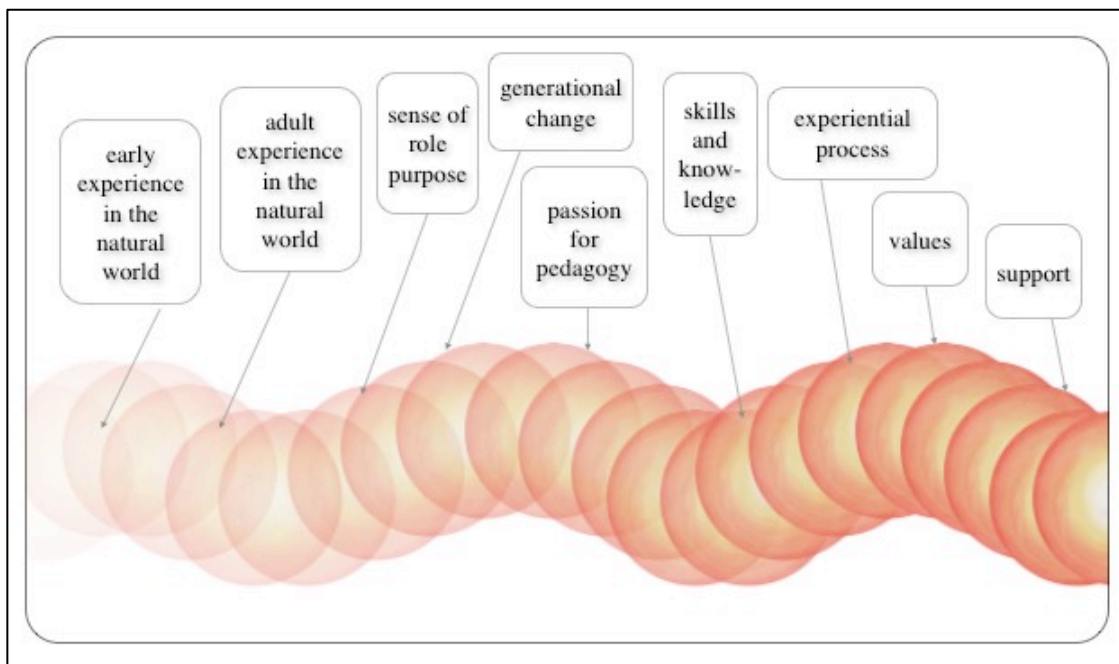
ongoing support, particularly once practising in context, is needed to undertake the training and establish practice successfully. Insufficient support is not a flaw of FS per se, as training providers may not have the ability to extend support or resources to trainees on an ongoing basis. However, the needs they state point to the demanding nature of the training. A low completion rate is the norm for the training provider where the research was undertaken and is common across UK FS training. There are no national figures on ongoing practice as data collection has not been tracked across providers. The rhizomatic infrastructure of FS nationally has not yet had the resources to follow up on trainees. Further, it is not just the training that has impact during the training period, as broader life or professional developments can happen, or a change in circumstances, context or perspective. The government cuts in 2011-12 had a significant impact upon the job security and contexts of some of the practitioners; Salamander, Moose and Lion. Moose had some thought for the future, highlighting the potential for practitioners to share skills and support each other, something she had the benefit of within her team.

I'd like to support other FS practitioners who are not as fortunate as myself in their settings, and also help teachers free themselves from 'ticking boxes' into being present with the children and young people they work with.
(Moose, reflective journal)

This quote affirms the perceived need for ongoing support and the role that FS practitioners could play in culture change within their contexts.

Using *eco-social identity* as a frame of representation, aspects of these themes are summarised in Figure 7. It serves as a mnemonic of the themes explored so far, as seen through the lens of the researcher. Together, they show the ongoing formation of *eco- social identity* in becoming a FS practitioner.

Figure 7: Lifeline after training



Summary

In this final section, I enquired into the experience and impact of FS training.

Aspects of the training that practitioners regarded as impacting and valuable concerned primarily the combination of the practical, experiential and affective content. The fundamentals of tool use, woodland skills, risk assessment and safety were cited as significant. Safety procedures were particularly important to some.

Practical skills were helpful in terms of resources, responsibility and autonomy. The practical experience had a knock-on effect, a cumulative learning process that combined with the affective, creating a sense of possibility to experiment and try things out. Support was the most significant theme, to enable the practitioners to effect practice as they desired and perceived as within the FS ethos. Overall, practitioners had shifted in various ways; in terms of realising they needed support, requesting it, creating it for others and in perceiving shared values as a basis of affective support. On the training course, the affirmation of their own values had

inspired confidence and purpose, connecting to the earlier discussions around the affective roots of pedagogical purpose and views on generational change. The socio- emotional child-centred values within the training were valued by all practitioners, yet many of them struggled to implement these in practice, due to social factors and disparities in values in their settings. There was a view that the combination of theoretical, affective and experiential was a powerful and transformative process. Further, support was mentioned in both positive and negative senses. During the course time, support within the group was a positive experience across the cases. Time on the course also gave them opportunity to find support by having a chance to reflect, on both their connection with the world and with their practice, as the experience of '*simply being*' in the woods was significant. There was a politicised perspective on how free time in nature affords both emotional and ecological literacy, for both the practitioners and their future participants. Yet, as they began their initial practice and continued with their coursework, many of them felt that their need for support was not met, from either the training or their setting contexts, raising an important question of how training can best support the realities of establishing practice.

In this chapter I analysed the findings on the practitioners' personal journeys through the initial training process, to move towards a more theoretical explanation of experiences of the adult role in FS. I began by exploring ideas surrounding construction of self and identity, from childhood to ongoing adult experience, choices and identity construction. I introduced the concept of *eco-social identity* as a relational framework integrating both ecological and social experience in the cognitive and affective process of constructing identity. A common perspective in

cross-case comparison was that early experience goes on to influence adult identity and a value for supporting connection with the natural world for children now.

Seven out of eight participants felt a strong sense of place and relationship with nature. The uncommon differences were that some had no early experience of outdoor play but had professional reasons or adult experience that had led them to chose the training. These cases were based on intellectual reasoning rather than the strong affective emphasis of the other cases.

I then looked at the roots of conviction in their professional role to elucidate the perceived meanings that led to their choices for eco-social practice and motivations for training. There was a wide range of different motivations and understandings, but again, a sense of belonging to the natural world was clear across seven out of eight cases. Concern for the future, expressed in a desire to pass on values and skills about how to care for the environment, ranked highly in these cases. Other motivations were to improve pedagogical practice and to share the values inherent in FS with other professionals. These findings reinforce the concept of *eco-social identity* within their professional purpose. For some, part of their identity formation involved being an advocate for children and eco-social justice, with strong views on pedagogical theory and policy expressed, thus showing the political implications of their role. Some of the more experienced practitioners had a sense of conscientisation (Freire, 1970) that had enabled them to act on their views and adopt a critically reflective stance on their work towards eco-social justice. This demonstrates the links between the affective roots and a developing critical consciousness that combined in their choices for training.

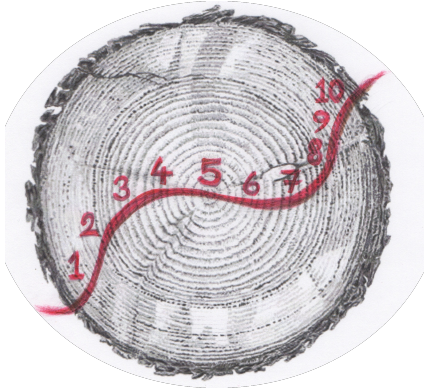
Feelings on societal and generational change preoccupied all of the practitioners,

again locating the affective domain alongside a politicised viewpoint in their choice for training. Negative changes were located in environmental degradation, nature-society relations, increased urban lifestyles and reliance on technology and an erosion of childhood experience concerning free time to play and take risks outdoors. All practitioners expressed concern and a sense of responsibility for the future in terms of nature-society relations and loss, anger and fear were strong affective drivers on their decisions to become FS practitioners.

This chapter has illuminated the significance of the continuous formation of *eco-social identity* within the personal journey of FS training, deepening an understanding of how best training can prepare practitioners for the realities of practice. In the next chapter, I consider the practitioners' approaches, as they set off on the journey of practice, informed by the investigations made here into their identity, thinking and values.

CHAPTER 7:

FRAMING THE APPROACHES



In this chapter I look at the FS practitioner in action, with the aim to explore how they approach, enact and understand their role. The analysis is drawn largely from the second phase of the fieldwork, after the practitioners completed the initial training and undertook initial

practice within their settings; a required placement as part of the course. This was between 4 and 6 months after the initial interview. Here I introduce another frame, the *connector*, which re-conceptualises the adult role as a form of applied *eco-social identity*, activated through the approaches of the practitioners. I consider how the adult role as *connector* is relevant to the idea of the encounter. I discuss literature on encounter and how I explored it in the present research, in which *Shared Space* was used both as data collection method and analysis. Three encounters from the case studies are then given and the findings are summarised and conceptualised using the *connector*, fusing the key factors of the adult role found within the encounter cases.

The adult FS role as *connector*

As I explored in Chapter 2, there are few specific guidelines to define the FS practitioner within the FS literature, and I have drawn from the FS principles, my own FS experience and the present research to heighten understanding of the role.

On reflection from the findings, I chose to use the term *connector* to describe the over-arching functional role of the FS practitioner, connecting with the children, the environment and the wider social context. Throughout the fieldwork, the practitioners self-described or gave examples of different aspects of their role, which I first categorised under the different research themes of views on the professional role of the self, natural world, childhood and social world. I thought about how these could become active principles that would help to define the FS adult role more clearly. The word *connector* returned frequently in dialogue with the practitioners. An active sense of connection implies that something is separate, divided or disconnected. The practitioners perceived part of the FS adult role as a counter-active agent to what they located as a socio-cultural problem (Kraftl, 2013). Ant specified a sense of '*re-connection*' rather than connection within nature, in that we are already connected and part of nature, yet we may not think of it that way. A sense of restoration and repair seemed appropriate, based on the insights on practitioner identity. Affective motivations, of fear for the future, sadness, anger and loss about nature-society relations, and the child-nature relationship in particular, were key drivers for the practitioners.

To some extent, the role of an educator or facilitator with a learner or participant is always that of a *connector*. They support the connection of the subject (learner / participant) to the object (of learning / experience) through various skills, competencies, systems and resources. The idea of a *connector* links with Rose and Rogers' concept of the 'plural practitioner' (2012b) in early years settings, in connecting the multiple selves or roles of the adult. Connection is a two-way process, returning to the self in an iterative cycle of 'reflection-in-action' and

‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön, 1983). In Bronfenbrenner's theory (1979) interactions are bidirectional, between the individual and the context in which they develop. A two-way process holds potential for other actors in *Shared Space*; the children, environment and other adults in the context, to become *connectors* too. A socioculturalist position views learning as a collective process, with the knowledge becoming a possession or property of a group, not just the individual participants (Rogoff, 1998).

Building on insights from the practitioners’ approaches, the *connector* role is part learner-centred and part nature-centred. Having looked at the underpinning pedagogical theory, I now consider some ecological theory, still located in social processes. Owing much to Bateson’s legacy (1973), Guattari theorised on the principles of ecosophy within ‘The Three Ecologies’ (2000). Guattari argued that an ecosophically-framed society requires a re-orientation of thought; to understand ourselves, the society and the ecosystem we inhabit as three different scales of ecology, linked by a series of processes. It is a call for a new way of understanding the world, and our agency and connection within it. Deleuzo-Guattarian thought was helpful to me whilst constructing the *connector* role. A *connector* is capable of acting processually, of re-territorialising, subjectifying, and dissenting. There is a level of change agency in the *connector* role that activates through these principles. Deleuze and Guattari (1972) used the term *detrterritorialisation* to describe the process of taking the control and order away from a place that is already established, weakening ties between culture and place. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1972), connection to the natural world has become detrterritorialised as a norm, through the mechanisms of late capitalism. The *connector* can be seen to be

reterritorialising any previous norms of the situation with their own subjective action / production. *Connectors* are taking control of the situation with their own power and order, and becoming part of a wider process to do the same. This locates the *connector* role relationally and processually, an extension of its natural function. I began to think of a way of describing how the connector enacts their role. I analysed the approaches the practitioners described in the *Shared Space* interviews where they reflected on an encounter. From this analysis, a working definition of a situated and interactive FS adult role emerged. At first I synthesised the role into three distinct parts as a dynamic process of thinking, being and doing. However, this didn't really speak to the vitality diversity and depth of the practitioners' approaches. It is interesting to consider the *connector* role alongside the following theoretical lenses on encounters.

Theoretical lenses on encounters

Building on the notion of the *connector*, I then filtered my analysis of the encounters through theoretical concepts from pedagogy, play and improvisation theory. The derived meanings for the practitioners are presented using the *Shared Space* model. I place importance on interaction within encounters as being at the heart of the process of FS, as the situation where connection can happen.

Responding to the moment requires the juggling of synonymous factors using skills and competencies found in FS practice, using what Ant refers to as '*different levels of attention*' or Moose as '*scanning*' when assessing a whole group situation. This is a complex process that requires further investigation of the actual encounters to reveal how the FS practitioner enacts their role, beyond any defining principles that they may be seen to act under. Lynch (2011) questions the position of principles and

instead refers to casuistry, or the art of case- based reasoning. Preferencing the real to the hypothetical, this reconfigures pedagogy as a series of occasions, as opposed to a system of thought, and argues for the analysis of case studies to illuminate how principles translate, or not, into practice.

Within the following encounters, the FS practitioner role and identity is improvised from moment-to-moment in a dynamic, fluid setting. Teaching has been defined as 'structured improvisation' (Sawyer, 2004) and learning from a constructivist perspective is a 'creative improvisational process' (Sawyer, 2003). During the fieldwork I found significance in improvised experiences which make up the main body of FS interactions. I observe that the FS practitioner role is predominantly improvised, for 2 initial reasons. Firstly, FS is a relatively new practice, without National Occupational Standards, so the job description or perception of the role varies from setting to setting. In common social understanding, the FS practitioner role is not perceived as uniformly as, for example, a teacher role. This engenders more unanswered questions or fuzzy edges about the role for the practitioner, often making it up as they go along, arguably within certain parameters, as echoed in many of the case studies: *I make my own job description* (Salamander).

Secondly, and more importantly, the majority of approaches were child-centred and to an extent child-initiated, where the practitioner improvised responses in interaction with the children, other adults and the environment. Sessions were planned but the onus was on building relationship and following what happens, which could change dramatically. This resonates with the process of interactional synchrony (Feldman, Greenbaum and Yirmiya, 1999), defined as the adult responding sensitively moment-to-moment by tuning into the child's needs and

interests, thus developing rapport and attachment in the interpersonal relationship between adult and child (Rose and Rogers, 2012b). Further ideas about response in relational pedagogy and playwork include accepting what the child offers within the play process (SkillsActive, 2005) with ‘unconditional positive regard’ (Rogers, 1967).

Lobman (2006) and Sawyer (1997b) are the only scholars in the literature that have applied improvisation as an analytical tool to study early childhood settings, and only Lobman focuses on adult-child interactions. Within improvisation performance, there are principles of form, such as the giving and receiving of offers; ‘Yes and’ and ‘Don’t negate’ (Johnstone, 1981; Sawyer, 2001; 1997a). I look at the encounters from the lens of play and improvisation theory, looking for offers and how the practitioner builds on and intervenes in the play. Play is a distinctive pattern of interaction (Sutton-Smith, 1997). Sociologists such as Goffman regard play as a quality of relationship, within encounter, that people have with each other and the conditions of their lives (Henricks, 2006). In ‘Homo Ludens’, one of the earliest texts on play theory, Huizinga identifies play as a ‘well defined quality of action’ or a ‘special form of activity’ (1955, p. 4). He marks 5 defining traits or characteristics of play; voluntary nature (play is free and is freedom), difference from ordinary or real life, qualities of seclusion and limitation, combination of order and disorder, and finally, connection to secrecy (with no agenda or material interest). There are elements of these traits in all the encounters and it serves the purpose of the enquiry to apply a play perspective to their analysis, honouring the intended, often playful, aims of the practitioners.

I defined the narratives in the present research as encounters before I discovered Goffman's work on this subject, and his work inspired me with a further sense of purpose for the research. Within sociological theory, Goffman is the lead thinker on encounters, with social interaction being the chief concern of his long research career. According to Goffman, an encounter is 'a type of social arrangement that occurs when persons are in one another's immediate physical presence' (1961b, p. 17). In encounters, we can see how the self reacts to societal regulation, in moving from unfocused to focused attention. An encounter only becomes real when the individuals become absorbed, or 'engrossed' continually in the activity during the period of focused attention. For Goffman, this is when the encounter becomes 'real' (*ibid*, p. 80). Making the move in attention creates an opening for 'relationship wedges' that ease future interaction (*ibid*, p. 105).

The approaches of the FS practitioner can be viewed in this way, looking at the interaction between them and the other actors, who I take to mean not just children and adults, but also the environment; other species in the non-human world. This is my slant on Goffman's interaction theory, to make explicit the role of interaction between the self and the natural environment in the social world, although, Goffman views the environment as part of the embodied self and the social world. A differentiation between approaches in FS and other forms of outdoor play and learning can be made, in that the environment is something to engage with, rather than simply a backdrop for the action (Nerland, 2007).

A FS practitioner considers what tactics or moves are appropriate in child-centred and nature-centred intervention, as to where they might put their own focus of attention. Timing is important, highlighted in many of the practitioner's anxieties

about when to intervene and when to stand back and observe, or take their attention elsewhere in the group. Time co-ordinates the rhythms of the group in the environment. Space is crucial in Goffman's theory and he distinguishes between regions and region behaviour. Regions include the front, where the focused attention takes place, the back where the front behaviours can be contradicted or explored without observation, and the 'outside', which must be kept at a distance (Goffman, 1956, p. 135). The activity acts as 'a boundary around the participants, sealing them off from many potential worlds of meaning and action' (Goffman, 1961b, p. 24).

The philosopher Buber has also theorised on the significance of encounters (*Begegnung*), stating that 'all real living is meeting', often interpreted as 'all real life is encounter' and that the sum of an encounter produces 'the sphere of the between' (1973, p. 72). This is the space where relation occurs and where we can recognise the possibilities of the time-space between us. To Buber, the fundamental means to relationship is dialogue, whether spoken or silent. He makes the distinction between relation and irrelation in his noted work 'I and Thou' (1958). The 'I-Thou', or 'I-You' relationship is viewed as part of a whole, in relation, whilst the 'I-It' relationship views 'It' as a separate and distanced object (*ibid*, 1958, p. 24). I link the 'I-You' relationship with what I call the unlearning of de-individualisation; not to the point of boundarilessness, but to the point of *connection*; of conscious interdependence. It is a useful point in improvisation, for example, where a group needs to collaborate together. This perspective holds relevance in the present research to my framing of *eco-social identity*, to the practitioners' views on their place in the natural world and their understandings of

socio-emotional relationship, particularly in child-centred practice. It is appropriate to engage with the encounters from this pluralist perspective, drawing on an interdisciplinary synthesis and finding connections on a theoretical level as well as in the analysis of the text. The analysis is in two parts, immediately after the encounter narratives and a comparative summary.

Notes on the use of encounter narratives

I share and reflect on encounters from the second phase of fieldwork interviews in this chapter and the following chapter. My aim for the encounters emerged out of reflection on the initial phase of the fieldwork, where the practitioners had shared their thoughts and feelings on concepts more than real-life events. Further, a question had emerged for me as to where and how exactly their practice was centred, in the inter-relationships between adult, child, environment and contexts. To this end I developed the *Shared Space* model (McCree, 2011). I wanted to discuss a concrete example of their practice with each practitioner, so that we could draw out issues that were important to them. I hoped that focusing on a particular moment would afford specific insight and keep the reflection phenomenological and embodied. This research technique gave more affordances for reflective discourse (Mezirow, 2000).

In guiding the choice of encounters, I asked the practitioners to choose a moment or event that had given them cause to think. I sent them the *Shared Space* model in advance and explained that we would look at all the inter-relationships that were present in the encounter. I asked them how they facilitated the moment and encouraged a discussion based on the different relationships present in the *Shared*

Space model; between the adult, child, the environment and the wider context of the other adults and setting, situated and over time. In the end, there was no avoiding the impact of identity, the researcher-researched relationship and the research process. For example, five out of eight shared encounters were those the practitioners were proud of, thought successful or an example of best practice (Moose, Salamander, Caterpillar, Lion and Rhino). They had, in short, happy endings, which may have been easier to share, in particular knowing that they might become public. There was still material to investigate from the high level of reflection in the interviews. We discussed myriad aspects and the practitioners raised interesting points. I add my own layer of ‘reflection-on-action’ (Schön, 1983) and conceptual reflection within these chapters. In all cases, the encounters gave me another chance to get closer to the practitioners’ understandings, values and approaches. Yet I wondered if I had given the best invitation to the practitioners. In retrospect, I wish I’d asked for a story of an encounter that had confused them or left them unsure of what was the ‘right’ thing to do. 3 of the encounters involved the practitioner questioning their own actions more deeply (Monkey, Eagle and Ant) and interestingly, predominantly involved questions about contextual relations with staff and social norms in the setting. One could assume that these 3 practitioners embody wearing the ‘black hat’ from De Bono’s ‘Six Thinking Hats’ (1985), dwelling with criticism on the gloomier sides of a story. However, I was happiest with the 3 ‘black hat’ examples as they gave an affordance for a full ecosystemic critique of the social context, one aim of using *Shared Space*. Perhaps a ‘black hat’ perspective was what I subconsciously wanted from the practitioners; in some respects my own response to the FS polemic of espousing the benefits. The five ‘best practice’ encounters were in contexts where relations were either positive or

not mentioned negatively. Some had high job satisfaction and less to complain about in their immediate context. The practitioner was in the foreground in the 'best practice' encounters, allowing a focus on the practitioners' approaches in our discussion. I consider some of these encounters on the following pages. In the next chapter, I consider the three that focused on contextual and conflictual issues.

Moose and the selective mute

There is a small girl, I shall call her Polly, from a school not far from here. They came on the residential, the week long FS. We went to the school and I noticed this particular child at the back of the class, with a one-to-one, not saying anything, quiet, sitting on a chair at the table while all the other children were sitting on the floor. She came to visit the centre. It turns out that Polly is a selective mute and she visited because her mum was convinced she wouldn't be able to come, she wouldn't be able to cope with it, or deal with it, being away from home not talking.

I literally showed her around the centre, we went into the woodland, she came with two teachers, her one-to-one, a teacher and a friend for support. We came out of the woodland and I was talking about what we would be doing when she would arrive and suddenly she started talking. And just dragging me all over the place showing me things. The teacher's response was that she was being very noisy and the one-to-one with her said 'What are you saying? I've never heard her speak before!' But that was the initial teachers response. And when Polly went back to school, she stopped talking. Then she came on the school trip and she was only supposed to come for a day and go home at night, because her mum said there was no way she could stay. But she stayed for the whole time and she spoke more and more throughout the week and then dragging her friends around, blindfolded and playing with trees and building dens and finding things and she just loved it and so needed to be outside. And just communicated the whole time. I suppose the reason I'm thinking about this moment, is how unsurprised I was and then I had to go back to school to see them all after they'd finished and she's not talking again. And she came outside to do an activity and she spoke to me. So of course I'd like to have her coming back to the centre each week.

I was unsurprised because I didn't have any expectations. I find it really difficult when groups come in and an adult will tell me what is wrong with a child, what label the child has, the way a child behaves or doesn't behave. And I automatically block that. Now I know its quite a big one, deciding you're not going to talk. Not talking for years. I know that's large and deep. But I also know that those large deep things can move and shift, and in

different environments with people communicating with you in a different way and being able to breathe, not just air, but emotional space, can bring out all sorts of stuff and these things happen all the time. So I guess I wasn't surprised once she started talking and dragging me around, my heart wasn't going 'Shh, she's talking, she's talking, she's talking, this is brilliant!' because I feel I would have scared her to tell you the truth. Umm, it was like 'OK show me', that was it and she showed me more and more and more and I was being dragged around and she was like 'Whoa!' She found a load of stuff when we were over there and it was almost a breath out rather than a surprise, if that makes any sense? ... just like that 'Aaah' moment. You have them in your own life and if you work with children you get those moments with them. I suppose it's being in that moment, nothing that's happened previously or after, just that moment and I think that is something that FS gives you a lot of. That out breath, for the children or for yourself or others you're working with. We're so uptight all the time, things are held in all the time, we've got all these emotions all over the place. All this stuff around us all the time, that we don't get much chance to seize the moment for those shifts to happen. I wasn't expecting her to talk but I wasn't surprised that she did. And when I came in and said to my bosses, she spoke to me, it was then I cried, when I got in. And my boss said 'Yeah I thought she might'. That was that.

She was relating with the outside environment with wonder, definitely and it inspired her, it was very physical for her, lots of touching, finding, just loads of wow moments, and it excited her that she couldn't help but talk. That was it. She was excited and couldn't hold it in anymore. That's what her relationship was with the environment... when she came out to have a look round. I was with her and the teachers for about 45 minutes. We were in and out of the woodland and walking around and I was talking about different things, getting distracted as I normally do by amazing things that are around, just taking her on a tour really, to show her what it was going to look like feel like and be like.

I'd just been with a group and ran into the house to find Polly in there. I think my thoughts were when I was running from one situation to the other through the woods, was ok where's she going to be at, how does it feel inside there? I imagined how much pressure would it be to be expected to talk, what would be your first words, how would you say it, how would people respond? Can you imagine thinking all those things? It's bad enough being shy in a social situation, let alone if you don't normally do it at all. I wasn't overly present with her - equally talking and being present with her as I was with her friends. I was probably more present with her and her friends than I was with her teachers. It was about them, and I was also present with the adults, cos you can't forget them. You can't make change happen, as she's going to go back into school, unless you've done that with the adults too. I think she, I dunno, she must have just felt comfortable within her surroundings and being with a good friend of hers and me, who maybe she didn't feel there was any expectations, I don't know. (Moose 2)

Analysis

In this powerful encounter, Moose acted as a playful guide or mentor, role modeling a different way of being in the environment, to a *'physical space'*, connecting Polly to the outside. Moose was aware of the sensitivity of the new situation for Polly, and handled the meeting by giving attention to everyone present, not singling Polly out at first. Moose recognised the effect of a different environment as well as that of different people and ways of being: *'I think it was a big mix of all those external factors that allowed that internal shift with her'*. Moose was a confident improviser and *connector*. After she guided Polly, she played with power and status, *'OK show me'*, allowing a shift where Polly became her guide: *'she showed me more and more and more and I was being dragged around'*. Moose remained engaged, noticing and valuing what Polly found, or how she engaged. She gave *'emotional space'*, being present without expectation for an outcome, accepting Polly as she was in that moment.

From an improvisation perspective, Moose both gave and received offers, adapting her role and status, to be fully present to what Polly offered her. Moose was adept at engaging playfully with the affordances of the environment, embodying authentic wonder and play within her own experiential learning process. Her guide approach, *'talking about different things, getting distracted as I normally do by amazing things that are around'*, modelled a different and expressive way of being for Polly. I asked Moose if she did *'getting distracted'* as conscious modeling. She explained about the depth of relationship between her and the environment, in how she engaged.

That kind of getting distracted, I never do it on purpose! I just get distracted! (laughs) Just Whoa! What's that! I don't think I could plan it, and anybody that works with me they might find that a little bit frustrating! (laughs) I think when maybe my excitement about the things around me, well obviously I'm modeling, they're going 'well its ok for me to feel like that and express that I feel like that, cos they all feel like it'.

I asked her what else we could call distraction, as a positive aspects in terms of influencing her relationship with the child (Kraftl, 2013), and she rephrased it:

'Getting attracted, that's what it is, I'm attracted to something that's happening!' In her relationship with the world, she allowed herself to be attracted to things, allowing herself to act instinctually within her surroundings. In terms of *Shared Space*, being in the nucleus of now, she moved towards it by getting *'distracted'*.

She saw that as part of her own experiential learning process, sharing her discoveries and sense of wonder with children. She noted the freedom in her role to be able to do this, compared to that of a teacher.

I can see how some teachers find it very difficult to let go within an FS environment, cos they're so used to being so totally focused on what those children are achieving, and not actually..... you've gotta model something.

This modeling opened a space in which Polly was free to act differently too, *'relating with the outside environment with wonder'*, exploring with her senses and physicality. Moose thought that Polly's excited emotional response, *'just loads of wow moments'*, led to the point *'where she couldn't help but talk'*, *'couldn't hold it in anymore'*.

I think that we did make a connection and the outside could be the thing that makes a permanent shift for her...

Moose was aware of an emotional aspect of time, to be able to become *'unstuck'* and *'shift'* through free time outside. She talked about letting go into the moment.

I suppose it's being in that moment, nothing that's happened previously or after, just that moment and I think that is something that FS gives you a lot of.

She talked about being in the moment with emphasis, to allow space for transformation to happen by facilitating the potential for a deep encounter.

I've been working outside with that ethos for a really long time, 9 years, and you kind of let go, and the further and the more you let go, without letting go of the whole feeling, you try and make sure everything's there obviously without letting go within those moments, the more of them occur or the more of them you notice. And then the more you notice of them, the more you can help that child or yourself or young person, to be present themselves in that moment, to help them get unstuck.

With this ethos she was able to shift her attention to hear the 'voiceless politics' in children's play (Kallio and Hakli, 2011, p. 63). This is pertinent in the case of a selective mute child. Moose held the space for Polly to navigate to what she needed. Her ethos came into conflict after the encounter and the week residential, when Moose tried to follow up with the school.

I had a conversation with the adults and they said they couldn't quite believe how far she'd come on and they'd taken lots of footage to show her mum cos there's no way her mum would believe it would have been happening. And they were really going to work on it and try and make sure she was still talking back at the school. I said I'd be really interested in coming in so let me know if I could do anything, but of course they get back to school andIt drifts and you can contact them and say hey I'm still here which was part of me going back, but schools, they're just like little whirlwinds aren't they? One minute you're in it and then you're spat out again at the end!

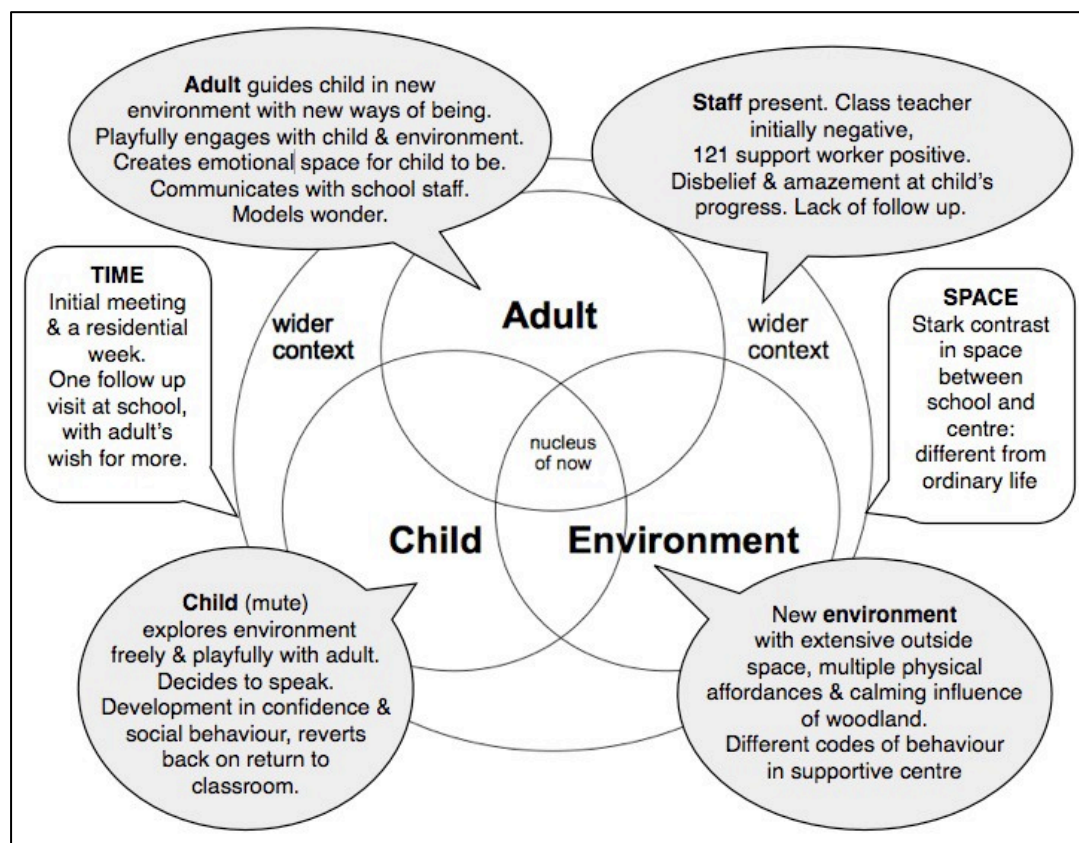
When I went back to school, I took a pot of bubbles with me, cos I thought the blowing and the movement of the bubbles might be something that she might reach for, and that's when she started talking again, with the bubbles, that time. I saw a few of the children, they brought them to me on a little patch of green just outside the school, just 2 or 3 at a time, so I could spend some time with them. Maybe that brought her back into that moment, speaking again at that point.

Key approaches

- Playful guide, mentor, role model: embodied way of being in the environment
- Recognises transformative, emotive effect of time in different environment
- Letting go into the moment, 'emotional space', being present

- Engages playfully with environment in own experiential learning process
- Notices and values child's engagement
- Improviser - gives and receives offers, subverts status
- Follow up with teachers

Figure 8: Shared Space of Moose and the selective mute



Caterpillar, the boy and the bee

The little boy, he's very quiet and shy, and his mum is just expecting another baby at the time, so he's a bit up and down anyway. He had this really awful fear of bees. Any time anything flying came towards him, he just really freaked out, which isn't so good in the FS environment, with all the hoverflies and bees and everything else. You do get a lot of hoverflies over there so, it's up and down. Showing him the difference between the hoverflies flying and the bees, cos they do fly different, so he knew he could tell which were which. He sat on my lap and we watched a bee on a log, hopping onto a flower, and he sat with me for fifteen or twenty minutes, totally still, just totally watching this bee. And I was trying to explain to him that bees don't build a nest unless they have to, cos they die basically, if the bees sting, but wasps can sting again, and tried to explain that the bees would only do it if they thought he was

going to hurt him. It was a beautiful day anyway and the sun was coming through and it was just so lovely sat with him, so still just watching this bee...Where we were, there were no other distractions for him other than looking at it, and also being able to just sit there with him watching them without other stuff distracting him...It was such a lovely experience and after that, he would come into the site and tell me which ones were which, for the next few weeks and it was really lovely.

[Next week] he showed me the hoverflies and how they stay in one place and another bee flying and it was whizzing around and he said 'that's a bee cos it's moving around like that, it's not hovering' and stuff like this, so you know he remembered what I told him and it was really nice to have that feedback from him and that he'd remembered what I said and he wasn't completely freaking out about the bees anymore.

I think he needed to [have time]. He was a bit emotional anyway because of other issues, and because it had got out of hand with the bees, he'd been like it on the other site and didn't want to come out the once, because he said 'There's too many bees out there'. And then 'Come on then, it will be alright over there' and he did come over and he was a bit 'Haaa!' when he saw that there were a lot of hoverflies over there and they, you know, have their own little territory don't they and places, and there were a lot of them there and he was getting really upset about it. So I got him to sit down and calm down and we just sat and talked. And [a colleague] was with me, the other girl from the course, and she'd had him so she knew what he was like so it was really nice that she gave me the time to sit with him to do it and it was definitely worthwhile as the next week he was completely ok, which I thought it would take a few weeks at least, but he was wonderful and you know, he was pointing out that we had some teasles in the garden part and they came into flower and he was showing me all the different bees and the hoverflies on the teasle flowers, which he would never have done the week before... It's one of my favourite things of the summer really. (Caterpillar 2)

Analysis

The encounter stood out for Caterpillar, as the boy grew interested in the species, and in being given the time by a colleague to be with him. Caterpillar has spoken a lot about time. Significant in this encounter was her value and use of time for dialogue, as Buber defines it (1958), including silence. This enabled a 'relationship wedge' (Goffman, 1963, p. 105) where she could give attention to the boy at his request.

I was very grateful to [the colleague] that she did actually give me that time and you know, and that he got what he needed out of that time, which was brilliant for me. So, I knew he needed a bit of one-to-one at that point and just to be able to give him that was really lovely.

Without the team support and within her normal site and ratio, the encounter wouldn't have been possible at all. Caterpillar talked about time-space for stillness and 'being' a lot, whether together in focused attention or the child on their own. Another continued theme for Caterpillar was the Montessori philosophy, of simple space with few distractions. Outside, this translated to her own presence of being able to be still and calm, focusing on one thing at a time. She was comfortable taking the time to be with the boy at his pace. She met the children with her own stillness as a model, and valued the affordance of the lower ratio in FS. Getting the time to do this was very precious in the busy nursery environment.

I do think it's important, erm, some of them, you know, just need that time, some of them just want to come and sit on your lap and just look at stuff, or ask a question, and to try and give them that time when we've over there, with you know, less children than inside and it's the higher ratios and everything so they've got a bit more of you if you know what I mean?

Caterpillar spoke about how the children approach her in the nursery. Often they simply joined in with what she's doing, choosing to copy and follow her lead: 'they seek you out and follow you'. At other times they asked her for help, being 'shown where most of the insects might be hiding'. In this way she facilitated at a distance, responding with a 'Yes, and' on invitation. Yet she recognised that an invitation may be to be unobserved.

And if they want to be left alone we leave them alone and if they want to come and talk or they want to ask or they want you to come and do something we always try and do it. I think that's really important for them.

Caterpillar's practice was driven by socio-emotional relationship. Despite her strong naturalist tendencies, she placed the socio-emotional as first priority,

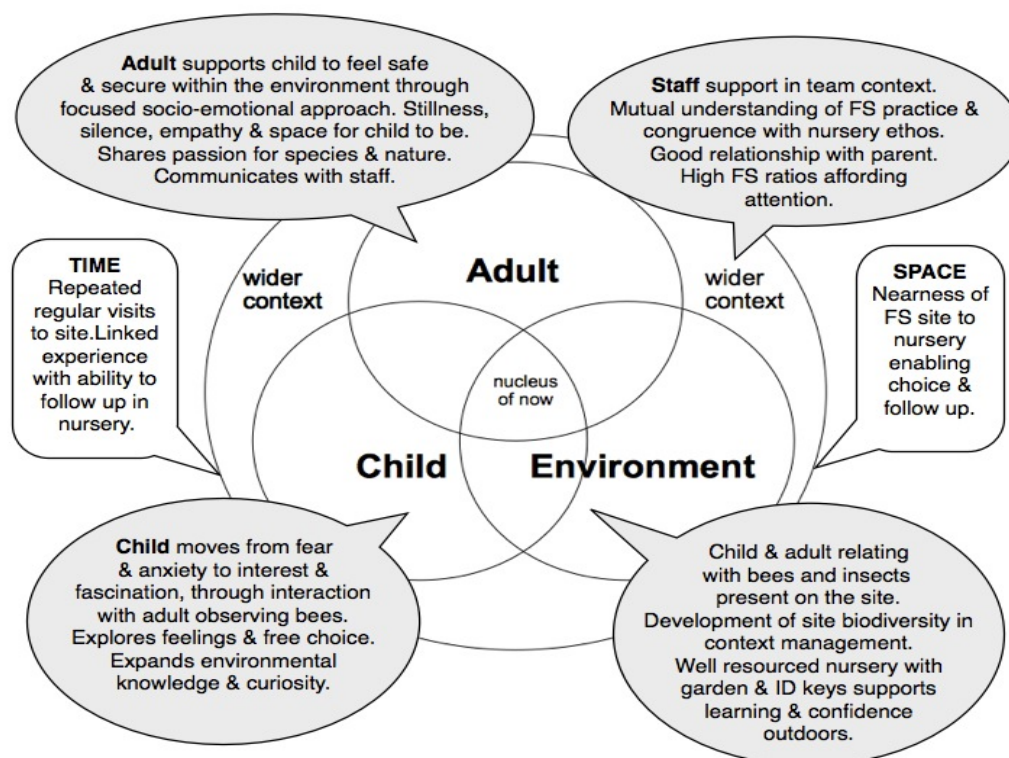
referring to Maslow (1954), that *'if they don't get their basic needs met'*, they won't be able to engage enjoyably with the natural world. Caterpillar knew the boy was having some emotional distress at home, coming to terms with his mother's second pregnancy. On previous visits to the wooded site, he was upset and frightened by the bees and insects and had returned to the nursery. In the 20 minutes they spent huddled together in the encounter, Caterpillar gave the boy close attention, being still and waiting while he calmed himself in her presence. Caterpillar reflected that she answered his questions as best she could so *'he could get it clear in his own mind'*. She gave him time, support, information and room for free choice, responding in interactional synchrony (Feldman *et al.*, 1999) to his emotional state with reassurance and empathy. On return to the nursery, she showed him an identification book with pictures of different bee species. One species had the same name as the boy, and with time he was able to recognise the species, saying *'That's my bee'*. His initial fear and anxiety transformed into interest and fascination. In her own childhood, Caterpillar was obsessed by insect life and, as an adult, she spent a lot of her free time in nature with her family. Her approach was non-instructional, starting from and following their interest to provide knowledge when she could, or finding things out together. Her ecological awareness as a practitioner changed the nature of the experience for the child. She was able to identify species, imparting knowledge and enthusiasm about them. She was particularly fond of hoverflies. Caterpillar spoke about how her interest and knowledge of nature transmitted, how other children had previously got the *'bug-hunting bug'* and started collections at home, surprising their parents. Other parents had told her that long after the children had left the nursery and started school, that their interest for bug hunting, exploring or gardening remained. The boy's mother

remarked at a later date how he had shared his new interest at home and how relieved she was that he was no longer scared.

Key approaches

- Carer; value of socio-emotional relationship, providing security
- Strong socio-emotional conception of the adult role
- Facilitator; child having agency, practising choice within the relationship
- Values child's autonomy to develop their own confidence and understanding
- Awareness of time, stillness and being as an integral part of interaction
- Naturalist; a *connector* to environment through passion and knowledge
- Engages in a shared sense of wonder in nature
- Transformation of child-environment relationship through adult attention
- Sustained time frame of repeat visits and ongoing linked practice in nursery
- Follow up with parents and colleagues

Figure 9: Shared Space of Caterpillar, the boy and the bee



Salamander and the knot demonstration

He was from one of the schools that we work with, Year 2, KS1, a quiet young lad in class, very on the ball but he doesn't engage with the others...It was the first term of FS. I'd...started to do some knots around the fire pit and he came up and sat with me to find out what I was doing. The head teacher happened to be on that session the next week. The boy learnt the knots and he was really pleased he'd learnt them...he taught the rest of the group how to do it, with the rhyme, tie the scarf around the snowman's neck and then poke him in the eye...His class teacher actually made comments about the fact that he's stood up in front of the whole group of people, his peers and he got it wrong the first time, but he didn't stress. And its quite interesting because what would normally happen in a class situation, if a child gets it wrong, the other children are going 'Miss Miss Miss it's mine, I'll do it I'll do it, this is how you do it', etc but they didn't and he just stopped and he took a moment and nobody said anything...the adults didn't jump in and say 'Oh let somebody else do it' and he composed himself ...and he got it right. Which is a totally different experience to getting something wrong in front of a group of children when you're in an enclosed space. Because the adults want to intervene and then the children want to have a go because 'He got it wrong', but actually the whole interaction was very different out there...

The following week he...came and got the rope off me, sat down and taught [the head teacher] the knot. So in terms of confidence building, in terms of his belief in his own abilities and actually that shared kind of power, 'Well I know something that you don't know', it was really quite lovely...he's come on leaps and bounds now. A totally different child.

Interestingly enough we're coming to the end of the year with those year groups, that school now, because the idea is that we're with them for a year. We train up their practitioner, they're qualified and so by September they can go out on their own, they don't need us, we're just on the end of the phone. Their literacy and numeracy scores, or their rate of development or rate of progress, has significantly enhanced to the same year group last year. There's no cause or effect and there's nothing specific to say it was FS but FS was the only intervention that was put in. (Salamander 2)

The purpose of this encounter was to explore an adult-led practical skills approach with the aim to help a child settle in and then flourish in a FS environment. In her role giving advice to schools and settings, as well as delivery, Salamander acted an advocate for children. She described the boy in this encounter as one of the 'children you probably miss in the classroom'. The positive outcomes in Salamander's approach helped to establish a new group of children into a new

environment and the style of FS delivery. It was a clear example of an adult-led approach enacted within a child centred philosophy. Salamander introduced rope as a loose part for play, but importantly also taught the skill of knot-tying, thereby increasing the resources for extension available to the child. Knots within FS are an important feature in helping children to explore the environment of the woodland in a playful and empowering way. This encounter only charted the beginning of the process for the boy. How he developed further through using knots is unknown. The potential of what he could do with his new knot skills opened up the ability to make swings, walkways, gather branches, build dens and sculptures, extend imaginative play etc, as well as the simple pleasure of successfully learning a skill that he proudly showed off.

Salamander had a specific reason for providing adult-led activity for this particular age group in the new environment of FS. She observed that children unused to an outdoor environment often didn't know what to do at first, with '*no confidence in their body's abilities*'. She saw a need to settle them in, to '*help and nurture them*', particularly the older children.

With young children, early years and Foundation Stage and sometimes Year 1 children, when they come onto a site like this, they've still got that love for awe and wonder, I call it. They've still got that creative play. When you go further up the school the older children become less confident in making their own choices, and less confident in playing.

Salamander was heavily critical of the prescribed programme in education as well as the prescribed nature of play equipment and toys. It can seem counter-intuitive to then provide more adult-led intervention in the sessions she ran with new groups in Key Stage 1 and 2, but she theorised she was meeting them at their level, and giving them open-ended invitations from a initial structure. Beginning with clearly

adult-led activities, she gave focus, direction and increased their confidence to explore, with an aim that they would then find ways simply to 'be' there. In this way, adult-led intervention came from within her child-centred and nature-centred approach. It exemplified the *connector* role the FS practitioner plays, between the child and the environment, adapting to meet the child's needs and revealing some of the affordances of the space.

Tied into her interventionist approach was a strong socio-emotional conception of the adult role; of support, encouragement, strong boundaries and positive reinforcement. This challenged the norms for school staff who came on some of her FS sessions. She insisted they remained active and directed them to areas where they could support the children. The reasons for Salamander were clear:

...because actually, what's that showing the children? They're not really bothered about what the kids are doing and they're not interested. Actually when you're in FS as an adult member of staff, you're there to show the children that their experiences are really worthwhile and valuable. And that doesn't happen by sitting on a tarpaulin chatting with each other and drinking water.

It takes assertiveness and a certain level of authority to be able to direct other adults on a session, in particular those not from your own setting. Salamander's high standards of practice were evident, and she succeeded in communicating them, reflecting a high level of change agency and strength of conviction. In this encounter, the relationships with the setting staff were strong and positive. The staff maintained an active interest in the child.

After teaching the knots on request, Salamander herself played a role in the back region of the encounter. She observed, praised, reinforced and ensured that the adults that were significant to the boy did the same. With this space in the

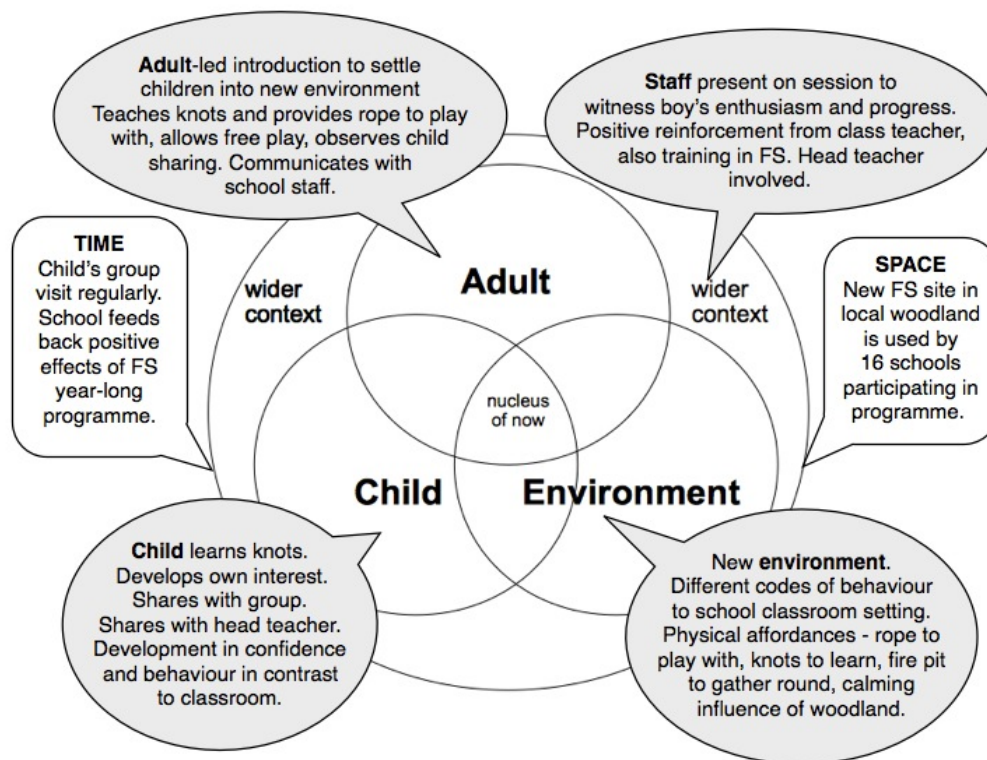
relationship and expectations, the boy built his own confidence and decided when he was ready, to take the step to share his skill with the group and the teachers. Salamander's approach promoted the growth of his self efficacy; 'belief in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments' (Bandura, 1997, p. 3)

The influence of the woodland space was not something Salamander commented on during the narrative of the encounter, but one that she described at other times, as having a calming effect on both the children and staff. The site was in an established and well managed woodland. As part of Salamander's strategy and partnership working approach, she developed a FS site within these woods, that any FS group in the local authority could access and use. It was a popular site with dog walkers and visitors at other times, therefore possible for parents and children to follow up on FS activity at the same site in their free time.

Key approaches

- Adult-led child-centred approach
- Starting from child's needs in the space
- Teaching practical skills aim to help child settle in and establish relationship with space
- Strong socio-emotional conception of the adult role
- Back region support, encouragement, strong boundaries and positive reinforcement
- Communicating and directing other adults
- Creating new sites and affordances

Figure 10: Shared Space of Salamander and the knot demonstration



The connector role

The *connector* concept details insights from the study on practitioner approaches and performative role processes. The following summary of the approaches used is included in full, and then fused in a visual overview (see Figure 11).

Critical (role of thinking: skills, competences, knowledge, questioning, reflecting)

- Playful guide, mentor, role model: conscious way of being in the environment
- Own experiential learning process
- Naturalist: a connector to environment through passion and knowledge
- Strong socio-emotional conception of the adult role
- Reflecting on core values

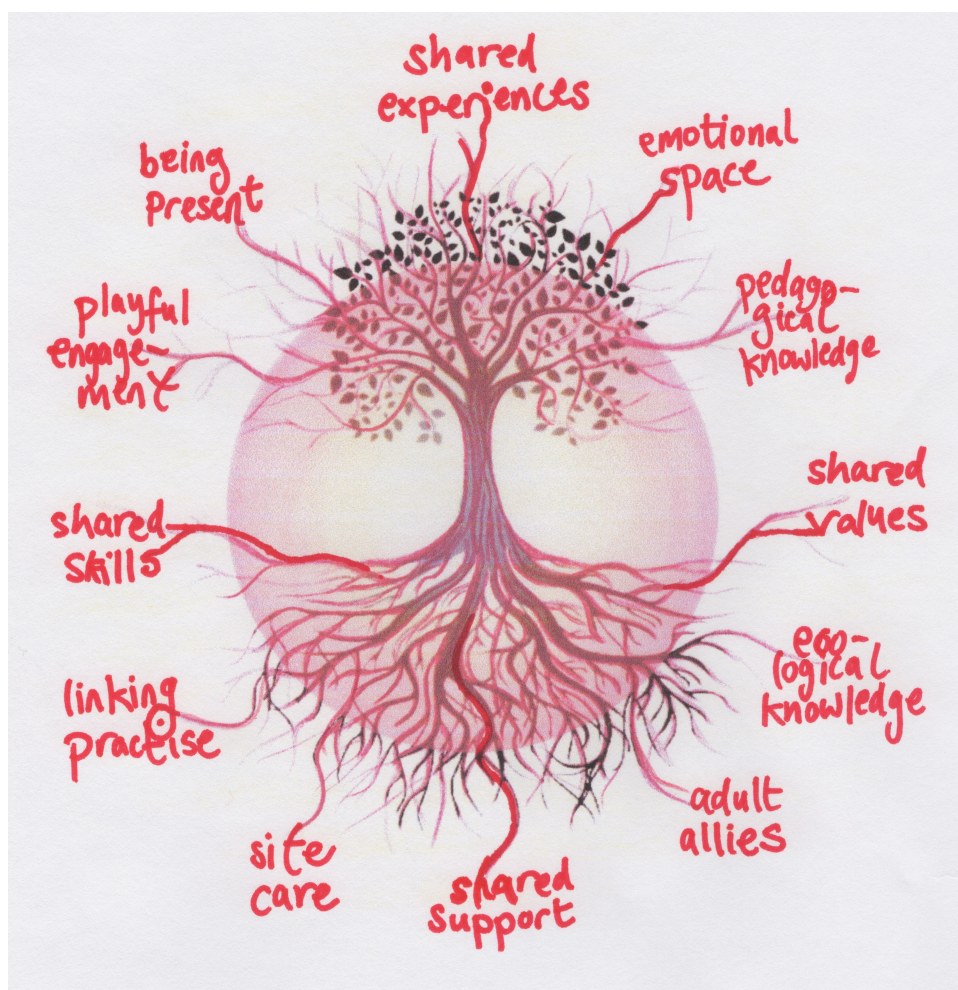
Processual (role of doing: acting as part of the process, participating, subjective production, interacting, intervening, singularisation)

- Engaging playfully with environment, embodying wonder, play and sensory experience
- Follow up with teachers, parents and colleagues
- Improviser: gives and receives offers, subverts status
- Facilitator: the child having agency, practising choice within the relationship
- Sustained time frame of repeat visits and ongoing linked practice
- Adult-initiated child-centred approach
- Carer: valuing the socio-emotional relationship with the child, providing security and starting from the child's needs in the space
- Communicating and directing other adults
- Creating new site and new affordances

Relational (role of being: attunement / synchronising, joining / connecting / relating, observing, ecological systems, flow, located and present in time-space)

- Letting go into the moment, 'emotional space', being present
- Recognising transformative and emotional effect of time in different environment on child / Awareness of time, stillness and being as an integral part of interaction
- Noticing and valuing child's engagement
- Transformation of child-environment relationship through adult attention
- Back region support, encouragement, strong boundaries and positive reinforcement
- Valuing child's autonomy in developing their own confidence and understanding
- Engaging in a shared sense of wonder in nature

Figure 11: Connector role building on Chapter 7 encounters



Bringing connector, eco-social identity and Shared Space as lifelines together.

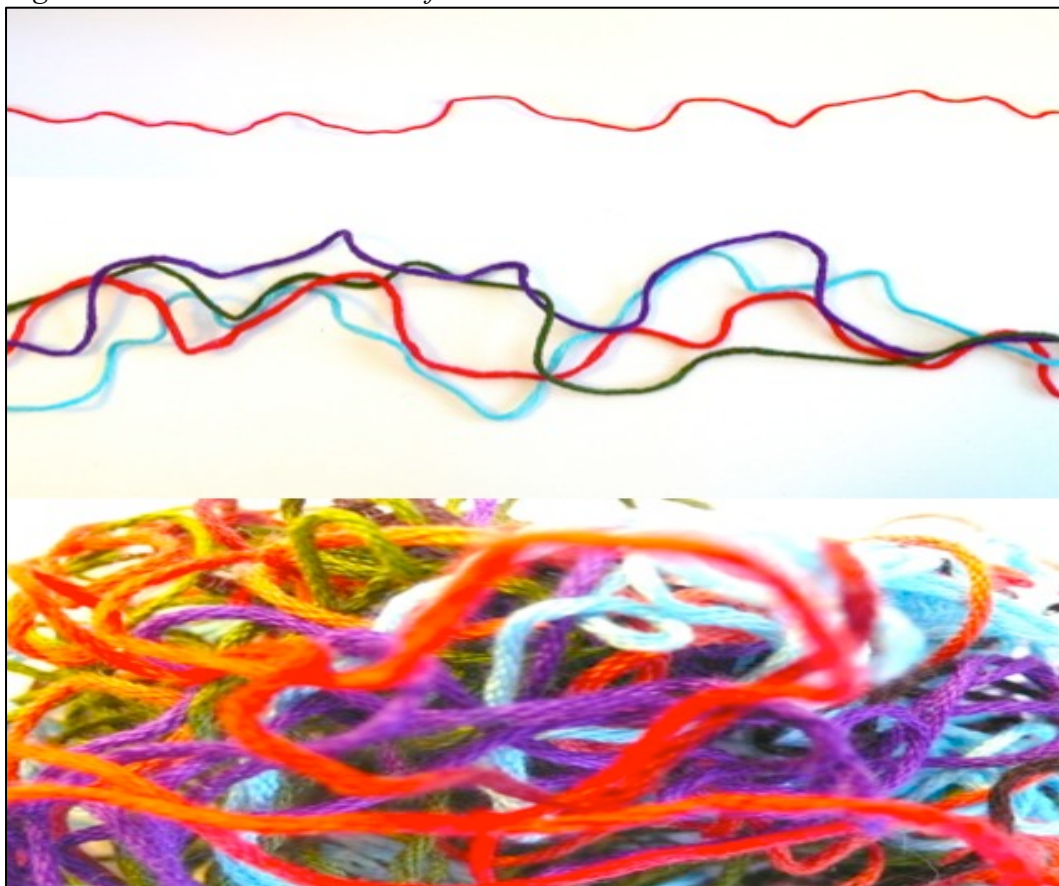
In the *connector* role diagram, the tree was chosen as a metaphor to represent continuous connection with the environment. At first I had resisted the obvious metaphor of trees, but in the end it seemed the simplest way to explain the process of the *connector* role. I was further inspired by Ingold, who uses the concept of a tree to demonstrate his view of the world's materialities as made up of lifelines, threads and traces, engaged in the meshwork, or the 'zone of entanglement' (Ingold, 2008, p. 1796). The words around the periphery are drawn from the above encounter approaches, as active constituents of the FS practitioner role that had been discussed within the interviews. Four of the words are a

continuation from the model of *eco-social identity* which preceded the connector in Chapter 6. As the practitioners were now practising what they had learnt, for the *connector* I joined the 4 words to 'shared' to demonstrate connection through practice. These were shared values, experience, support and skills, slightly abbreviated from the eco-social identity words for brevity here. This also connects with the idea of relational practice, evident in all the models. The red colour is intentional, continuing the red thread from the practitioners' journeys and the outer colour of eco-social identity, as a lifeline showing the continuation from training to practice. I developed this idea of lifelines further, in a joint quest to be able to visually represent movement and shifts in the practitioners, and in order to find a way to synthesise the conceptual models together, to show how they related to one another. In interpreting and representing the practitioners' journeys from training to practice, I had come to a place conceptually where I wanted to show a continuous thread running through the whole of their experiences, and the tendrils of relation that were the bread and butter of both their profession and situated subjectivities. I had been playing further with metaphors that would suit the subject. Shared Space had worked well as a heuristic tool and analytical method, yet it had its limitations. After the interpretation was done, I wished to improve the model further. Reading into the literature around spatiality and affect (Kraftl, 2013; Thrift, 2008; Ingold, 2008) I felt that I had found the canon to help me develop the concepts.

The models come together as a series of connected lifelines. Eco-social identity becomes a continuous lifeline, which can be seen as the constituent part of the *connector tree*. *Shared Space* also became lifelines, Conceptually both the *connector* and *eco-social identity* are located within *Shared Space* as the

representation of the practitioner, accompanied by other humans, non-humans and materialities. Taking the flat Venn diagram model of *Shared Space* as a cross section of deeper model that continues in a similar lifeline, as the tip of a trajectory, then *Shared Space* becomes a series of lifelines running alongside and with each other in the same atmosphere; the adults, practitioner, children and environmental materials and beings. An experiment at mapping *Shared Space* relationally and with movement can be seen in Appendix 9. It includes weather symbols to represent affects, as the weather is often a metaphor for emotions, and it continued the metaphor of atmosphere as a container. In the figure below, I played with threads to show the progression of the different lifelines through eco-social identity and the connector, to *Shared Space* running alongside and with each other, and a deeper, denser, tangled *Shared Space*.

Figure 12: The three models as lifelines



Summary

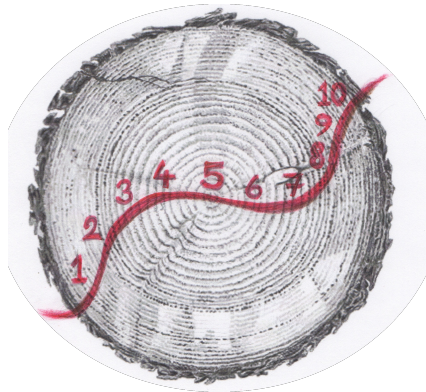
Returning to the encounters, after a brief interlude into the conceptual models, although Moose, Caterpillar and Salamander had quite different approaches, this was due to the nature of describing a specific encounter, as they responded to a situation with particularity. They shared a similar child-centred and nature-centred ethos. I attempt here to categorise the key factors within all their approaches, building on the notion of the *connector*. They used and moved between different tactics in a flow process, for example at times being adult-led and initiating, or providing background support, or being alongside in equal participation. They shared a way of seeing and relating with the world through embodied play and sensory engagement. Caterpillar's style was through joint close observation of species, Moose through embodied play and wonder, and Salamander through creating affordances for the child to engage independently with the world. They all valued the child's choices, autonomy and ownership, noticing when they were engaged and following the child's initiated actions. They all communicated the value of the encounter with other adults albeit in different ways; Caterpillar teamworking with her colleague, Salamander acting in a directive and assertive role and Moose following up with the school teachers. This highlighted an aspect of change agency in the adult FS role, communicating values around child-centred play and engagement with the natural world and working towards sustainable practice by seeking collaboration. For Moose and Salamander, this meant challenging social norms in how the adults related with the children. Caterpillar helped to establish congruent social norms that fitted her FS practice in her setting, working with a colleague '*on her wavelength*'.

Their approaches built resilience in the child and the environment, starting from building a socio-emotional relationship with the child and attending to their basic needs and security within the space. They built resilience in one way by being a secure part of the environment, a personal resource that the child could draw on and negotiate their needs and interests with. They opened up the affordances in the environment with the child. They drew other adults into the frame of the child's world. Thus, they were increasing the resilience of the child to negotiate the world around them and navigate to what is desirable (Ungar, 2008).

There were two other vital ingredients within the context of these encounters; time and space. Time was a recurring theme throughout the research. This aspect of time I call the *repeated loop of familiarity*, using rhythm, interval, habit and familiarity (Kraftl, 2013) through frequent, regular visits to a natural setting. Self-directed, engaged experiences needed time to come into being. There was time for learning opportunities for the other adults, for reflection and further questions to be generated from the process. Provision of space was also vital to the process. The practitioners acted as guides to open out new spaces within the natural world to, and with, the children. Inhabiting a different space afforded the children to be able to explore different modes of being. Polly risked talking, and the boy with Caterpillar grew accustomed to a wilder space and its inhabitants. The encounters demonstrated that to separate the practitioner from their context is illusory within a complex ecosystemic view. Within this chapter, I have looked at approaches that the practitioners used primarily in their interactions with the child and the natural environment. In the following chapters, I shift focus to the social contexts of the settings, to analyse the practitioners' strategies and adaptations in the context.

CHAPTER 8:

FRAMING THE ROLE IN CONFLICT



Within this chapter, I use within-case analysis to frame some of the practitioners' contexts and the impact of socialisation and norms upon their role. Tense encounters, where tension was more keenly felt by the practitioners in relation to their contexts, are analysed using the *Shared*

Space model. I describe how the social realm feeds back to the practitioners, reflected in a shift or a maintenance of their role, perspectives and approaches.

In the initial chapters, describing the wider context of mainstream pedagogy and care, I referred to the potential for collision between the values and attitudes present in settings and those embodied by the FS practitioner. Maynard identifies the role of the adult as the greatest source of tension in FS practice (2007b), coming into conflict with other adults over values, beliefs and goals, in particular concerning eco-social values and relationships to systemic aims, or the values situated in the context. Within this role tension, there is both conflict and potential for transformation through the experience of FS, not only for the children but for the adults present (Murray and O'Brien, 2005).

To consider contexts, it is imperative to consider the situated perception of role and the process of social norms and socialisation. In Chapter 3, I discussed role through

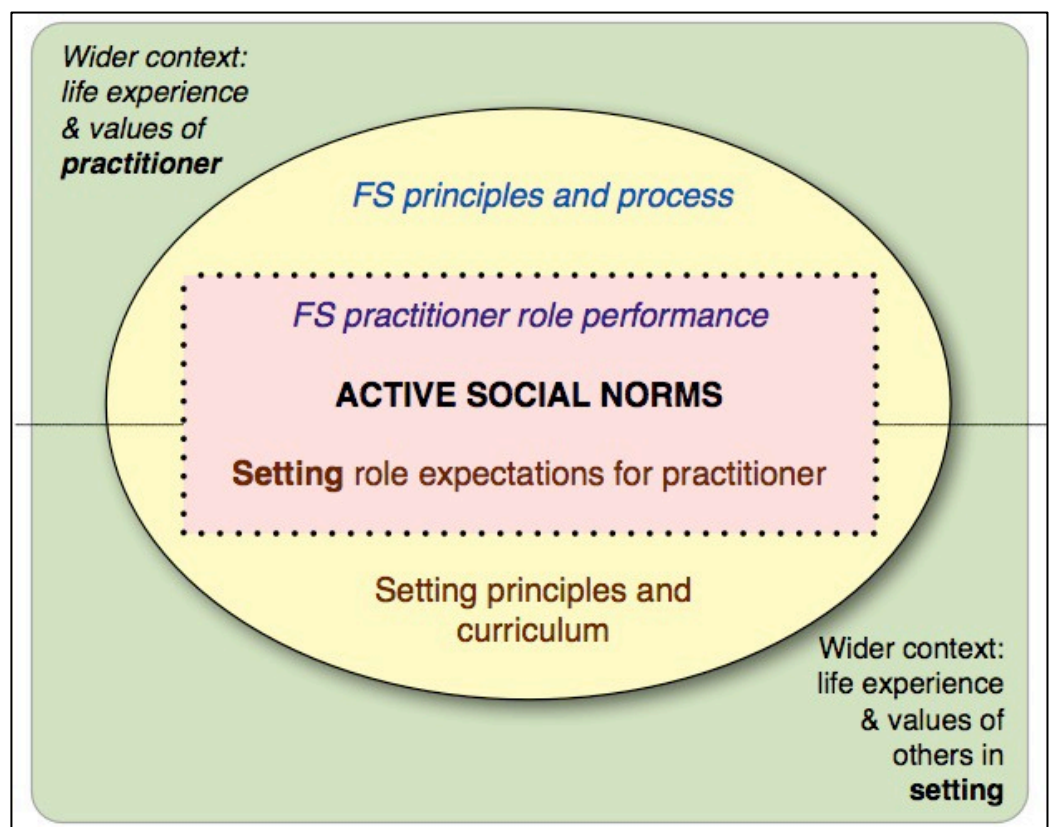
the perspectives of Goffman and Foucault. In Chapter 7, I conceptualised role as a *connector*, re-connecting others with the natural world within a relational pedagogic framework.

Tense Encounters

Within the settings, the practitioners' roles were viewed and performed very differently, influenced by differing expectations and subjectivities. Within the case analysis, a clear division emerged between the expectations of the FS practitioners and the settings. Role is a significant contributing factor to creating and maintaining social norms (Foucault, 1977; Goffman, 1961b). The norms and expectations were either located in either the purposes of FS (as embodied by the practitioner) or the setting, reiterating the theme of *fitness for purpose* within Chapter 2. Yet there were many places where this division was blurred. Most practitioners in the present research embodied both the role of delivering FS and a wider staff role within the setting (Ant had a less embedded role, volunteering in a school solely for his FS placement), therefore at least two sets of norms and role expectations had an influence. Insight into their role performance within context, afforded a more theoretical explanation of how an individual adapted within a situated role, and some of the tensions and opportunities within that process. It is of interest how much an individual departs from certain expectations, why, in what ways, and what changes occur due to that movement. In order to clarify the different influences, the figure below (Figure 13) is a plural framework of active social norms operating on and within the practitioner role in context. For the purposes of establishing a baseline rather than a collective representation, the FS principles are used here, to overcome the 'troublesome ambiguity' posed. It is

recognised that each setting is immersed in its own socio-cultural context wherein the norms and expectations vary. This framework, much like the *Shared Space* model, can be filled with the details of each individual case. In the present research, in the experience of practitioners working in mainstream settings, accepted social and behavioural factors in FS practice often presented as an anomalous situation, causing tension in the interaction. These tense encounters are now described.

Figure 13: Active social norms - context framework



Eagle and the ladybird funeral

In Eagle's case study I explored how she had felt engaged in a 'battle' and how she argued with the staff team over differences in approaches to practice. There were differences in understandings about child-centred practice in the early years curriculum as well as nature-centred practice and the FS ethos. Within Eagle's

encounter, a tension in ideology is played out on the micro-level in an interaction over a dead ladybird, exposing questions over the norms in the context and the challenges of working within a team ethos.

The children were looking...we were outside, and one of the children spotted a ladybird on the floor, so we all went to have a look at it and I think there must have been 6 or 7 children all trying to squeeze round this tiny ladybird. And one of the children went to stamp on it. So I said straight away 'ooh no, we've got to look after the mini-beasts' and I was trying to like make up a story about how like his mummy and daddy would miss him, and he wouldn't be able to get home. I like made this whole story up about this ladybird, how we've got to look after him to make sure he got home and what have you. [Then] one of the other children stamped on it!

So it was like my reaction and the other member of staff's reaction, because I went then into like 'Oh no his Mummy and Daddy are really going to miss him, and they'll be wondering where he is' and I was trying to find sort of empathy from the child for this now splattered ladybird. The other member of staff that was there was quite ... didn't know what to say, because they...couldn't believe that I'd gone along that line with it...they were a bit like, well, so I was trying to make this child feel guilty and they were a bit like shocked by that I suppose. Whereas I was a bit like...at the time I couldn't think of another way to handle it. I was doing the whole story of 'Oh no Mummy and Daddy won't know where he is and they'll be really sad'. I was obviously trying to get the child to understand or empathise, kind of thing, which was my gut reaction to it...I don't think she would have wanted to deal with it in the same way...Cos she spoke to me afterwards. She was like 'I can't believe you've just said that, I can't believe what you've just done'. And she was like joking with it, but she was obviously quite shocked by the whole thing. I think she just wouldn't have thought to really act like that...she was obviously shocked at my response, but I think also she wasn't easy with the way that I...with the kind of emotion I was trying to stir in the children.

I think she would have dealt with it as a behavioural issue. And instead of like trying to make the child understand, it would be all telling the child off...That's what she thought, that I was trying to make them feel guilty. But me I was just trying to get them to empathise, and try and get them to understand that...I think it...would have had more impact, it would have been more supportive to their development than having just told them off. I think the children would have gained more from that...cos it's trying to get them to think, to understand the implications of their actions, instead of just telling them off without explaining why it's wrong. It's quite difficult to explain why something like that is wrong, isn't it, especially to a group of 3 year olds?...And it's like you said, they almost need to do it, don't they, to understand it? But what do you do as a practitioner in that situation? What's the right way of doing it?

I think as well it is quite hard to control your own emotions at that time as well, isn't it? Because, like to watch them stamp on a ladybird when you're trying to just like encourage them to, you know, be gentle and that kind of thing. Your gut instinct, your gut reaction is almost anger isn't it? So quite quickly you've got to like calm yourself down and try and understand it from their point of view, and then think where do you take it, how do you get them to understand that?

I think like the other member of staff probably reacted on her emotion...and kind of stopped there and didn't go through the rest of the process. Which is why I think then she was so shocked at my reaction...that for her, has crossed the boundary and her reaction was anger. So, I think like, to me, everyone must have some sort of cut-off point, where they can't carry on with that process, like you do just react out of emotion. Like for me a ladybird, I can rationalise a ladybird. But it does make you wonder, doesn't it, if everyone's got a different kind of point to which actually they just react to that kind of emotion and they can't get past that. (Eagle, int 2)

Analysis

In Eagle's words, this encounter was about '*how do deal with squishing an insect*'.

There are different points of interaction to consider here, between Eagle, her colleague, the children and the ladybird. Eagle explained the process in her thinking about the encounter in 4 parts; how to deal with her own emotions, the children's emotions, '*to think about it from their point of view*', her colleague's emotions, and lastly how to go forward and reflect on the outcome of the encounter. Eagle reflected that what helped her get past her emotional reaction phase was '*having an understanding of child development, and what is developmental and what is behavioural, like the difference between competence and conduct*'. This fundamental difference of understanding frames the encounter. She and her colleague viewed and valued competence and conduct differently in the context of the nursery and the children's play. Firstly, her thinking involved a spontaneous strategy to engage the children with empathy and imagination rather than behaviour management. She tried to develop her initial emotional reaction of

anger at their action and an urge to invoke guilt or remorse, into a considered response to draw out the learning from the situation. She recognised that killing the ladybird was in some sense an experiment. Having been drawn in to observe the creature, the children were testing their mastery in the environment (Cobb, 1977).

I think it's just like they're absolutely fascinated aren't they?...they are trying to understand these creatures and these things, and they're alive like they are, and they do things the same as they do, but they're not the same as they are...Recognising similarities and differences, isn't it, in other living things?

Eagle recognised the learning potential the children got from the encounter, the different quality that engaging with other species brought their play. For the children it was a significant encounter and they came back to look at it throughout the day.

Some of the children joined in with that storytelling about the ladybird and you could tell they could empathise, because they were going 'No...his brothers and sisters will be looking for him' and the children were taking part in that storytelling. And some of them just spent ages just looking at it. Like you just couldn't get them away from it, they were just sat in a little circle around this squished ladybird...fascinated with it...then they just kind of slowly lost interest and went back to doing other things. But it was still quite interesting even later in the day, some of the children would still go over and look at it. Even after that period of going inside and coming back outside again, like for a few of them they went straight to the ladybird to see if it was still there.

She wanted to promote the emotional connection that the children already had with the species in the space, to further their interest and engagement and to ask questions about the consequences of life and death for the ladybird. This was the difference between provoking their imaginative and emotional competence, responding to the offer of the ladybird's death with another offer, compared to saying their conduct was inappropriate; in effect closing down the encounter. She chose to say 'Yes, and' instead of negating.

I still think like it was more positive for the children's development to do it that way, than just to tell them off. To do it 'Ooh that wasn't kind', I think

they'd learn more from trying to empathise with it, than just being told off for reacting in the way that they did.

Using a storytelling approach, Eagle remained in the 'focused attention' (Goffman, 1963, p. 24) with the children on the ladybird, trying to build connection with the creature, rather than moving the attention to the children. Improvising and negotiating her role as an adult, she tried to promote empathy as a connecting force, building on their '*natural curiosity about it that drew everybody's attention to it to start with*'. Eagle observed that the children often found and interacted with species in the space, '*any mini beast, like another little girl drew a picture for a spider, and we had to hang it on the fence next to the cobweb so that [the spider] could look at the picture*'. This was usually encouraged within the nursery team.

We had... a dead bumble bee outside and they've decided amongst themselves that the bumble bee is asleep, so they're all tip-toeing around it and being quiet so as not to wake it. Instead of going 'Actually no that's not a sleeping bumble bee', we just kind of let them get on with that, if that's their understanding... just go with it. It's so cute to see them all...normally it's such a busy space, like with the children running everywhere, and then... the few that found it trying to manage the behaviour of the other children, to get them to walk and tip-toe and be quiet, cos the bumble bee was asleep. They are quite extreme aren't they? They're like very 'Rah' but like it's so different, it's so extreme, their behaviour towards insects and things.

The encounter with the ladybird was different, in that the children killing it posed an ethical or moral dilemma for the staff team and exposed the contrasting values in the team. She didn't talk it through any further with her colleague, but their short dialogue left her with questions about her response; whether she had a valid reason.

I think I'd probably do it again if it happened again. But the other member of staff's reaction made me question what I'd done, because I almost felt like ok so what was I doing? Was it that I was trying to get them to empathise with the ladybird, or was it that I was angry and trying to make them feel guilty? And at the time like in your head, you're quite clear cut about it, but afterwards I did think 'ooh, now I don't know' because somebody else kind of raises that question in you, and you think 'Ooh'.

One of the questions raised in the staff dialogue is how do you teach or model care for the environment? Eagle was trying to model empathy, which was read partly by her colleague as trying to make the children feel guilty. She felt a little misunderstood. Was there another way to deal with the human impact on the environment? In particular, what ways do we deal with this issue with children? Eagle invited the children to be part of that story, and to express themselves, exploring their feelings. She felt that in provoking their emotions perhaps this was *'an important lesson...otherwise if you don't feel guilt then you don't feel remorse, then you can't be sorry if something goes wrong'*. She was aware of the young children's pre-occupation with fairness. Yet with Eagle and the colleague, the encounter had tapped deeper issues about how we engage children with the darker sides of the human-nature relationship, and the purpose of engagement with the natural world in the nursery. I read it that, to the colleague, the encounter could be framed in terms of conduct and that a relationship with the natural world could be taught as what is acceptable behaviour or not. Eagle was trying to engage the children in active reasoning. However, the team did not have a consensus on approach. Underlying this, there was a difference in ethos or norms in the nursery team about engendering an emotional relationship through play with the natural world.

I was like 'Oh God, maybe I didn't deal with it in the right way'. And then that gets you thinking what is the right way? Because like if you just told them, then what would have happened, and if you didn't then what else could you have done? Like what other ways are there?

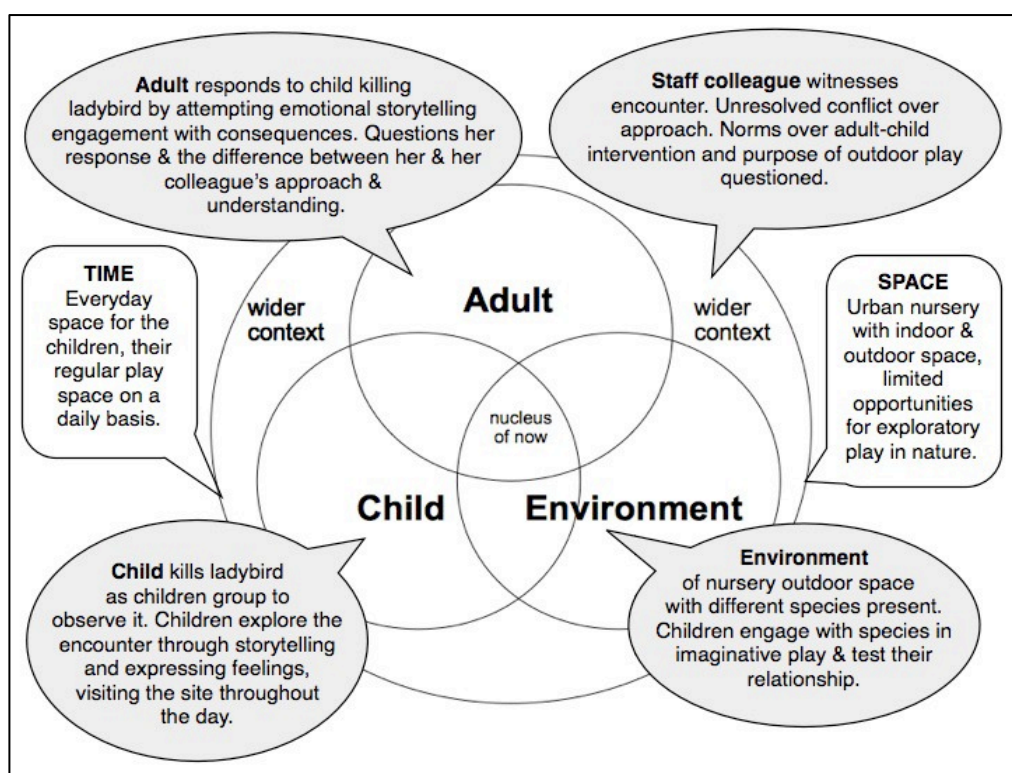
The norm in the nursery team's approach was debatable. Eagle seemed open to embracing other approaches. From Eagle's point of view, her colleague reacted with anger, yet we do not have her voice here to explain her perspective more fully.

In a busy nursery environment, there is little time to discuss and reflect deeply on issues such as those raised in this encounter. The issue remained unresolved and an opportunity was lost. The choices made in response to the affordance of the dead ladybird, to promote either emotional competence or behavioural conduct, revealed a difference in approach about the children's education and care and their relationship with the natural world.

Key approaches

- Engaging with species in everyday space, building relationship through play
- Promoting understanding, learning and development
- Valuing of children's imagination and emotional engagement
- Imaginative storytelling response, with focus on competence over conduct
- Reflection and questioning over appropriate response

Figure 14: Shared Space of Eagle and the ladybird funeral



Monkey, the other and the observation tree

I had one at FS today, and she'd got the branch on the tree and she was shaking it, and I said 'Did it make any noise?'. 'Yes' she said, 'but I'm milking the cow, look'. 'Are you?' and she said 'Yes'. And she'd actually sort of... almost... it was amazing how she was doing it. I said... 'Wonderful, that is lovely'. I fell into scribbling away, but I thought the imagination that comes out from these children, it leaves me speechless some times. I'm in awe of it, I must be honest. So it never fails to amaze me what they come out with.

[As my FS assistant] I think the supervisor still thinks she's in supervisor role, and the other member of staff she thinks 'Well I'm outside, I don't really need to do a lot'. And I say 'Have you noticed anything about anybody?'. 'Hmm well, she's just said that'. I said 'could you jot it down for me?'. 'Oh well you could write it down, couldn't you?'. I'm not getting a lot of feedback, and I'm finding that a little bit frustrating. So you know I might have to say 'Look please, I'm giving you this notepad, please write in it and let me have it at the end of the session.'

[The other member of staff] was under the tree..and this young girl is playing at milking the cow as it were. And I turned round to my colleague and I said 'Ooh, isn't that wonderful?'. 'Yes' she said, and she said... 'I think she's done something else...she'd sat in the tree and she'd used it as a seat, as a a throne or something.'

And I said 'Ooh, have you jotted it down?'. 'Oh no' she said, 'No'. But of course I'd got pen and paper in hand. [She said] 'Well you can write that down.' I said 'Well it's fine I'll do that then'. And of course I go off thinking 'What else can I do?', you know? In my very sensible brain, that little bit that I've got left, I know I need to sort of say to the staff 'Look... I need a lot more support.' (Monkey, 2)

Analysis

In this short vignette, several distinct interactional relationships were played out.

The children playing in and with the tree, and the adults playing out their own roles in their various ways. There's a beauty to the fantasy play of the children and an equally inspired response from Monkey, who acted like a landscape artist being struck by awe mid-walk, having to make a quick sketch. What she saw was the children 'really getting into it', relating to the environment through their imagination. Monkey revelled in these moments and saw them as significant encounters in themselves; 'You know they'll be there for 10 minutes. Just think! I try

and leave them'. Monkey saw the child's relationship with the environment go in to a deeper level through their fantasy play, but the other adult paid little attention. It was as if they watched different sets of action, through contrasting individual perception. Yet in this encounter, the two sets came into collision. Meanwhile, patrolling in the back region of the action, the supervisor supervised, simply because she wanted to.

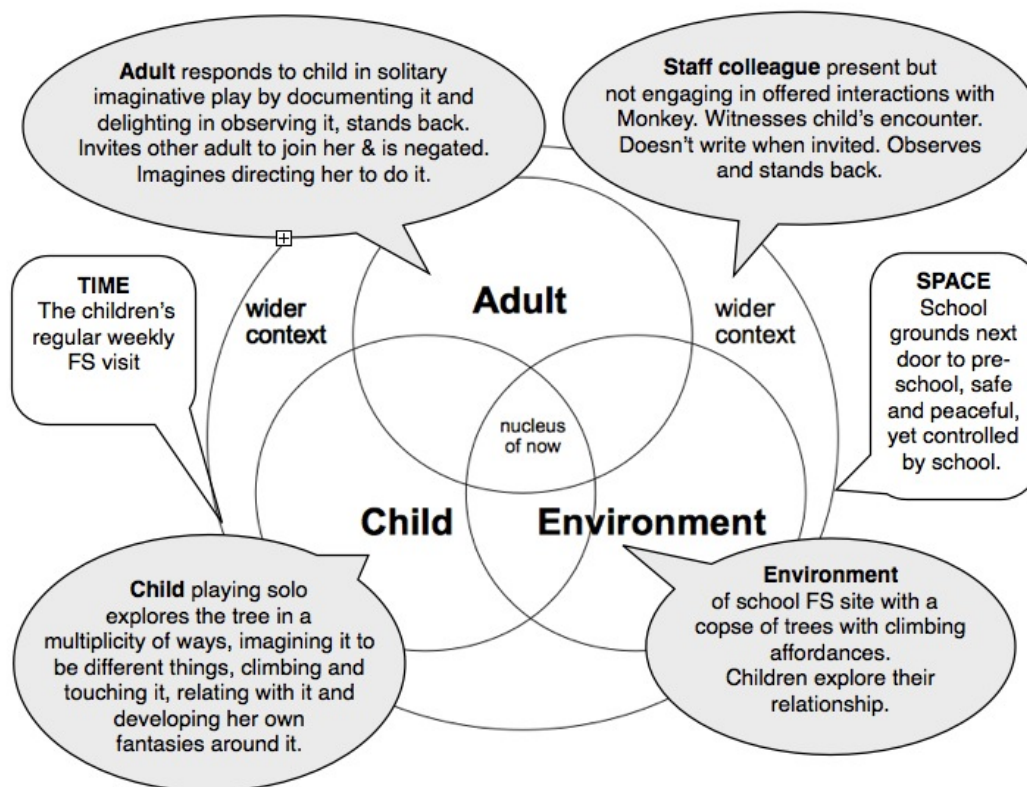
We could imagine all kinds of thoughts that were in the other adult's head at this moment. Monkey thought that the other adult felt she did not have to do anything and doesn't want to be there. Maybe the other adult was thinking 'Oh, that's just what children do'? Maybe she was not getting involved for another reason? For it is their fantasy play; if she was of a child centred persuasion, she might have waited for the child to invite her in, and stayed out of the frame, to support the child's absorption in the play. She may have felt the children did not want her there, as Monkey seemed to, staying back, observing and scribbling. But from Monkey's perspective, they were both staying back in energetically different ways, active and passive. She perceived that the other adult did not read the play or engage with it as a significant encounter. Monkey shared her enthusiasm to gauge the other adult's response. and the other adult responded 'No'. Next, Monkey imagined asserting herself, actually directing the adult to do it. Yet she feared that if she did, the response would stay the same. Monkey found the adult-to- adult relationship *'frustrating'* and feared that another member of staff will start talking to the children, bursting the bubble, breaking the frame. *'Please step back!'* thought Monkey. She did not understand how the other adults related so differently to the children and the environment around them.

They're almost controlling them, in a (sigh), in a way. They're not letting the child just be, in my eyes. You know, I mean I think if somebody is just quite happily lay there or sat there in their own bubble, their own world, just being, you know why can't they just be left alone to be...? I mean it's different if they're sat there looking totally bored out of their mind. But you know we can recognise the difference in a child that's just totally chilling, and maybe just sat listening, or you know feeling the breeze on their face, to the child that's just sat there thinking 'I don't want to be here, I'm bored stupid, just get me back to pre-school'.

Key approaches

- Observation and documentation
- Child-centred natural play facilitation
- Delight, awe and wonder at child's imagination
- Tentative non-directive approach to colleague
- Private relation with notebook and imagined dialogue

Figure 15: Shared Space of Monkey, the other and the observation tree



Ant and the runner

My incident is about one girl...there were two kids actually that were consistently in this group, even though the other members changed, but these two kids were always in this FS group, and this was over a period of...18 weeks. The other kids would come in for six week stints, and these two kids were just with us.

The girl in question was a runner; she'd just get up and run, which is great for FS, even though funnily enough one of the rules that the teacher I was working with [the FS leader], her rule in FS was 'No running'. No running, but walking. She wasn't militant about it, but it was like 'twig in the eye' stuff, and I was like 'Oh, just clear those twigs'. Anyway I couldn't ... I was under ... I didn't want to cause tensions between our working relationship...

The site is narrow, there's just a fence next to the playground. There's an interesting interaction at playtime over the fence when they're in FS. In the session, they began 'free play', they're building dens. What happened was, the playtime ended and the kids in class were all lined up and the teacher was shouting. They stayed outside and the teacher had some kind of science experiment going on, you know, I think they were exploding something. Most of the FS kids lined up on the other side of the fence and asked if they could go back to class, all their attention is over the fence at what the kids in class are doing, the option that they can't do cos they're in FS. My response was 'I can't believe this is what you want to do?' But they said, 'Oh yeah but this is cool'. They were interested in what was happening. The FS leader was with the fire-mad kid back at the fire pit, so I was there with them on my own. I didn't say yes or no, I just kind of stepped back and tried to pre-empt what I thought was the outcome, that the kids in the playground would go back in soon and the FS play would resume.

I didn't want to interrupt their focus if that was what they were looking at and interested in. But the runner girl started to climb the fence and I stopped her. So, in effect, she found the edge of the adult-child power boundary. I felt there would be repercussions on me from the teacher if I didn't stop her. The leader would be responsible so this affected my decision. The boundaries and norms had been broken. The children were free but they weren't, there were parameters as to what this kid and I were allowed to do within a 'free' space, the designated FS activity. My impulse was that opportunity for FS time was being wasted, but would it have been within the FS ethos if they went back over to the class activity? They were using outside stimulus. Stopping the girl wasn't following her interest (Ant, int 2).

This encounter provoked Ant firstly because it raised questions for him about agency, aims and freedom, for both him and the children, in the adult-child-environment relations in terms of 'what FS was and what it should be'. He felt the children didn't feel part of their own boundary setting within the FS session: the

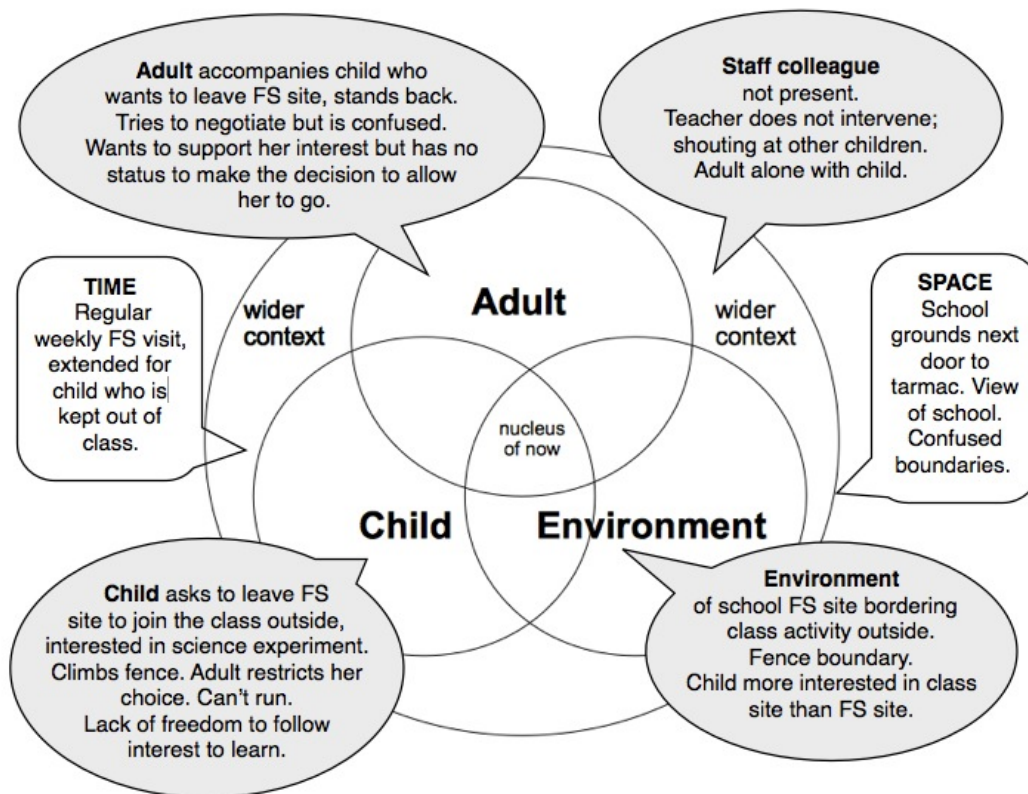
boundaries around what they learned, how they behaved and where. Part of the problem as he saw it was that the space hadn't been designed in a way that made it clear to the children. They hadn't had an input into the design of the FS space, and he felt it *'was confusing for a kid to have a fence separating everyday school and FS'*. He reflected that *'there are reasons for boundaries to be there but they aren't the same'* as the ones in school. The moment when the girl climbed the fence challenged Ant's ability to respond spontaneously, *'I didn't know how to draw something out of that'*. He didn't feel he could elicit a playful response as he was confused himself about the boundaries at that moment. In hindsight, he felt he *'could have been more playful'* in his response and this might have helped to negotiate the trickiness of the negotiation. He felt like a *'spin doctor'*, manipulating the facts, and *'it wasn't black and white'* in terms of knowing what was an appropriate response. At the front of Ant's concerns in this encounter were boundaries and safety. This raised a lot of difficult issues for him. Firstly, how to communicate and reason with the children about what the boundaries were within the session. Freedom is an important theme here and Ant spoke about the difference between negative and positive freedom, after Berlin's two concepts of freedom 'from' and freedom 'to' (Berlin, 1958). The two children that came to every session he attended over 18 weeks (instead of the usual six week blocks for all the other children) had been chosen by their class teacher to continue their time in FS. Further, the children who came on 6 week blocks were also picked by the teacher for reasons he wasn't party to, but he felt it was *'just the naughty ones who go out'*. Ant queried the ethics and reasoning behind this. There was an inequality of access, that he felt had an impact on the children who were effectively excluded from some regular class time to be put in FS. Organising FS attendance in this way, as a form of segregation or behaviour management for children identified as

having behaviour and social skills challenges, has been criticised by Borradaile (2006), as a divisive rather than an inclusive approach. A child may feel different and excluded as a consequence. The integration of FS into the curriculum needs thought about equality of access and in this case, the inequality had some impact on the two regular attendees, with Ant needing to spend time with the girl in particular each session. He felt she perceived it as if she had to be there, with little choice, and constantly sought the edge of the boundary, frequently running off. Why did she run? He felt this action was 'exposing the lie' in the freedom of the space, and the inadequacies of FS when delivered in a tokenistic manner. Ant empathised with the teacher's choices and situation, reflecting that it was probably a mixture of reasons why the choice of children was made and that he appreciated *'there has to be some kind of order; because you can't do much with chaos either'*.

Key approaches

- Following child's interest and accompanying her
- Negotiation to clarify boundaries and freedoms
- Chooses not to act through confusion
- Problem not shared with colleague

Figure 16: Shared Space of Ant and the runner



Summary

The tense encounters framed some of the conflict within the practitioners' contexts, surrounding the impact of socialisation and norms upon their role. I described how the social realm fed back to the practitioners, reflected in a shift or a maintenance of their perspectives and approaches. In terms of shifts, Monkey was provoked by her interactions with colleagues and knew she had to act to make a change, to assert her requests of the staff team within the sessions. Ant questioned whether the FS ethos was really following the child's interest or whether he was acting as a '*spin doctor*', colluding in the setting's aims of maintaining the boundaries they had set. He was not sure if FS was the appropriate provision for those children and raised the issue of their involvement in the design of the space and the boundary-setting.

Eagle reflected upon her conflict with a colleague but maintained her perspective that she felt she had done the right thing in the circumstances, by trying to model empathy and promote understanding in her experimental approach.

Within the encounters given, subjective perceptions and expectations of the FS practitioner role differed between the practitioners and setting teams. Eagle felt she was enabling an exploratory and emotional connection to the natural world, and wanted to stay in the frame of the encounter. In contrast, she reported that her colleague felt Eagle was provoking the children to feel guilty and did not reinforce the issue of behavioural conduct. Monkey valued the children's fantasy play as an aspect of their developing relationship with the natural world and saw her role as facilitating them to '*be in their bubble*', whilst observing and documenting in order to gain greater understanding. Her colleagues did not seem to share the same values and were reluctant to take up her suggestions to document. Her role was not clear or accepted as the lead FS practitioner guiding the team's practice in the sessions, so she failed to change the norm of practice.

Ant wanted to communicate and reason with the children, yet felt challenged by his given role. He gave the example of colluding with the '*No Running*' rule. Ant strongly felt he wouldn't do the same if he'd had more ownership of the session. Therefore, he struggled to maintain a social norm that he didn't agree with.

The social norms in place had a strong impact on the practitioners' actions. The practitioners either challenged or colluded with their team's social norms, by either attempting to do things differently or toeing the line. I do not assume the social

norms were negative. What I am exploring is the level of agency the practitioner had to question, explore and change the norm. Overall, they all made attempts to different degrees to modify normal practice. Eagle could be seen to have succeeded, where Ant and Monkey did not. Yet Eagle maintained her perspective, perhaps helped by her status as manager, or her level of conviction whilst reflecting and considering her actions. In all 3 cases, their attempts were modified by the everyday social controls, and therefore were, in part, colonised by the setting norms (Foucault, 1977). The social order was preserved in that any amount of experimentation or deviation from the norm was minimal, leaving all 3 practitioners with questions as to how they could practice differently. The disciplinary power in the setting was felt by all 3 in that they limited their actions to some extent, staying within the norms whilst feeling a level of dissensus. Where they enacted 'lines of flight' to re-territorialise the norms (Deleuze and Guatarri, 1972), with small movements towards change, they were met with conflict, and felt confused or frustrated. The practitioners considered their levels of change agency within their settings. The power to change was located mostly outside of the practitioner, requiring a further level of conscientisation (Freire, 1970) within a collaborative team context for change to be considered. This suggests that what all three encounters lacked was a level of critical reflection and discussion with colleagues over the challenges presented, coupled with an openness towards experimentation or new approaches. This can be seen as a missed opportunity, bearing in mind that the contexts of the encounters were busy settings with high workloads where time to reflect is very limited. The practitioners raised key questions within the research interview but not within the staff team, with the exception of Eagle within the frame of her encounter dialogue.

Conflict, or the interaction of differences, invites reflection perhaps more obviously than the subtleties of consensus or congruence. It raises questions such as what is just or unjust in each situation, or whether a norm is appropriate, ethical or arbitrary. Certainly conflicts, tensions and challenges are mentioned more by the practitioners within the interview data than congruent relationships. This may simply be because, when something is harmonious, there may be less need to discuss it. Perhaps, because the conflicts outlined in this chapter often involve a missed opportunity of further team reflection, the research process itself was a place where reflection was invited, and tensions could be aired in a safe-enough space. Aside from the impact of the research process, this also raises the consideration of subjectivity and particularity in the cases, in terms of perceptions of self and others and the individual personalities and behaviours of the practitioners. The encounters given are not representative or generalisable, yet the similar dynamics of conflict found within them provide some insight into the negotiations and shifting subjectivities of practice. My intention was to look closely at the types of contextual conflict presented in some of the case studies. The dissensus presented within these encounters were quite minor, not big ruptures. Yet they represent the ongoing and dynamic process of negotiation between FS practitioner and setting teams, as a micro-example of the negotiations that may happen on a daily basis. They reflect the 'minor politics' of practice (Rose, 1999, cited in Dahlberg and Moss, 2005, p. 14). Finally, a focus on conflict may lead to bias; painting a specific picture of a negative reception to FS practice, or creating a false duality between FS and the settings. In the following chapter, still focusing on context, I place conflict within a continuum alongside collaboration or congruence and consider the cases as a whole.

CHAPTER 9:

FRAMING CONTEXT RELATIONSHIPS



This chapter looks again at situated role performance, using cross-case analysis to examine the key themes in adult-to-adult interaction. The analysis looks closely at experiences and responses, within several different key themes. Experiences are then placed

in relationship positions of conflict, collaboration or congruence, between the practitioners and the setting teams. The data was taken from each practitioner's setting observation and final interview, informed by the total journeys. The setting team context can be defined as a complex self-adaptive system, with its own norms, upon which FS is imposed, bringing another set of norms. I attempt to identify how the experience of socialisation and social norms affects FS practice, enquiring and reflecting at a systemic, social level. I explore how the practitioners avoid, challenge or transform the status quo, and to what degree they appear to succeed or fail in their endeavour. This relates to my research questions about how practitioners adapt to experience, the impact of training and external factors on practice.

Key themes

Several key themes emerged in the analysis that demonstrated a relationship of conflict, collaboration or congruence, between the practitioners and the settings.

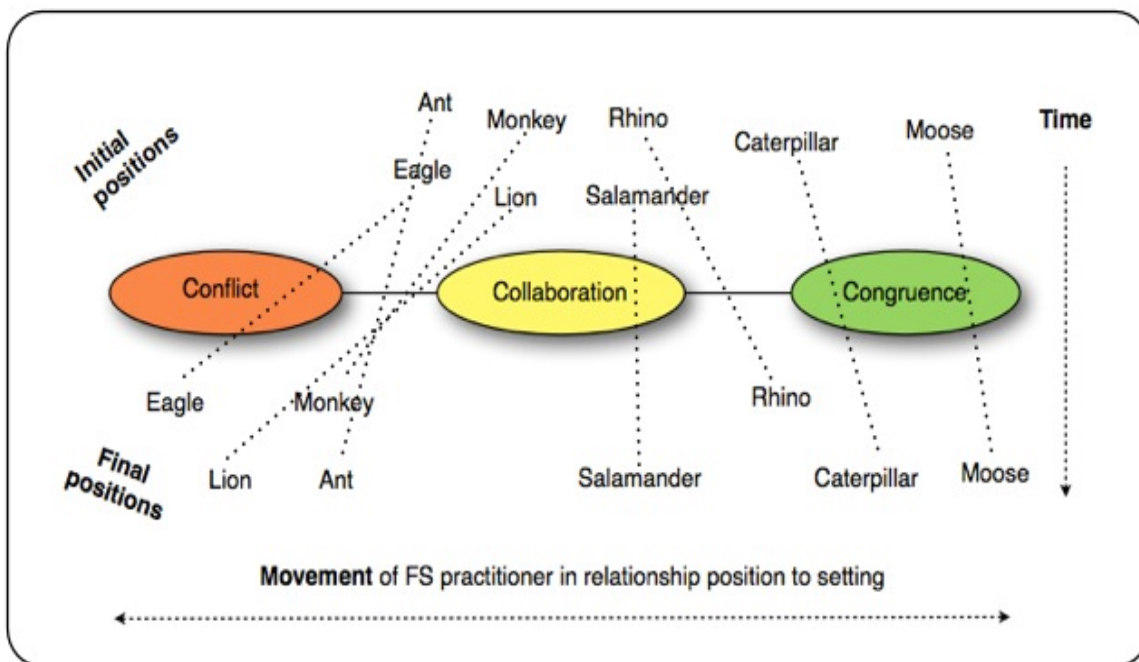
I looked for the themes in their presence, absence or transformation. These were: the understandings of FS values and ethos; follow-up or interest from staff team; controls and standards in setting practices; curriculum pressures and setting aims; and site provision and care. I consider each of the themes below, yet there was a level of complexity in the everyday dynamics, challenging to reduce to a linear narrative. The key themes are interwoven within each other. Acknowledging this, I attempted to draw out the significant aspects in analysis that will render clarity and new understanding.

Conflict, collaboration and congruence: relationship positions

Three relationship positions emerged within the data analysis; conflict, collaboration or congruence, describing the adult-to-adult interactions between the setting teams and the practitioners. This further analysis develops the use of the previous models of *Shared Space* and the *connector* role. Adult-to-adult interaction was an area of *Shared Space* that became significant within the analysis of the practitioners' situated experiences. This area revealed the complexities of subjective understandings, agency, norms and socialisation. The relationship positions (conflict, collaboration or congruence, or CCC) helped to clarify how and why a practitioner adapted in response to specifics in adult-to-adult interaction. Further insights on the meaning and source of relational conflict, collaboration or congruence could be drawn. These relationship positions are not static states. Like any relationship, they are subject to change, as demonstrated by the movement shown (see Figure 17 below). The positions help to deepen an understanding of what influenced a practitioner's ability to perform a *connector* role, for example, where different demands were put upon their role. It demonstrates how connecting

with other adults is a significant part of practice, and in the present research, it was the most significant than any other relationship. Further, the negotiations in relationship positions relate to the construction or destruction of *eco-social identity* in the practitioner and the other adults within their context.

Figure 17: Movement of FS practitioner in relationship position to setting



Relationship position definitions

Figure 17 shows the overall initial and final positions of the practitioners, in relationship to their settings. As the practitioners differed in their approaches to FS, I used the FS principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012) (see Appendix 3), representing good practice in FS, as a baseline to determine a position in relationship to the setting. Drawing on the data, I interpreted the position that they were in at the beginning and end of the research process. This helped locate the adult-to-adult interactions in relationship positions between the practitioners and the setting teams. To clarify the

definition of each position, here follows a brief overview of examples from the practitioner's experiences. Within the rest of this chapter, I consider each key theme and identify a relationship of conflict, collaboration or congruence, in cross-case analysis. At the end of each key theme section, a table summarises aspects of the different positions.

Conflict

Identified in the previous chapter; the 3 *tense encounters* explored an area of conflictual adult-to-adult interaction. Ant became clearer on his viewpoint through a conflict of aims. Monkey knew what she needed to change but felt located in conflict rather than able to resolve the issues through collaboration. Conflict can be identified within many negative outcomes across the cases, such as Eagle and Lion leaving jobs and FS practice. There was a significant amount of movement in a negative direction during the period of the research, towards conflict from the initial collaborative positions of Lion, Eagle, Monkey and Ant. It is noteworthy that these 4 practitioners, who felt themselves to be in conflict with their context, worked within mainstream settings subject to government curriculum and policy. Caterpillar was the only other practitioner who worked in a similar context and deviated from this group, located instead in a congruent relationship, for reasons I explore within this chapter.

Collaboration

This position revealed an interesting and dynamic middle ground, of situated pragmatism, negotiation and extended boundaries. The role of the FS practitioner as a *connector* became expanded by working in partnership. Caterpillar's, Rhino's

and Salamander's experiences and interactions had a transformative effect on the relationship with their settings. Through the process of collaboration, their relationships became more congruent. Salamander worked within mainstream settings but with a different agenda, status and role and acted out a distinctly collaborative strategy.

Congruence

This relationship position can be defined by a *fitness for purpose* between FS and the setting. Rhino and Moose worked outside of curriculum constraints in alternative contexts. Therefore they were able to exercise autonomy over what curriculum they had in place. I will consider both the challenges and the possibilities afforded to them within alternative contexts. I begin the analysis of key themes by looking at how Caterpillar had a congruent relationship with her setting but in a different way to Rhino and Moose.

Understandings of FS values and ethos

Caterpillar was located in a congruent relationship, as although she worked in a mainstream setting, the aims and values in the setting matched those in FS. Where there was some mismatch, she worked collaboratively to adapt the setting practice, with the support of her superiors. Caterpillar was recruited specifically to coordinate the outdoor area, able to integrate outdoor practice fully with the early years curriculum with the support of her team. Having a clear job description enabled her to implement FS practice without causing any tension within her role. Although she was the only outdoor practitioner in the team, joint observation and ongoing assessment of children within FS and other outdoor experience across the

setting was shared in a whole team approach. FS was supported as part of everyday practice, as both Caterpillar's owner and manager were *'very keen'* and understood the ethos. Rhino worked with parents in a home education group for her FS sessions which had a strong sense of congruence on values and ethos. Moose's setting was congruent with FS practice, with key tenets of child-centred and nature-centred practice at the heart of all their work. The understanding of FS was shared across the team and the observations of the participants contributed to the overall ongoing communication with the settings and families that the children were drawn from.

Salamander implemented a wide range of partnerships and collaborative relationships to manifest her aims, involving others in culture-change to integrate FS into settings. By acting at this level of change agency, she reterritorialised norms of practice. To this end she created new sites of practice and developed a training programme. This affected how FS was valued, for she created a space for reflective discourse around standards, values and principles. For example, she became the leading advocate for FS in the local authority. She founded an advisory group, including representatives from education, parks and *'sustainable schools'* across the borough.

Monkey, Lion, Eagle and Ant, located in conflictual relationship, struggled to integrate the FS ethos into their settings in various ways and frequently used the metaphors of a fight or battle. For Eagle, her *'employers have got their own idea of what FS is and what FS should look like and that doesn't sit very well next to mine'*. This clash in ideologies or understandings of FS, played itself out to the point where Eagle left her job, as did Lion. Ant questioned the values in place in

the setting where he took his placement, not accepting that FS was being implemented for its own purpose, but rather to fulfil behavioural management aims. Monkey struggled to find shared understanding within the staff team and committee, coming into frequent collision over practice. Although the committee had approved her training and practice, they did not know why it's a *'good thing to put forward'* and Monkey felt they were not committed to FS or understood the full implications. They had not visited the sessions and failed to understand why tools were used in FS, denying her permission to do so.

In further discussions I've had with the committee, in my opinion they didn't quite believe in FS. It's the fact that they just realised that a lot of other places are starting FS, who want to keep up with the competitors...there isn't an enthusiasm there, but it's not as if anybody's saying 'Ooh, yes we really believe in it'. It's more do with 'Well, we've got to just move with the times haven't we', you know? (Monkey 2)

Monkey reported that her pre-school committee were putting FS in place simply to compete in the pre-school marketplace, using FS as a badge to boost their profile as *'FS to them is just something that goes on the advertising logo, that competes with other nurseries'*. Ant felt that the same branding effect was in place at the school he volunteered at, devaluing FS practice by homogenising its identity: *'a multi-cultural approach to FS where you can say everything is acceptable because people have made it particular to their own context'*. The impact of competing in the market for places was one of the factors he saw as having a detrimental effect on the particularities of FS practice.

It's basically a brand, that's what it's become. It gets used as part of marketising. Schools can say 'Come to our school, we've got FS' so it's like saying 'Come to our school, we've got IBM computers' rather than RM computers. It's like 'We're a little bit better because we can deliver some curriculum outcomes outdoors'. It's a very cynical approach and a lot of good stuff does happen in FS. But from the very outset of the conditions FS has to have in order to get the outcomes that it wants, i.e. regular contact outdoors, that fundamentally doesn't happen in schools as far as I can see,

because what's in it for the school? How could they possibly facilitate 300 kids to go out for 12 weeks at a time? If they can't do that, then what does it become? It becomes this tokenistic kind of thing, whereby they go and do FS and then they've had the 'FS experience'. (Ant 2)

Tokenism is the inevitable outcome of applying a practice without an awareness of the underlying principles and philosophies; a symbolic effort that expresses commitment externally, yet internally has not integrated the practice into the traditions of the context. Establishing outdoor practice is not without challenge. Within primary school settings, to create a substantial offer of time outside the classroom involves re-organisation and demands on logistics throughout the institution. Further, confronting training gaps, and attitudinal or value-based barriers within the staff team, can be complex and hard to resolve.

Table 10: CCC key words on understandings of FS values and ethos

<i>Understandings of FS values and ethos</i>	
Conflict: tokenism, marketisation, branding, co-opted for other aims, misconception.	
Collaboration: staff meetings, wider communication, involvement, partnership.	Congruence: whole team approach, integrated, support, joint observation, related outdoor experience, training.

Follow-up and interest from staff team

A lack of interest from staff teams helped form positions of conflict in Lion, Eagle, Monkey and Ant's settings. Tokenistic practice stemming from a lack of team understanding of FS functioned as a barrier to garnering support, interest and enthusiasm within a wider team and community. This was expressed as resistance or ignorance, such as the simple reluctance of staff to prepare to go outside.

All the children... turned up with their wellies. But the staff had to go home to fetch their clothing. And I thought 'Well that just shows how important you think this is'. I think there is an undercurrent of that. You know I've been pro-FS for such a long time, I've been banging on my soap box a little bit, and I know not everybody takes the same view, but I thought 'You're really showing that you actually don't regard it very highly at all.' It's unfortunate, but I do think there's, I would say, a lack of interest. (Monkey 3)

A reluctance to participate demonstrated a devaluing of outdoor practice and a resistance to team ownership of FS. Ant believed that what made FS distinct from most of a school programme was that *'it cannot be separated from the outdoors'*.

The reason for being outdoors was often missed in these mainstream cases. FS principle 2, on the relationship between the learner and the natural world, states good practice should 'develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community' (FS IOL SIG, 2012). In practice, this criterion was not attained within the staff team that had conflictual relationships about FS.

Ant was not aware of any communication of observations or planning integration that happened with the class teachers. FS principle 1 states that, in relation to being in a natural wooded environment, 'planning, adaption, observations and reviewing are integral elements of FS' (FS IOL SIG, 2012). Links to curriculum are often used in planning FS yet a bi-directional aspect of feeding back the outcomes of the sessions was missing in Ant's case, as in Lion's, thus the wider staff did not gain new perspectives of the children from the sessions.

Caterpillar was able to overcome some of the obstacles collaboratively within a shared team ethos: *'You do sometimes feel like you are battling your head against a brick wall, but I've had quite good support from management about it.'* Monkey's

challenge was in promoting interest for FS assertively across the team; *'you can't force your beliefs or your enthusiasm onto other people.'* Lion had no support from other staff on the sessions, relying solely on volunteers, stating *'it's really really frustrating, and there's no one really who shows any interest in what I'm doing down there'*.

For Monkey and Lion, the ownership of FS practice was solely attributed to the FS practitioner, co-constructed in their role as the 'outdoorsy' person by the rest of the staff team. This isolated positioning by the team sets the FS practitioner apart in a role that has a desocialising effect on the social norms of the context, and limits the opportunity for FS or outdoor practice to be embraced within the active norms. The reasoning for FS, its ethos, aims and principles were not shared across staff teams, who most often have not received FS training and so, over and above their own attitudes towards working outdoors, lacked the resources to adapt their practice. Instead, co-operating with the rest of the staff team and dealing with adult attitudes within FS sessions became an issue for Monkey, Ant, Eagle, Lion and Caterpillar.

I mean you just have to go with whatever at that time and it is an instinct. I know some of the other staff, they're great. I think P [co-worker] is coming round to FS but you still see her backing away when it gets dirty. There's still that air of 'Oh no! Don't come near me!' and [the supervisor] doesn't 'do' dirty, so... (Monkey 3)

Further there was perceived resistance, as Monkey stated *'I don't think the staff that I take up with me [to FS] change their way of being'*. This has parallels with how some of the practitioners talked about the changes to early years training and curricula and the impact this had within the setting, with frequent conflicts over methods such as child- centred practice, as Eagle shared, *'as a early years manager I feel like its my role to like, impart, be trying to tackle those beliefs'*. Monkey stated *'It's very hard isn't it trying to get them to move to that next stage and sort of*

embrace that kind of ethos even if it's just in part'. Lion, Monkey, Eagle, Caterpillar and Ant all saw this as a training issue, and this presented more within the early years settings where, as Caterpillar, Monkey and Eagle experienced, staff could have '*completely different training*'. Eagle felt she was engaged in a fight with her team due to these differences, that '*those people who have done their training before you have and have done it in the old way and then you're saying 'No, actually we don't do things that way now, we need to do it this way*'. Child-centred practice and free play are strong tenets in FS and the early years, yet where they are not fully present in the wider setting, it is beyond the scope of an FS practitioner to transform the team's approach to practice within the FS session.

They can't just let them play for play's sake, there has to be a purpose to what they're doing which, ok, nine times of ten there usually is, but sometimes, just let them be and see where it takes them. There's far too much of adults stepping in before they need to. (Monkey 3)

I've taken over from someone else, who is very 'old school', not really into child centred play, is teacher trained and probably not early years trained. So trying to get that across has had a few ups and downs but I think we're really getting there now. (Caterpillar 1)

Lion had initially had a collaboration with a teacher in her setting, who followed up what the children did in FS and contributed actively. Lion spoke of how the children had brought their pirates topic into FS successfully. However, when that teacher was replaced, the new teacher did not value the play-based approach of FS in the same way and Lion felt increasingly isolated despite trying to involve the wider staff team. The value of play is within FS principle 6, where 'play and choice are an integral part... recognised as vital to learning and development' (FS IOL SIG, 2012). Lion was clear that there was a perception in her school and parent community that needed challenging. As the children entered Year 1 and 2, there was a rejection of play from the parents and staff on the basis of there being no obvious

value and that school is different from nursery in that *real* learning must begin.

The problem that we've got at our particular school, because it's quite an affluent area, the parents don't perceive the value in what they perceive as children 'rolling in the mud'. I've tried to do things to raise awareness of it, but when you've not got the backing of the head it's difficult. (Lion 2)

Socio-cultural variances in attitudes and awareness were present not just in the staff team but in the wider communities of parents and governors. Monkey stated that in her setting *'we don't get a lot of parental support'* and she noted how a lack of interest from parents, in aspects of the childcare offered, affected staff decisions. Making FS a success relied on her individual enthusiasm and she spoke of having to spend her free time writing information letters and organising meetings, as *'unless we can convince the parents, which is obviously going to be my job'*, FS practice was not going to be able to happen. She spoke of having to teach the parents about FS, for instance to get permission to take the children out in all weathers and well equipped. She found this a frustrating addition to her workload, questioning whether *'the parents, do they actually understand?'* Despite the practical pressures on working parents, she felt that the parents were missing out on a chance to be involved and interested in their child's development, that *'if you [as a parent] ...just stayed for maybe an hour, you would see your child in such a different light'*. Monkey's views on the changes of parental involvement in their child's care links with Lion's view, that *'each year there seems to be less and less parental support, just in general [in the school], which is quite scary really'*.

There is a link between the amount of understanding of FS and the follow up or interest from the staff team, demonstrated in the differences between the conflictual cases and the others. Moose and Rhino benefitted from significant follow up and interest in their own teams, yet their teams were small and less complex than those

in the mainstream settings. Interest in FS, as an alternative pedagogy, appealed to the home educators, who by dint of their choice were actively involved in designing their child's education. There were some aspects where congruence within Moose's setting did not transfer to the other related settings, in that transmitting the understanding of FS values and ethos and following up with other staff was not always within their capacity. Parents attended the FS sessions within the present research and were growing in their awareness through direct experience. Challenges came from communicating with school settings, as due to the nature of FS happening away from the school site, follow up was less effective concerning the rest of the children's lives within school. Whether improvements using a more collaborative approach could be made was something that concerned Moose, who had found it difficult to commit teachers to meetings to pass on assessment and observation from the sessions, due to their busy schedules. Salamander was pro-active in reinforcing to schools how FS could be integrated with classroom-based learning and advised the settings across the borough. An example of the success of a whole team approach can be gained from the training programme she implemented, actively increasing understanding of the FS principles and how they could be integrated into the setting practice.

Table 11: CCC key words on follow-up and interest from staff team

<i>Follow-up and interest from staff team</i>
Conflict: reluctance, link to ignorance of FS and tokenism, challenge in socio-cultural attitudes to being outdoors, devaluing outdoors, no observational scaffolding, new perspectives not observed / fed back, rejection of play value, little parental support, lack of wider staff training, linked reform challenges in early years training and practice, assertiveness challenge for practitioner.

Follow-up and interest from staff team	
Collaboration: good support from management, parental communication, culture change within settings through training, active change agency.	Congruence: whole team approach, links with home education ethos, parents, teachers and other staff present, active change agency.

Controls and standards in setting practices

A clear distinction on power relations is possible in this key theme, as Eagle says, *'it is more of a battle'*. Conflictual settings were those where the power and control was located outside of the FS practitioner, and there is a direct relationship with the level of agency the practitioner perceived they themselves held. Where the practitioners had more of a sense of their own agency, in collaborative or congruent settings, power and control was shared transversally, contested and reterritorialised (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972). Setting practice standards for FS are also a site of contention, linking to diverse understandings of FS in definition, interest and value. The two themes are related in that whosoever has the power and agency controls the standards.

Eagle noted the practical outcomes of having to adhere to the standards and controls of her superiors, in that *'the people that have really got, the major control, are not the people...doing the training'*. Monkey thought *'it's very difficult because obviously my supervisor's got her view of how she wants it to operate'*. She was hampered in her influence and autonomy, noting that *'as members of staff we don't get to go to these committee meetings, so we can't voice our opinions'*. Eagle stated that *'the more that I'm hearing about their expectations of FS, I'm thinking 'Oh dear, that's really not what FS is.'* This was echoed by Lion, where *'FS in our*

school isn't what we're doing'. Where FS had been in evidence in the mainstream settings previously, as with Lion, Eagle, Caterpillar and Ant, the newly qualified FS practitioners all stated concerns about the standards of FS practice. Where lesser informed, but higher status, team members contributed to how FS developed in the setting, differing practical requests and attitudes towards FS further compounded the previously discussed gap in understanding. Practical requests were made on Monkey and Lion to ensure that large numbers of children accessed FS, over-riding the stipulation for high ratios of staff to participants (FS Principle 5, FS IOL SIG, 2012). Large groups were enforced despite practical advice from the practitioners, such as Lion saying *'the site is not big enough to sustain that amount of people at any one time'*.

Within each setting, FS had been adapted to suit the culture, which could be problematic or purposeful. The disparity in FS practice was influenced by the variety of FS training courses available and further, by the lack of required CPD to top up FS training many years after qualifying.

I think the teacher that's leading FS at the moment, she did her course as a night school course, and I don't know whether they did all of the things that we've done, all of the practical skills...it was five years ago so things have moved on quite a lot...she's said to me 'I really want to do fire but I don't know how'. I don't think it's a case that she doesn't want to do things, I think she just doesn't know how to do it. (Lion 1, 08:40.95)

Lion felt disheartened by the lack of an attempt at culture change within the school around the value of FS. Her attempts to raise awareness within the staff team had not progressed. Finally she resigned over this difference in values and other perceived double standards, giving the example of how first aid and health and safety within FS were not attended to at the recommended level for practice. FS principle 5 states the need for 'relevant working documents' and up-to-date first aid

qualifications ((FS IOL SIG, 2012). The standards in FS were not monitored or reported, and practice had not moved on to a level that Lion felt secure enough to practice within.

FS was [perceived as] just 'rolling in the mud'. The comments that I've had back from the deputy head and another senior member of staff and I can't disagree with them, were 'They just dig and the teacher [that led FS previously] is just stood around gossiping'. That's what was happening back then. I observed it. Last week was a real eye opener to me [on FS training]. I'm going to change the way I do all my lesson plans and everything. But I never even knew until I went on my training that we should have a lesson plan for FS. There was never a safety sweep of the area then, certainly at the beginning of the session we never spoke about any dangers, all we ever spoke about was the weather. And that's what these teachers think FS is, because that's how it was done for 5 years. (Lion 2, 32:56.08)

This was an additional impact of a lack of interest or follow up and the results of tokenistic practice having a negative feedback on perceived value. For Lion, the devaluing of FS in her setting was in part due to the previous low standard of practice and a lack of interest. However, she felt she was fighting against entrenched attitudes in both the parents and staff team that FS was not contributing to the children's learning or development, in comparison to academic achievement. She shared a conversation she'd had with a colleague:

Her comment to me was, as a parent, herself and from what she sees from our parents at the school, she said 'what you do at FS is what I could do with my children in my home time' and she said 'I want my children to go to school to learn to read, write and do Maths, by people who've been trained to do that job'. And I fully understand that, but I said 'the amount of children that we have in FS that don't go out and play in the dirt'. (Lion 2)

Lion understood her colleague's point of view but balanced it by pointing out 'if they're not getting the FS side of things at the school, they're not going to get it at all'. FS gives the benefit of self-initiated outdoor experience for children, which can contribute to learning, yet not all setting teams valued these benefits or knew how to incorporate them into the wider practice and curriculum.

Conversely, Caterpillar said how she was recruited to take over from someone previously trained, whose standards in FS hadn't met the standards of the setting team. She attributed the low standards to the attitude and desire of the previous practitioner, *'she's just not got that...want to be outside with the children...I think everyone does have different skills and preferences and some people like being inside and they like the controlled environment.'* In terms of congruence, raising the standards of FS had a pro- socialising effect as the setting team wanted to change and become involved. Caterpillar was able to achieve congruence with the agency granted by her job description, able to make changes to the outdoor provision with the support of her superiors. The use of shared observation and assessment and the involvement of the wider staff team transmitted the value of FS as a distinct practice within the setting. Moose worked in a setting with integrated ethos and values, which influenced their standards of practice. They had support from their superiors to enact FS as they intended. Rhino had autonomy to set her own standards, although she spoke of wanting to further unveil the potential of FS to the parents who attended. Working in congruent settings, Rhino, Moose and Caterpillar had the agency to negotiate and assert the standards they desired.

Salamander was aware of the local diversity of practice standards from her baseline assessment of FS in the borough at the start of her programme. 6 out of 128 primary schools in LA doing some form of FS. Based on observation from this assessment, she was concerned about the standards of child-centred practice and *'dodgy practice'*, so she self-appointed herself as a FS standards watchdog and engaged the settings in dialogue. Her collaborative strategy utilised the agency and status she had at her disposal to influence and control the standards of practice. By setting up training, support and advice, she established channels of communication

to ensure understanding of why the standards within FS were important. She regularly met with head teachers to talk about embedding FS. By working in partnership, she was able to draw on support at a higher level across the local authority, changing the culture within the parks department, so that practice was not impeded in public areas. The key theme of controls and standards highlights a difficulty in the transference from training to practice, from the focus on training an individual out of context, to the individual acting in context. An awareness gap is created by implementing practice that is informed by external training for a sole practitioner rather than a setting-based training and ethos. Without support or agency to change practice, the practitioner can be isolated and face conflict when FS practice provokes culture change or a confrontation of values and attitudes.

Table 12: CCC key words on controls and standards in setting practices

Controls and standards in setting practices	
Conflict: power relations, lack of practitioner autonomy, previous low standards, lack of monitoring, rejection of play value, lack of parental involvement, lack of required CPD, difference in role expectation	
Collaboration: culture change, change agency, pro-socialising effect of raising standards, involvement of team and community, partnership working.	Congruence: integrated ethos / values / standards, support from superiors, autonomy.

Curriculum pressures and setting aims

In the previous section, I explored some of the differences between the practitioners' aims and their superiors. In Chapters 3, I examined how, within state education and care, there are numerous curriculum targets and pressures which come into collision with FS practice. FS has the potential to fulfil curriculum

targets and is often used in this way, yet this is a disputed topic in the FS community, with strong views for either a pragmatic or purist approach. However, within the statutory curriculum setting cases in the present research, FS often operated as a stand-alone supplement to the curriculum. Monkey voluntarily transcribed observation notes from her FS sessions in her free time, to include in the children's ongoing assessment. FS would not have been integrated into their assessments and observation without her initiative. Eagle and Lion had similar struggles to work with their team members to integrate FS within school time and for FS to be perceived as learning that could be valued, assessed and measured.

If you consider that FS for Key Stage 1, it's one tenth of their curriculum, because they have a whole afternoon. We're dedicating all of that time to FS, why are we not placing importance on it? Effectively we're doing as much time on FS as we're doing on phonics and guided reading. So they're having over a two hour session every week, roughly the same as 20 or 30 minutes per day on phonics, and then we place no value on it. I've said 'Why aren't we writing in their children's report?'. I know it would be extra work for me, but why isn't FS mentioned, when it takes so much time? I'm not sure, the feeling I'm getting... is that FS is being used as filler for me to cover PPA time. It's being used as an easy option. (Lion 2)

However, for Monkey and Eagle, assessment within the EYFS framework (DfES, 2007) was more easily assimilated than in Lion's case, working with Key Stage 1 of the National Curriculum. The inclusion of play and outdoor environments within the EYFS framework supports a congruence between FS and the EYFS. For Lion, after a change in staff, the new teacher '*shows no interest whatsoever*', which Lion attributed to her lack of knowledge about FS. Yet the previous teacher had brought learning outcomes linked to the curriculum into the FS sessions and incorporated the discoveries made in FS back in the classroom.

Last year they did a pirate topic and they brought the pirates in down into FS and made boats and things, and evolved it, like proper FS should be, they evolved week on week and made bigger and better structures, boats and all of

the pirate language came into FS, so we worked really closely last year with the class teacher

The teacher would say 'What were they doing? Is there anything I can do in class to follow on?' and then they would bring more ideas down to FS. And it certainly it was not lots of classroom-style in FS, which [the local FS advisor] was saying lots of FS is being used for at the moment. Because we weren't taking things from school, they were things they were learning, they were actually putting them into action and using the woodland setting to expand on their learning. (Lion 2)

Conversely, in Ant's case, he felt FS was being used to help meet targets *in class* for children not attending FS, by '*excluding*' pupils with behavioural challenges to weekly FS sessions, to help the teacher cope; '*if you've got challenging kids for the classroom environment...it's going to detract from your time from doing your government-set agenda*'. Ant felt that the sessions he attended reinforced curriculum links mainly rather than the children leading their exploration of the environment. He was against FS being used to meet National Curriculum targets, as he didn't perceive FS to be the appropriate place to do that. This was not just his view on FS but part of his criticism of the state education system itself, which he was determined to either work outside of or ideally to transform. Ant felt that a balance was needed to resolve the tension between FS and the curriculum, in that the curriculum is '*dominated by a lot of rational abstractions whereas FS...is experiential*'. At the heart of this premise lies the prioritising and valuing of different styles and aspects of learning, and he felt that by the school trying to elicit what the children had learnt about literacy or numeracy in FS, they were missing the point and the value of learning in and about the environment, and '*doing the things that they're doing, in their own initiated way*'. For him, the mainstay of the FS ethos was about the experience of the outdoors and environmental education, which he felt was not getting the focus it deserved. He had discussed values in FS

with the school head and did not feel comfortable with her use of FS to meet curriculum aims. However, FS had been practised in this way at the school for 6 years to some success, and Ant's view seems at one end of the spectrum of pragmatism to purism, stating *'that's not what FS was about'*. He saw the limits to what FS can offer and the need for balance, *'unless FS was going to adapt itself to become that comprehensive holistic education... it would have to become a hybrid'*. He was in favour of the integration of pedagogical approaches found in FS, *'applied in various different learning situations, not just learning about FS'*, arguing for overall pedagogical reform. He noted the limitations of trying to operate within the state system and he remained unconvinced that the main tenets of FS could be met within it, as it involved change on a systemic level and greater autonomy for staff.

It's almost like a little game. A game of...can you teach the way you think it should be done, rather than the way it's prescribed in this country, and purely by the state? (Ant 2)

Ant recognised the value in literacy and numeracy skills, that *'there are aspects of the National Curriculum which are important'*. Ant was interested in how the *'experiential element, practical skills and human contact can be integrated and valued more'*. He believed that the focus on which skills are valued within the dominant discourses of education and society was too narrow. Practical skills are not valued within *'this whole economic paradigm'* which preferences the valuing of education *'to train up to be higher level professionals'*. He aspired for education to achieve a *'balance of practicality and cognitive abilities'*. Lion felt that the inclusion of practical skills had decreased in school curriculum, and emphasised the value of tool use in FS, observing that children *'don't have the opportunity to handle tools'*. She felt that vocational job opportunities were being missed as

'there's so much emphasis being placed on academic things in schools now'. The focus on experiential learning can be diluted by a setting team's understanding of the purpose of FS.

It just seems to be academic, academic, academic...[My colleague] wants FS to be an outdoor classroom and I've said we've got a separate outdoor classroom. We don't need to be taking laminated sheets with things on into FS, unless it's a tree, leaf, bird or plant ID. The [local FS advisor] was saying she was horrified. She went to a FS session and it was laminated pages with pumpkins and numbers on it. The whole thing on the creative curriculum, which our head is very very keen on, he wants more...outdoor environment learning and I'm just worried that FS [practitioners] are being forced to use FS as an outdoor classroom and not what it's intended for. (Lion 2)

There are choices that a school can make in their own local or creative curricula alongside the National Curriculum, yet the pressures of meeting targets can create a culture that emphasises achievement over experience and a reduction of autonomy or real opportunity for change. Ant acknowledged the challenge for teachers to find ways to make changes within a system without wider reform of the system that informs how settings operate.

Within the economic structure that we have, they have to meet these targets, in their eyes you know. And there's an argument to say that they can expect teachers to make these changes on a local level, in relation to their local context, and the local cultures within that context. But you show me a teacher that isn't stressed by all the pressures that they're under, and I don't feel like they can do that within the system. I don't know, it's a fight isn't it, and it all comes back to economics anyway because any changes that do happen on a local level have to be funded, and all the funding goes from the top down. (Ant 2)

Within the systems in the conflictual cases described here, the experiences available to children are limited and controlled within tightly defined parameters and narrow time periods. Opportunities are missed within FS practice for children to lead their own learning and build on their experiences, resonating with Goffman's analysis of the staff world in total institutions. Teachers acting as agents practising the official goals of the setting are unable to reconcile the goal of

control, or 'object-work' with more humane standards, or 'people-work' which can result in a confusion between the two (1961a, p. 82). Similarly, Lion felt that most of her role in school was about '*behaviour control and policing*' and she valued the affordances in FS for '*open freedom and being creative*', both for her and the children.

The whole thing of 'it's a grey area and there's no right or wrong', I think that's really important...with school life in general, there are so many rules...yes they've got the rules for the FS area, but what they're doing within that FS area, as long as they are within the boundaries of the rules, and not being destructive or hurting anyone else, generally speaking what they're doing isn't right or wrong, so there's no negative feelings of 'Oh I can't do that, because it's going to be wrong anyway'. So it's motivation for them, just to be themselves. Because some children are just put down all the time. (Lion 1)

Maynard researched (2007b) how tensions emerge and are negotiated between teachers and the FS practitioners. In the case she explored, at first the relationship declined due to differences in approach, but after seeing the benefits of FS for the children, some agreement was reached. The teachers maintained at first that they had to set tight boundaries to ensure control, but as the programme progressed, they attempted to loosen these, questioning their teacher-led approach as a reaction to the risk posed to meeting National Curriculum targets. They felt, or had internalised, the disciplinary 'gaze' (Foucault, 1977, p. 202) in that they were observed, needed to be seen to be meeting the expectations of their role. The FS practitioners were outside of the school institution and therefore could resist this pressure more easily and allow the children greater independence and freedom. Their construction of the child was different to that of the teachers. By the end of the programme, the teachers committed to using more practical, hands-on outdoor activities, 'reconstructed their professional subjectivities' (Maynard, 2007b, p. 390)

and found where FS could fit into the Foundation Phase (WAG, 2007) curriculum. A Foucauldian and Goffmanesque reading provides a way to understand the challenges and perceived threats of the FS approach within school settings, especially when the encounter takes place outside of the ‘enclosure’ of the school in the FS site. Further, within a situated role, our sense of self can shift and seem contradictory, and the ways that our perception of what is true, right or normal can limit our thinking and action. The approach to understanding, in making the collision of discourses visible, is useful as a way for both FS practitioners and team staff to acknowledge the tensions and work through them, rather than let the relationship decline and the opportunity for growth on a personal and professional level to be missed. The space for multiple perspectives to work in parallel and collaborate can be made when the aims of both setting and FS are clarified.

Table 13: CCC key words on curriculum pressures and setting aims

Curriculum pressures and setting aims	
Conflict: government-set agenda, economic targets, valuing of academic achievement, stand-alone supplementary practice, enclosure, disciplinary gaze,	
Collaboration: expanding on learning approaches, balanced value of academic, experiential and practical.	Congruence: integrated within curriculum, EYFS parallels, child-led learning, value of play, reconstructed subjectivities, free play settings,

Site provision and care

An additional factor of tension was the sourcing and use of site space, opening out the politics of the physical contexts in which the practitioners worked. As I explored in Chapter 3, the expansion and use of outdoor space in settings is an under-resourced area across the whole of outdoor play and learning, and the

responsibility for maintaining outdoor areas is not within the traditional role of a teacher or children's professional. For FS to be successful, it needs a well resourced site. Challenging and time-consuming to establish, this entails a lot of work initially plus ongoing maintenance requiring land management skills available to FS practitioners through their training but often not found within the wider staff team. Eagle keenly felt the challenge in her busy workload to improve the site, as *'there are things which need doing to a site really before its safe to use, or before you can even call it a FS site'*. Within the cases, the work entailed is often done in a practitioner's free time or in very limited time within a paid role. Caterpillar referred to the juggle of time as *'using who you've got'*, when staffing issues meant that time allocated for site development evaporated. Locating a site outside the setting grounds can entail further work, and Rhino and Salamander researched their local areas to find appropriate woodland sites and to set up contracts with the owners. Rhino was prompted into collaboration to care for the site, by the children who took an interest. She was easily able to achieve this due to her autonomous position, building the time into the visits and teaching further coppice skills. This had a positive impact on the relationship with the landowner. Ant, by contrast, had wished the children had been more actively involved in the design and boundary-setting of their FS site, feeling that it would have increased a sense of ownership in the children, some of whom presented as ambivalent towards FS as it was in that setting. However, he was not in a position to implement this and was unsure of how broach it within his relationship with the other adult. When within the setting grounds, tensions around ownership and management can grow. Monkey encountered a series of social obstacles over the use of the neighbouring school site; *'I thought, we're using the site, let's all work together, but there isn't that*

working together concept...I've got to be fairly diplomatic. Her enthusiasm for developing the site was met with resistance by the school team; *'they look at me as if to say, Oh God she's off'*. She experienced a difference in attitudes to how the children could use the space, with restrictions in place that became *'political'* in negotiation.

I don't think the land has a problem, I think the school has a problem...The school FS leaders have said they don't want anything going on the site. It's conflict. (Monkey 3)

In terms of congruence, Moose had an incredible resource of grounds at the environmental education centre they worked at, with an area purposely planted for the use of children over 20 years ago, showing the congruent ethos of the setting. The site was maintained as part of the provision and used for a variety of different educational and play based activities. The relationship between adults and the site ran deep and was an active part of their philosophy.

FS principle 2 (FS IOL SIG, 2012) states that 'FS takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world'. Further, a FS programme 'constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner / manager, the practitioner and the learners' (*ibid*). It is telling that not all the cases in the present research do not manage to achieve this and indicative of how little impact the principles have on the reality of some practice. In order to achieve an agreed plan, for example, Monkey, Eagle or Ant, would have had to attempt negotiations from their conflictual positions. Monkey's case was particularly pertinent in demonstrating how a communications breakdown can have a very real impact on the site provision and therefore the resources and

affordances available to children. The involvement of children in the plan is an aspirational ideal that only worked in Rhino’s case and perhaps reveals the lack of active involvement with site grounds that many settings have. In order to find collaboration or congruence within this key factor, the findings indicate the need for positive nature-society relations and good communication to be in place. Conflict over site provision and care is one example of how FS can be applied tokenistically, as actual engagement with the site, one of the key aims of FS, is inhibited or not actively promoted.

Table 14: CCC key words on site provision and care

Site provision and care	
Conflict: politics, ownership, power struggle, responsibility, safety concerns, lack of affordances, children not participating.	
Collaboration: involving children, relationships with landowners, woodlands.	Congruence: own site, autonomy, purpose-designed, resources for maintenance, part of curriculum

Summary

In this chapter I examined individual experiences and responses to key themes that emerged at points of conflict, collaboration or congruence, both in relation to FS principles and the settings. I looked for the impact of social norms and socialisation and how practitioners avoided, challenged or transformed them and to what degree of success.

The examples given in the discussion highlight aspects of the practitioner role and experience in context which do not appear to be part of the initial role expectation of the settings in most cases, largely located in adult-to-adult interaction and

involving negotiation and communication towards culture change. Within the conflicted settings, the role becomes active in challenging the norms. It may not have been the role that the practitioner perceived when they embarked on training, yet within the experience of practice they have to make choices about how to adapt. This embeds the idea of the *connector* role into one of an active change agent, who needs to challenge or transform the social context in order to practice in accordance with the FS principles (FS IOL SIG, 2012), rather than simply integrate with congruent practice and contexts. I return to Goffman's theory of role as a significant factor in maintaining norms within social interaction within a 'role-set' (1961b, p. 75). Firstly, unless the practitioner had the accepted social status to do so, those who challenged the norms deviated from the normative expectation of their role, disclosing themselves as dissidents and were subject to a desocialising effect (*ibid*, 1961b, p. 24). Their role became more about the destruction rather than the maintenance of the system. In Foucauldian terms (1977) they became an agent of their own power rather than the power of the institution. Some practitioners challenged the norms in conflicted settings and were met largely with failure or a negative impact on practice outcomes. For example, Monkey failed to encourage other staff to document or take an interest in imaginative play, or stimulate a positive attitude to going outdoors, or work with her to develop the site. Lion failed to link practice with the new teacher or change attitudes towards a positive valuing of FS practice and left her job. Eagle challenged her staff but felt locked in a fight, moved jobs and gave up practice. Some practitioners avoided the norms in conflicted settings and adapted around the practice as it was. Both Monkey and Lion took this position after initially trying to challenge or collaborate. Ant also adapted to the setting aims in order to maintain his role but finished his placement

with questions over whether FS was appropriate for that setting.

An overall destructive theme emerged of tokenism, where FS practice was undervalued, misconceived, co-opted for other aims, disconnected from other setting practice or curriculum. The practitioners involved in such settings had a low level of change agency, support, team relationship and communication, including Ant, Lion, Monkey and Eagle. Tokenism is the outcome of a setting located in a conflicted position that cannot integrate FS practice fully and negates the FS principles. There is a resistance to culture change or shared discourse. It led to negative or failed challenges or avoidances for the practitioners. Successful transformations were achieved, including far-reaching culture change as demonstrated in Salamander's case. Most transformation was made possible in collaborative or congruent settings, where practitioners had, or enlisted, support from a wider team or network. They had a higher level of autonomy, status or change agency given to them in their team. For example, Rhino, Caterpillar and Salamander all created new sites in woodland outside of the setting. Caterpillar was able to link with other practice in her setting. Caterpillar's senior team welcomed her actively changing their practice, increasing the outdoor provision. Thus, a setting needs to be in, or moving towards, a congruent or collaborative position to be open to working within FS principles. Further, the practitioner must have accepted agency in their role within the team.

An overall supportive theme emerged of a whole team approach, where sharing of values, principles, control, agency, land and resources was encouraged and enabled. Within examples of this collaborative, integrated practice, both the practitioner and

the rest of their team were involved in implementing FS and there was a high level of change agency, support, team relationship and communication. It was present where staff had trained together, as for Caterpillar, Salamander and Moose. A whole team approach also applied to family involvement in Rhino's case and to wider partnerships with landowners, other agencies and networks.

Finally, I summarise the key themes in the different relationship positions (see Table 15). There are many points of crossover and intricacies of relationship.

Table 15: Key theme words in relationship positions

Key factor	Conflict	Collaboration	Congruence
<i>FS values and ethos</i>	Tokenism Branding Misconception	Communication Involvement Culture change	Whole team approach Integrated Shared observation
<i>Staff follow up and interest</i>	Reluctance Ignorance Devaluing	Communication Curriculum links Change agency Training	Whole team approach Shared values FS awareness
<i>Setting controls and standards</i>	Power struggle Isolation Role expectation Clash	Change agency Team involvement Raising standards	Integrated values with standards Autonomy
<i>Curriculum pressures and setting aims</i>	Co-optation Disciplinary gaze Economic targets Disconnected	Balance of learning approaches Reconstructed subjectivities	Part of curriculum Valuing of play & child-initiated
<i>Site provision and care</i>	Power struggle Lack of affordances	External partnerships Involving children	Maintenance Part of curriculum

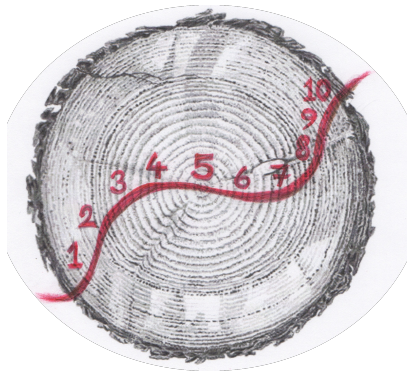
Tokenism was one extreme at the negative end of the continuum in conflict.

Through this final analysis I have demonstrated where positive outcomes were made through actively applying the FS principles within a collaborative, whole team approach, in order to achieve congruent situated practice. However, congruence is the other extreme in the context positions used. There is a danger in remaining congruent; of complacency, stagnation, purism and closing off from the rest of the world. One can be isolated at either end of the continuum. The inverse is also true, that conflict is a place of congruence for the norms and social factors that are counteractive to FS principles.

Congruent relationships, where FS principles were able to be fully realised, had a symbiotic relationship with collaboration, in that often collaboration is needed to maintain congruence. Critical practice needs new input and reflection, which seem to be qualities of collaboration. As a place of permeable boundaries and movement outward, collaborative relationships strengthen a critically reflexive approach.

Conflict and challenge can also be necessary states at times. A useful direction seems to be to allow fluid movement, with awareness through the different relationships, whilst actively using agency to challenge, transform or integrate with others.

CHAPTER 10: SUMMARY



Witnessing the eight practitioners throughout the research period was a surprising and moving journey. Each practitioner underwent a quest to establish practice and define their role within the social world of their setting. I hope to have presented a fair picture of each practitioner's perspective, approaches and context, noting the particularities and complexities in their work.

In the research, I asked; in what ways does FS training impact on trainees' thinking and practice? What factors, internal and external, influence the process of being a FS practitioner? Finally, how do FS practitioners adapt and improvise in response to their training and experience of practice? Within this concluding chapter, I first review the thesis to remind the reader of how answers to these questions were sought throughout the inquiry. I review the second half of the thesis alongside a discussion of the conceptual models that evolved within the research at this stage, drawing together a fuller picture of how they contribute to an understand of practitioner experiences in FS. With the models in mind, the insights drawn from the research are then considered. Following that is a discussion of the limitations, implications and recommendations for practice, training and further research on FS. Within my final reflections, I further consider the implications of the findings and raise questions that continue to resonate beyond the present research.

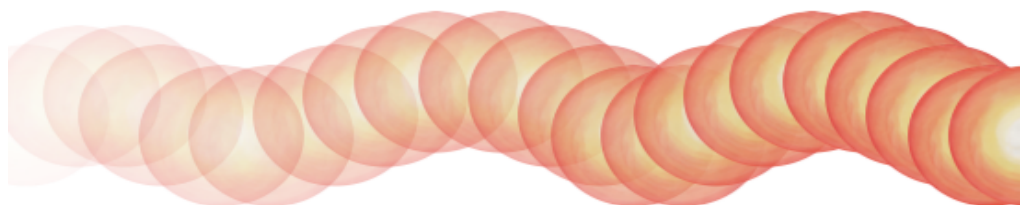
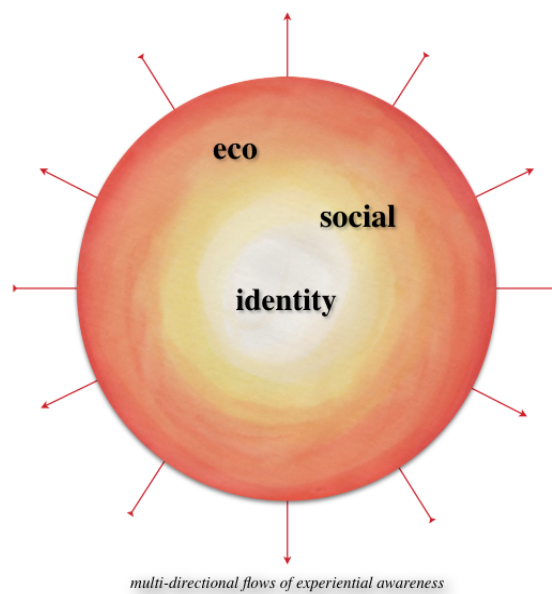
Reviewing the thesis, the practitioners' experiences of FS were analysed and interpreted in the following ways. The introduction and literature reviews in

Chapters 1 - 3 served to place the present research in the context of FS and related practice in contemporary UK culture, and introduced the motivation and rationale for the study. Training literature was critiqued in Chapter 2 and laid the ground for exploring the impact of training later in Chapter 6. A full literature review of FS served to show where the gaps in the literature were, highlighting that values, attitudes, tensions and conflict had been less explored than the pedagogy, ethos and fitness for purpose of FS. This led to a review of the wider literature in Chapter 3, to develop the idea of situated subjectivities in relation to FS practitioner experience. This served to illuminate the thinking that has led to the approach in the present research, providing a rationale for how practitioners and others might experience FS and construct their role and the potential impact of those experiences and constructions. Chapter 4 demonstrated the design and methodology of the study. Here I introduced the thinking behind the model *Shared Space* and how it was applied methodologically within the fieldwork. The journey of the researcher was made visible through a discussion of the challenges and dilemmas of analysis and interpretation. Trustworthiness and ethics were fully explained to demonstrate the methodological rigour of the study, striving to be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable. In Chapter 5, a case study of each practitioner's specific situation gave an in-depth narrative and background. Verbatim quotes were employed fully in the spirit of fair representation. From this point, the second half of the thesis unfolded into cross-case analysis and the use of conceptual models. I continue the review of the following section, where I highlight the use of the models.

Representing situated subjectivities through the models

The nature of the present research inquired into some subtle, affective and experiential states. The conceptual models were an attempt to frame these states as active constituents of practitioner experiences in FS. Within the thesis, *eco-social identity* was at first shown in cross section, representing a single point in time. Then it was extended into threads to show an ongoing lifeline, to document how the practitioners adapted to their experiences in a continuous process of identity and subjectivity formation.

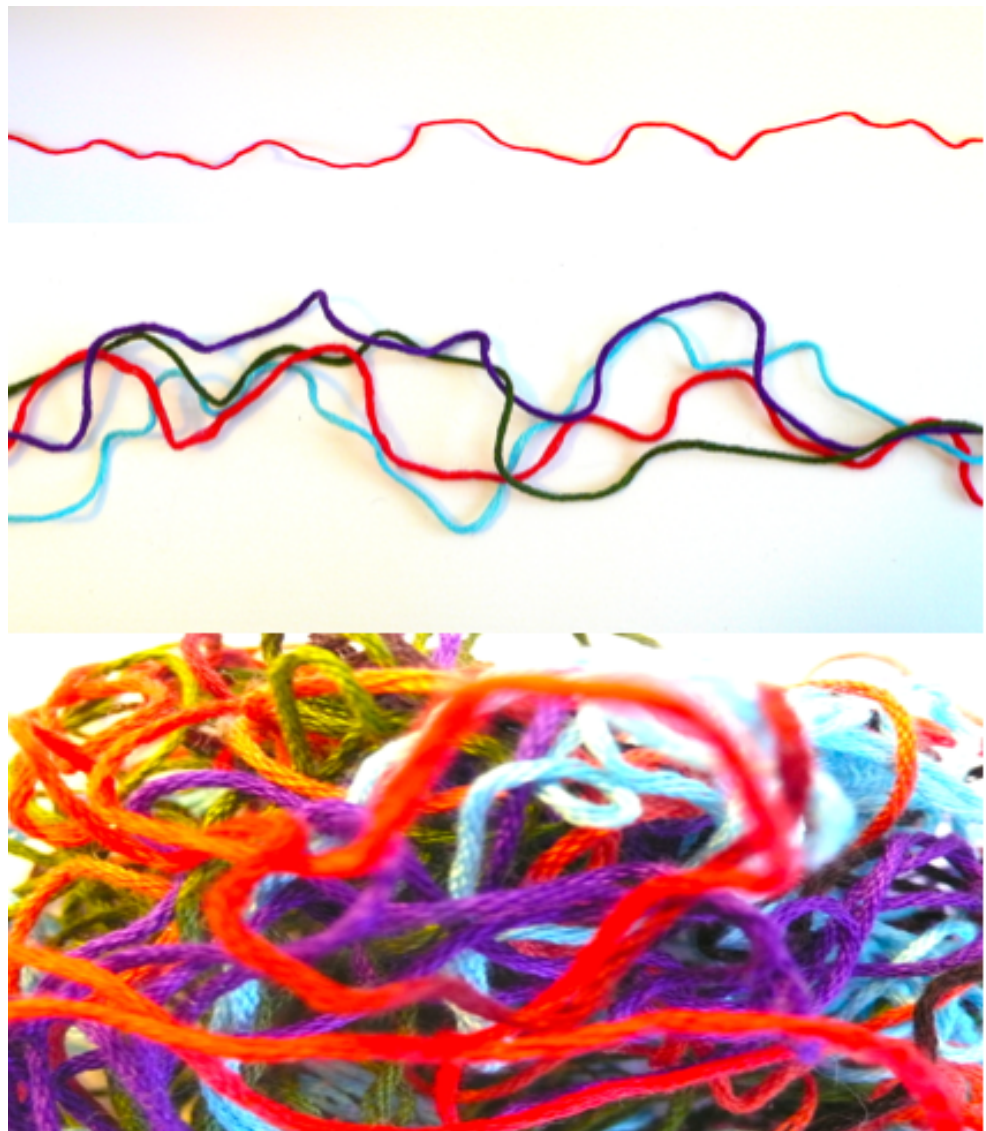
Figure 18: Eco-social identity in cross section and lifeline



The models emerged in the analysis and formed part of the interpretation, as another way into the insights from the data. Here I discuss how the models fit together to give a fuller perspective within a review the second half of the thesis. In Chapter 6, I explored the practitioners' personal influences and motivation for their role and the impact of training. The concept of *eco-social identity* was employed to frame their ongoing construction of self. *Eco-social identity* was explored as a blend of ecological and social processes of identity formation, in the ongoing situated subjectivities of life. In Chapter 6, a cross section in macro was used as a representation of this blend of experience, that contributes and constitutes the practitioner's identity formation, representing their early experiences, choices they made and the values and aspirations they have for FS practice. In Figure 19 on the following page, *eco-social identity* as a lifeline has become the connector thread, which is a micro version of the *connector* diagram. The red thread then intertwines with other threads that represent the other beings, human and more- than-human, in the *Shared Space* of their lives. The training impacts upon their identity and role, and they bring forward values, experiential process, support, skills and knowledge into their implementation of practice, along the red thread. In Chapter 7, the concept of a *connector* was introduced and an initial layer of personal connection was added drawing on the findings from Chapter 6. In Chapters 7 and 8, theoretical lenses on encounter were discussed with encounter narratives on the practitioners' approaches. These were analysed and represented using *Shared Space*, to frame an ecosystemic view of practice and role. From this, the concept of a *connector* role was expanded to include approaches and role processes. The *connector* role is enacted and represented in their intertwining with the other beings. The metaphor of a tree within an ecosystem was employed to represent how these the practitioners

inhabited their role, running alongside other lifelines that had the potential as *connectors* too. The *Shared Space* representations in Chapters 7 and 8 were, in effect, a zooming in on this intertwining, focusing on a particular encounter. We could imagine zooming in further, as the *connector* role diagram showed how the red threads of the practitioner were multiple and constantly changing and adapting, exceeding the representation in this lifeline overview.

Figure 19: The three models combined as lifelines



Along this overview of the practitioner's journey, a similar process of situated subjectivities leading to further movement is happening at any point. Further, we cannot see in this overview what affective states were shared. The brief 'weather report' of shared affect provided by the *Shared Space 2.0* diagram of Moose's encounter in (Appendix 9) was a useful development in showing the relational fluxes in affect that make up each encounter. Chapter 8 looked at theoretical lenses on role, socialisation and norms, with the tense encounter narratives analysed by *Shared Space*. Finally, Chapter 9 explored the practitioners' relationships within their contexts and looked at how they adapted to socialisation and norms in relationship, moving through positions of conflict, collaboration or congruence.

The present research only had a partial perspective drawn from my insights as a researcher, based on the accounts given by the practitioners. At this point, the research reaches its limitation. The complexity of encounter and ongoing *Shared Space* could be further illuminated, for example if a more detailed ethnographic study was conducted in one setting, seeking the perspectives of all the different actors involved. The present research has some transferability in this respect, in that the conceptual models could be applied within an analytical framework of another study. Next, I present insights that I have drawn from the present research.

Insights

Here I relate the insights to each research question and then to the models. In answer to the first research question, '*In what ways does FS training impact on trainees' thinking and practice?*', that a blend of skills and knowledge, experiential process, values and support were significant aspects of the training course itself to the practitioners. The combination of practical, affective, theoretical and

experiential training was experienced as effective and enjoyable. Safety procedures, practical skills and tool use were reported as essential, enabling and empowering elements. Hands-on experimentation, peer group support and reflective time in nature were reported to be beneficial experiential aspects. Practitioners' perceptions of self-confidence, autonomy, purpose and competencies were improved.

Concerning values, the practitioners identified either personally or professionally with the FS ethos and experienced a sense of validation, particularly concerning outdoor play, relationship with the natural world and child-centred principles.

Support was the most significant theme, with a sub-theme of values support within it, continuing to be a presence throughout the further analysis. Support from the settings, in particular from their colleagues and superiors, was a crucial element to enable the practitioners to effect practice as they desired and perceived as within the FS ethos. Practitioners felt the impact of this in various ways; in terms of realising they needed support, requesting it, creating it for others and in shared values as a basis for affective support. In my final reflections I consider the implications of the varying levels of practitioner support and the situated subjectivities surrounding this, acting as barriers or facilitators to successful enactment of FS practice.

The inquiry into training impact revealed that much of the impact is felt in the process of implementing practice, rather than of the course itself. Undertaking a 6 week placement is a part of FS training, and it common for it to be in the practitioner's usual place of work and for the process to last a great deal longer. Where training was shared by two colleagues, practice was experienced as effective and integrated into the setting, again emphasising the need for support and shared values for success.

In answer to the second research question *‘What internal and external factors influence the process of being a FS practitioner?’*, I found that, internally, an affective link between early life experience, nature-society relations and eco-social identity fuelled conviction and passion for practice. A deviation from this was training for professional reasons while not identifying strongly as ‘eco’ or ‘outdoorsy’. These practitioners felt that there was satisfactory justification in FS practice being perceivably good for children, to be outdoors, to play and to have access to child-centred services with credible ethos. All the practitioners valued a combined child-centred and nature-centred pedagogy, including play and experiential activity. Nearly all the practitioners held strongly conscientised views and principles of practice, based on experience and views of contemporary childhood and the natural environment. The practitioners unanimously had a sense of purpose within their role, that was based on social and generational change and, for most, current environmental degradation. The strength of feeling that was disclosed by all the practitioners about their motivations and internal factors was in some ways surprising. I was surprised by their unanimous passion about generational change, in the losses that they perceived, and how their choice of role and training arose in part from this discontent. It demonstrated part of what attracts people to FS training, to seek a role where they can exercise greater agency and autonomy to effect change for the better, in a way that aligns with their beliefs. There was a clear affective dimension of influence in choosing to train (Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007).

The level of social discontent highlights the politicised nature of FS practice, which itself arose from a group of early years practitioners seeking to find another,

better way and has caught on from the bottom up, rather than driven by policy (Cree and McCree, 2012). Further, this surprising theme raised questions about whether FS could address a list of eco-social ills, whether it was intended to or whether FS's aims had been constructed as such by others, in attaching prevalent social constructs like the vulnerable child in need of protection (Prout , 2000), or FS as a feel-good panacea that could be used without addressing wider systemic issues. This is a tension worth exploring further in understanding how FS is implemented.

Externally, across the different settings, there were strong disparities of support or restriction towards individual practitioners establishing FS. Colleagues' and superiors' understanding, value and interpretation of FS ethos and principles varied widely, which in turn affected both the practitioner and settings' perception and expectations of FS adult role. FS was either successfully integrated into the norm of practice, or held in ambivalence, ambiguity or disregard. There was a strong difference between the experience of shared or isolated practice, connected to a greater sense of practitioner status and autonomy.

FS took place in a variety of different social spaces and physical environments and the nature and ownership of the site impacted practice outcomes. Within the range of eight practitioners, there were diverse settings and setting relationships, role perception and initial levels of practitioner status and autonomy. Therefore, cross-case analysis highlighted certain patterns that were already in existence in the nature of the setting culture and social structure. Yet the analysis showed how FS was integrated differently in different setting cultures, and how levels of autonomy changed the chance for success.

Another clear pattern emerged of the affective movement that the practitioners made, in relationship to their settings, over the course of the present research. The relationship between the settings and the practitioners fell into three distinct themes of conflict, collaboration or congruence. The social norms influenced team relationships and affected the understanding of FS values and ethos, levels of follow-up or interest in FS from staff team and site provision and care. The impact on FS practice from controls and standards in setting practices and curriculum pressures and setting aims also varied.

I found in answer to the third research question *'How do FS practitioners adapt in response to their training and experience of practice?'* that adult-to-adult interaction within setting team influenced the practitioners more than any other factor, often negatively as a source of tension and conflict. The external influences that were found in the contexts, as described above, led to an ongoing adaptation and negotiation of the practitioner role. To outline the power of these external influences, I will first give examples from the half of the practitioner group where adult-to-adult interaction was largely positive. There was congruence between the practitioners' and the settings' FS practitioner role perception and expectations in all three alternative provision settings and one mainstream setting (for Moose, Salamander, Rhino and Caterpillar), where FS practice was integrated and valued within the aims of the settings. The contexts were supportive and the practitioner had enough autonomy and status in their role. Their experiences were not without some ongoing challenge, yet there were socio-cultural affordances that gave potential for successful negotiation. For example, Salamander, Moose and Rhino were able to exercise a high level of autonomy in their practice, and had levels of

accepted status in their role that enabled them to act on decisions. Rhino had practical challenges to continue her practice but had a supportive team of other home educating parents to work with. Caterpillar had a clear job description in the nursery and supportive management, giving her the agency to establish practice as she desired. The practitioner could engage in co-production with powerful results in terms of the quality of experience for the participant, demonstrated by the encounter narratives in Chapter 7.

In terms of approaches, most of the practitioners had a strong position and practiced pedagogical skill set that combined well with their new understandings of FS. The approaches were conceptualised in the *connector* role in Chapter 7. One question that might be raised from the connector model above and the discussion so far is what, or who, defines success or failure in FS practice and approaches? If the role is largely improvised and spontaneous, what accountability measures are in place to ensure standards of practice? Or, is it really up to the practitioners to decide what success is, as setting teams have a duty of care towards the children in their care and their own ethos to follow? This last question links to the potential for criticality, hybridity and the quality of practice which I discuss in the closing thoughts. The baseline FS principles and training process serve as initial guides as to what could be considered successful practice. However, within the present research, a lone practitioner attempting to practice ‘by the book’ may not be effectual in an environment where the FS principles are not understood or supported (Lion and Monkey). Further, positive and negative outcomes can be understood in more practical terms, which lessen the bias potential in making the value judgement of success. There were examples of unsuccessful practice where

the sessions stopped (Eagle), where practice was ignored or misunderstood by team colleagues (Lion and Monkey) or the children vote with their feet and want to leave the session (Ant). Quality, as discussed in Chapter 2, is not a neutral term, yet within the present research, there were clear factors that denoted success or failure for the adult practitioner. To analyse the quality of the encounters and practice for the learners was beyond the scope of the study, and FS literature exists on this subject. Suffice to say that where there is challenge and conflict within the adult teams providing FS sessions, that the quality of the experience will be limited for the child. This is not to discount what a child may derive for themselves from the experience of Forest School, without any adult intervention. Yet that was not the issue in the present research. What is not fully addressed in the FS literature was the impact of training and practitioner experiences in context; their situated subjectivities.

The above figure of the connector role, as found in Shared Space also, includes a vital level of the practitioner engaging with the context, or adult-to-adult interaction, in order to fulfil their role. Adult-to-adult interaction and the co-produced, situated subjectivities were a source of tension and conflict for half of the practitioners in the present research (Monkey, Lion, Eagle and Ant), as demonstrated by the tense encounter narratives and discussed in Chapters 8 and 9. There was conflict over role perception and expectations between practitioners and settings in four out of five mainstream settings. Practice was isolated, co-opted or de-valued within the aims of these settings. Tokenism and co-option of principles were the most destructive strategies within the settings for ongoing practice, and these practitioners failed to challenge the cultures in their settings. Three out of

eight practitioners did not complete the training after the practice placement. They had significant disagreements over principles and values within their settings. Therefore, where the contexts were not supportive, and the practitioner had less autonomy or status, there was a significant impact on the FS practitioner role and outcomes. Practice was challenged, and the chances for success therefore limited, in various ways. There were tensions and conflict around the FS practitioner role fitting into social norms and team socialisation. The practitioners were challenged to find support for a new approach to outdoor pedagogy. Practical and professional aspects of the FS practitioner role were often overlooked by mainstream settings, such as a challenge to pedagogic principles, site management, observation and follow up with staff and wider community. These aspects required extra workload, resources and practitioner change agency in the settings and wider community. I have discussed congruence and conflict in light of the overall findings. What about the collaborators? Collaboration, partnership and an integrated whole team approach were the most effective strategies for ongoing practice. The *connector* role is a valuable heuristic tool for practitioners to look at their approaches and seek opportunity to connect and collaborate, thus also strengthening their network of support. What are the limits of the practitioner to deal with all these different levels of approach and relationship? Some over collaboration and over connection led to burn out. Promoting collaboration could lead to unreasonable expectations being made of the practitioner. The connector role has to be viewed with criticality in this regard. From this discussion of the insights drawn from the present research, it is clear that the fuzzy nature of the FS practitioner role adds a strong dynamic to the ongoing situated subjectivities in their setting teams. Socio-cultural constructs are also brought to bear in the active process of nature-society relations in FS

pedagogy. I will now discuss the limitations of the research, the implications for literature, training and practice before some final closing thoughts.

Limitations

The scope of the research was limited in breadth and depth, with a small sample over a finite time. As interpretive research, it was not designed to produce representative or generalisable findings, yet insights on impact, dynamics and significance can be drawn surrounding the subjectivities of practice. Herein lies both a methodological blessing and a curse. As an exploration of subjective experience, of values, attitudes and understandings, the research narrative dwelled on the particular. Yet as the particular can speak to us in ways that the generalised cannot, in this way it was a blessing. The curse was a limitation when analysing contextual data and social interactions, as I had one side of the story, that of the practitioners. The research can speak to their experience, yet the opportunity to gauge values and principles across a whole setting was not possible. This gave a partial view of the setting contexts, which I struggled to overcome. My own assumptions often felt aligned with practitioners' similar perceptions, which brought challenges and required constant reflexivity. Research findings can only ever be partial, so in this way the awareness of bias has helped me to think critically and seek the trustworthiness in the data at all times.

The restricted topic area speaks primarily to a small group of practitioners, providers and interested parties. There are direct links with early years practice, playwork and experiential outdoor pedagogy. The research gives an in-depth picture of establishing practice in an area that is not easily integrated within the

prevailing culture. It enquires gently into nature-society relations and the impact of our current ‘industrial growth society’ (Kvaløy, 1984, p. 12) at a personal, interpersonal and subjective level. I do not subscribe to what I perceive as the flawed notion of behaviour change for sustainability. However, I do subscribe to the active exploration of nature-society relations. The conceptual models and theory-building of *Shared Space*, *connector* and *eco-social identity* presented contribute to new knowledge in this area, located within pedagogy and children’s services.

Implications for literature

FS is under-researched and there are no exclusive studies on FS training. Thus the present research contributes new knowledge to fill a gap in the literature. Adult experiences are important in children’s services, but are under-represented compared to research that focus on children (Knight, 2011c, Cree and McCree, 2013). There is a discrepancy between statutory standards and the training provided in outdoor play and learning to achieve those standards (Maynard, 2007c; Field Studies Council, 2007), which indicates a gap between policy and provision. Further, FS is vulnerable to polemic and aggrandised claims by ‘converts’ extolling its virtues and curative powers. Independent, empirical research into FS is therefore of value.

The three conceptual models have transferability for further research application, where they could be used as heuristic tools and as data collection techniques for reflective discussion. As a methodological enquiry, *Shared Space* can be applied to any type of encounter. It has particular relevance to encounters that take place outdoors and where nature-society relations play an active part. Through the

process of designing both the conceptual model and its application for the present research, *Shared Space* has a good level of dependability and transferability. I would be interested to see *Shared Space* used within school and setting teams for professional development in outdoor pedagogy. As subjectivities, values and attitudes are identified as strong barriers to outdoor pedagogy (Rickinson *et al.*, 2012) then using *Shared Space* could help to air them and reflect, through the medium of gaining richer perspectives from other positions. Further research on the use of Shared Space itself would be insightful in terms of accessing different forms of enquiry.

Future research

A need for comparative research on UK FS training was indicated by the present research. Through the study I became interested in how other cultures understood outdoor play and learning and have evolved systems, training and policy. Such research would contribute to the need for quality assurance within FS. I am in discussion with the FSA to develop the research into a broader study of both national FS training and comparative training in the EU. I wish to continue my enquiry into nature-society relations, in subjectivity, affect and contemporary cultural understandings, and the challenges posed by neoliberalism to developing eco-social justice within pedagogy and culture. Further, the creation of conceptual models, visual representations and phenomenological enquiry within the present research has fuelled my desire to return to creative practices and methodologies more in future.

Implications for training and practice

The research speaks first to practice and I aimed to bring a critical perspective in my insights on practitioner experience. In the light of recent developments in FS nationally, there is a need to clarify the understanding and use of the new FS principles and the inherent challenges. The following tables detail the implications for training, practice and settings, with chapter locations in the thesis.

Table 16: Research implications and recommendations for training

Chapter	Implication	Recommendation
6	Training validates practitioners and enables an exploration of identity and relations.	Experiential design of training programme, including both practical and affective skills. The combination of elements is important to maintain.
6, 8, 9	Trainees require ongoing support into initial practice	Space for reflective discourse on adaptation and the realities of practice could be provided. Signpost for ongoing support with establishing practice.
6	Training is more effective when shared, particularly within teams.	Encourage whole team training programmes. Encourage wider support networks and peer-to-peer mentoring.
6	Experiential time outdoors on the training is valuable to practitioners	Include explicit outdoor experience, education and reflection on relationship to the natural world.
6	Conviction, purpose and passion for practice has affective and eco-social roots	Explore identity relations & nature-society relations. Use <i>eco-social identity</i> concept as training tool.
5, 6, 7	Trainees value progressive pedagogy - nature- and child-centred, play-based and experiential approaches.	Maintain these parts of the training and build into it. Encourage critical enquiry into pedagogical theory.
4, 6, 7, 8, 9	New knowledge, theoretical models & concepts have been generated within this research.	Use in training resources and in follow up support for practitioners. Help counter common FS myths and improve FS principles.

Table 17: Research implications and recommendations for practitioners and settings

Chapter	Implication	Recommendation
6	Reflection on motivation, approaches and purpose helps to identify own core values and ethos.	Use <i>eco-social identity</i> , <i>connector</i> role and <i>Shared Space</i> models to reflect on own relationship to the natural world and to practice.
7	Theoretical models of the FS adult role as <i>connector</i> , and <i>performing CPR</i> help identify key approaches. <i>Shared Space</i> useful for reflection.	<i>Connector</i> role, <i>CPR</i> and <i>Shared Space</i> can be used for self-appraisal, as a session planning tool and in team communication on role.
5, 8, 9	A working definition of a wider situated role: strong emphasis on values negotiation and setting culture transformation, and change agency in the settings and wider societal realms.	Discuss aims for FS and role expectation with setting and wider communication.
5, 8, 9	Situated role: Extra workload of site management, requiring strong practical skills and resources.	Recruit practical support. Identify potential sites and land partnerships.
5, 8, 9	Support for dealing with the reality of practice in settings is required.	Further practitioner support, from on-course training provider and elsewhere.
8, 9	Training can contribute to isolation and polarisation from a mixed staff team if FS competence not valued or recognised.	Share practitioners' competence in team skill shares, reflective team discourse & / or team support. Local networking & collaboration.
9	Conflictual setting teams often lacked a level of critical reflection and discussion with colleagues over the challenges presented.	Encourage collaboration and try experimenting together with new approaches. Find opportunities for reflection & discussion.
7, 9	Collaborative setting teams developed an openness towards experimentation and new approaches, enacted culture change and worked in partnership across boundaries and sites.	Seek ways to practice collaboratively and mirror these approaches. Share with and learn from others.
7, 9	Congruent settings had strong team support and job satisfaction, due to shared values and ethos. They were limited by less contact with other potential collaborators.	Work towards shared team values and ethos. Maintain collaboration and partnerships with others, not all with same views and values.

Closing thoughts

My research suggests that, whilst FS practice is developing rapidly, approaches are diverse and deeply influenced by the aims of their setting context, namely the setting team and both the physical and social environment. The practitioner's ability and agency to interact authentically with children within the environment depends upon their own individual qualities, the site affordances and the available social resources, the latter having a more significant impact on the outcome of successful practice. Adults in schools, play and childcare settings in the study present either barriers or support to the inclusion of nature and spontaneous playful interaction. I link this with the perception of, and provision for, natural play in these settings. The adult role therefore involves challenging social norms and values that limit eco-social practice, which raises issues of power, socialisation and environmental relationship. Challenging social norms has a positive bearing on the wider movement for natural play and free-range childhoods (Gill, 2011). Arguably, a 6-week programme of FS sessions will not change long-standing attitudes. Therefore the recommended emphasis on long-term FS programmes is pertinent to the wider staff as well as the children. However, if staff continue to have negative associations with attending the sessions, there is little likelihood that FS will convert them into loving the outdoors.

In the present climate of pressures in schools, it seems a challenge for mainstream settings to apply FS fully and not tokenistically. The examples above highlight missed opportunities in several ways. Firstly, by applying it in the sense of a brand, the distinct difference in the combined FS pedagogical approach is lost. By focusing on curriculum links and learning outcomes, settings are in danger of

missing other outcomes from FS practice, such as observing the child holistically in a different context that affords a broader view of their individual dispositions and interests, and the potential for children who fare better outdoors to display their abilities positively. The adult may discover and apply new perspectives about the learner (O'Brien, 2009). Again, by operating FS as a stand-alone practice, these experiences are not witnessed and absorbed into the rest of the children's school life and learning. Lion's perception of FS being used as a 'filler' while staff took PPA time, demonstrates how FS can be organised in a way that devalues its function and possible contribution to the setting aims. If classroom staff are absent from the session, they do not have the same experience of the children as the FS practitioner and vice versa. It seems as if the different practitioners are viewing different dimensions of the children, in class and in FS, and that these dimensions do not get to meet, integrate, cross-over or be followed up. Opportunities are lost by dividing and organising FS practice in this way.

In part, a tokenistic approach is due to the identity crisis within FS (Maynard, 2007c), as with a mixed and ill-defined framework of underpinning philosophies and purposes, FS remains open to interpretation and co-option by a variety of adult-framed concepts and can be appropriated accordingly. The impact of tokenism can create a negative feedback loop, where manifest substandard practice is taken as a face-value example of the practice, contributing further to its devaluing. The question of whether adapting the FS approach to suit other agendas or contexts may dilute the principles of FS, or in contrast bring richness and diversity, is something that remains to be seen in the evolution of practice and research. I have termed much of the 'branded' practice with watered-down core principles and ethos, as 'FS Light'

and ‘FS Ultra Light’ as opposed to ‘Whole FS’ (McCree, 2013). On presenting an explanation of these terms at a recent FS conference, practitioners stated that ‘FS Light’ encapsulated certain dilemmas in their experience over the compromises that they are asked to make, and that exploring the ‘FS Light’ brand would be a useful heuristic tool in their settings to aid negotiation towards ‘Whole FS’. I was also surprised at one practitioner who enthusiastically took up the term ‘FS Light’ as a positive term, to more accurately describe what she could offer as a competitive product.

Further implications for training suggest that elements of FS training could be a supplement to initial teacher training and early years practitioner training. There is a tension here concerning the potential hybridity of FS practice that requires further exploration. Either distinctiveness, or FS for all, remains a significant debate for national practice. I prefer to think around such an either / or question with the rhizomatic concept of ‘and... and... and’ from Deleuze and Guattari (2002) or ‘Yes, and’ from improvisational principles (Sawyer, 2001). In this sense, there is room for experimentality and evolution.

Journey’s end

To write is to carve an new path through the terrain of the imagination, or to point out new features on a familiar route. To read is to travel throughout that terrain with the author as a guide. (Solnit, 2001, p. 72)

Having got this far, the reader has been through the forest and back several times, and encountered a rich panoply of people and other beings populating the nooks and crannies. I have guided the reader along the red threads of the practitioners’ experiences like Hansel and Gretel’s trail of breadcrumbs, through zones of

entanglement where trees never end and crisscrossing pathways invite us along, through temperate changes of affect and through space-time to nostalgic memory and dystopic future. Here in the present, I wish to retain a sense of experimentality.

Many of the practitioners talked about child-centred and nature-centred practice in similar ways, helping to define what generic FS terms could be in light of their examples. The theorising I built around *eco-social identity* and the *connector* role hold within them the potential for synthesis, for ‘Yes, and’, without dissonance or debates of disconnection. The present research presented many tales where valuing a sense of place and giving voice to the site was a form of adult-child-environment interaction, of *Shared Space*. Some wanted to make the links with environmental education more clearly, but felt that FS brought a difference of approach to the same aims. Not all practitioners agreed that FS succeeded and I enjoyed this healthy debate, for it showed signs of questioning minds and passion for people, processes and place.

Becoming more ecologically aware, sensitive and sustainable may seem like an unattainable goal, if an authentic ecological self is promoted as pure and unsullied by industrialised society, reminiscent of washing powder and shampoo television adverts, and out of most people’s reach or desire. The pragmatic approach of *eco-social identity* is helpful to locate the fullness of our multiple selves when moving to, from and between the machinations of our everyday lives. FS needs to be accessible and within reach of practitioners, not just those that strongly identify with an ecological, or eco- social, sense of self. FS training can help practitioners to understand the impact of their life experience and the constructs they use and draw

meaning from. An eco-social approach can facilitate the integration process of who a person is into how they do their job. One benefit of researching in depth has helped to generate new concepts and understandings that can be used in further research and as tools for reflective practice. There is particular value to critical reflexivity surrounding nature-centred practice and constructs. Within pedagogical principles, clarity over interaction in *Shared Space* may be of benefit to practitioners. The *Shared Space* model broadens the frame to include the environment and can expose the relational dynamics of power, agency and other interactive factors. Within this thesis I moved towards a theoretical explanation of the FS practitioner role, engaged in a dynamic performative process as a *connector*: Life cannot be contained and it is my hope that *connectors* of all colours and stripes continue to proliferate and spread mimetically, reverberating along the lifelines. Finally, I am grateful once more to those who gave their stories to form this wider story. In being wide, there are gaps, omissions and partialities. There are shadows in the dark woods. There is always something more to be said, learnt and experienced.

No story is like a wheeled vehicle whose contact with the road is continuous. Stories walk, like animals and men. And their steps are not only between narrated events but between each sentence, sometimes each word. Every step is a stride over something not said.
(Berger, 1982, pp. 284-5)

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APPENDICES

1. Literature review methodology
2. Primary literature review table
3. FS Principles and criteria for good practice (FS IOL SIG, 2012)
4. Level 3 qualification module content (FSTC, 2009)
5. Figure of Early Antecedents in FS History
6. Ethics consent form sample
7. Full ethics bias methodology
8. Sample of encounter dialogue using *Shared Space* model
9. *Shared Space* map of Moose and the selective mute

Appendix 1: Literature review methodology

I reviewed primary source materials; evidence-based research in the form of peer-reviewed journal articles, excluding scholarly books. I first gathered what was available on FS; from academic literature, reports from commercial organisations, government departments and agencies, charities and trusts, FS organisations, conference proceedings and the press. As the review progressed it became clear that some of the literature identified was limited or variable in type and quality. Literature was ranked into four categories and only primary or secondary academic research sources were included in the analysis (see Tables X1.1 and 1.2 below). Other sources of non- academic material were read and indexed but excluded from detailed review. Key information about each piece of identified primary and secondary research was collated in individual summaries, including methodology, aims and objectives, research design and key findings (see Appendix 2). The search inclusion criterion was to be about FS or the adult role in FS, wholly or partially. As no full review has been done thus far in the UK, my first review was of all primary literature exclusively on FS to date from 2000 to 2011. I have found no research on

FS prior to 2000. I repeated this review in 2012 and 2013 to bring it up to date. Due to space limitations, I excluded secondary literature or further literature on the adult role in the primary review table.

Literature ranking and exclusion criteria

Table XI.1: Criteria for inclusion / exclusion in FS primary literature review (adapted from Gill, 2011)

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
About Forest School	Not about Forest School
Empirical or evaluative research	Papers not reporting empirical or evaluative studies, e.g. descriptive research, think pieces, editorials, think-pieces, theoretical and methodological discussion papers Theses and dissertations (unpublished)
In English	In languages other than English
Academic or professional research by an authoritative source, a) academic institution b) national governments c) national public bodies d) non-governmental organisation	By other sources by other sources (private individuals and companies)
Published (print or online) in one of a) peer reviewed journal article b) scholarly book c) research report	Other reports and independent studies

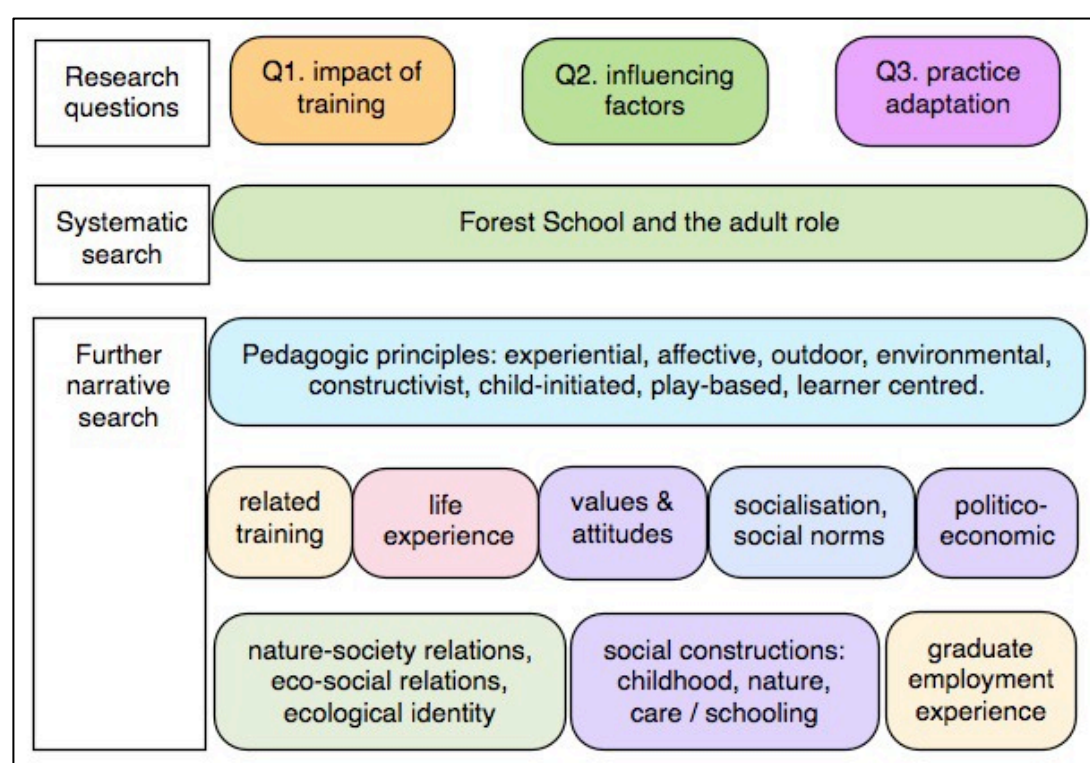
Table XI.2: Secondary Literature

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
About Forest School	Not about Forest School
Empirical or evaluative research	Papers not reporting empirical or evaluative studies, e.g. descriptive research, think pieces, editorials, think-pieces, theoretical and methodological discussion papers Theses and dissertations (unpublished)
In English	In languages other than English
Academic or professional research by an authoritative source, a) academic institution b) national governments c) national public bodies d) non-governmental organisation	By other sources by other sources (private individuals and companies)
Published (print or online) in one of a) peer reviewed journal article b) scholarly book c) research report	Other reports and independent studies

Narrative review

My research thesis has an interdisciplinary approach yet pedagogy is central to the investigation, as the basis of theory and philosophy behind FS and the adult role. I undertook a narrative review on other topics, filling in the gaps found in the first systematic review on FS literature. The search terms are included on the following table (X1.3).

Table X1.3: Narrative review search terms.



Weaknesses in approach

There is a standpoint challenge in this review. Within the FS literature there seems to be much agreement on position, theoretical perspective, approaches to practice etc. For example, most of the writers reviewed have a constructivist or poststructuralist standpoint, or are academics specialising in outdoor learning. It can be assumed that most of the authors support FS, and in some ways wish their research to contribute to the development of FS as an emergent practice, by their

focus on FS in the first place. Therefore a balanced critical appraisal is tricky to grasp within the literature. It can only be done by looking critically at the efficacy, rigour and quality of the evidence claims within the research, as to how much the study authors have attempted to balance their own arguments and provide worthwhile evidence to back their claims. FS is young and successful as a movement and I've not found any literature that refutes FS as an approach. Some authors attempt to look critically at the wide-ranging claims to benefits in order to find evidence to back them up or expose inadequacies. I have looked in particular for these points of criticism within the literature. Without extending the search to a wider criteria, e.g. critics of socio-constructivist approach, which is beyond the review scope, so a full critical balance is not possible. It's a case of waiting to see what research or theory is challenged at a later date by further evidence or a different perspective. Therefore, I have counteracted the initial bias by ranking the literature and excluding literature not based in evidence. Finally, as a long time supporter of FS and outdoor play and learning practitioner, I acknowledge my own professional and personal bias. My interest has led me to my chosen research. Like perhaps the standpoint of many authors in the literature, I want to support the measured development of FS by contributing to the literature. However, I use critical and reflexive skills as a researcher to be aware of my own bias and how it manifests and explore this at depth elsewhere.

Appendix 2: Table X2.1: Primary literature. (Abbreviations: JA= journal article; RR = research report; OL = outdoor learning; OP = outdoor play; FS = Forest School; NC = National Curriculum; Govt: Government)

Author/s (date) and title	Literature type & data sources	Aims & focus	Methods, sample & analysis	Key findings on pedagogy & outcomes	Key findings on adult experience
Ridgers, Knowles & Sayer (2012) <i>Encouraging play in the natural environment...</i>	(JA) <i>Children's Geographies</i> , 10(1), pp. 49-65.	To examine children's perceptions, knowledge and experiences of play in the natural environment' p. 49	Child-led case study. 17 children (aged 6-7) . 2 qualitative methods: focus group and interviews, before & after 12 wk FS programme within 1 school grounds.	FS had a 'positive influence on children's natural play and knowledge of the natural world around them' p. 49. E.g. less perceived weather as barrier to play. Stimulated imaginative play & social interaction. Parental restrictions barrier stayed the same.	Barriers to play: many cannot go out without adult supervision, parental fears, traffic & accidents. Invite parents to take part in FS to facilitate more natural play in children's lives. p. 60
Roe & Aspinall (2011a) <i>The restorative outcomes...</i> Roe & Aspinall (2011b) <i>The Emotional Affordances of Forest Settings...</i>	(JAa) <i>Urban Forestry and Urban Greening</i> , 10(3), pp. 153-256. (JAb) <i>Landscape Research</i> , 36(5), pp. 535-552. Based on Roe (2008) PhD research. (RR) Roe, Aspinall & Ward Thompson (2009) <i>FS: Evidence for Restorative Health Benefits in Young People</i> . Edinburgh College of Art for Forestry Commission Scotland.	Observing emotional responses to forest setting. (2011a) Psychological restoration across good & poor behaviour spectrums, to test importance of nature as resources for personal development. (2011b) Sets out a framework for integrating affect within the affordance perceptual model.	Mixed methods.(2011a) 18 children in 2 samples: 'no behaviour problem' (mainstream school) & 'significant behaviour problems' (special school: as 2011b). Behaviour spectrum model and personal project methodology (2011b). Ethnographic qualitative: 6 months, 8 boys (aged 10-12) with extreme behaviour challenges in special residential school (woodland grounds) 2 fold analysis - 1st study integrating role of affect within affordance perception (new conceptual model). Novel use of graphic mapping.	(2011a) Reduced anger and improved mood, positive outcomes in personal reflection. Greater positive effect for poor behaviour group.Environmental interventions (in forest settings) help to improve behaviour. (2011b) Results show an increase in positive affective responses to the forest setting over time, accompanied by increased trust, exploratory activity and social cohesion, dimensions linked in the literature with well-being. Forest settings can, in a rehabilitation context over time, offer opportunities for long-term 'instoration' in boys suffering from extreme trauma.	(2011a) No discussion of adult role. Limitation noted in that social context was not a controllable or measurable factor. (2011b) Trust as an outcome was shared with the adults present. More disclosure and story-sharing happened outside. Children were able to take control and use adults in their games, 'catching up with their childhood'.

Author/s (date) and title	Literature type & data sources	Aims & focus	Methods, sample & analysis	Key findings on pedagogy & outcomes	Key findings on adult experience
<p>Waite (2011a) <i>Teaching and learning outside the classroom: Personal values...</i></p> <p>Waite (2010) <i>Losing our way?...</i></p>	<p>(JA 2011a) <i>Education</i> 3-13, 39(1), pp. 65-82. First published online September 23, 2010.</p> <p>(JA 2010) <i>Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning</i>, 10(2), pp. 111- 126.</p> <p>Based on studies in secondary literature Waite <i>et al.</i> (2006a,b & c) (RR)</p> <p>With reference to - Waite (2007) 'Memories...', <i>Education</i> 3-13, 35(4), pp. 333-347.</p> <p>Waite & Davis (2007) <i>The contribution of free play...</i> (chapter).</p>	<p>(2011a) and (2010) Survey of experiential OL opportunities (which included some FS), examining attitudes, practice & aspirations of practitioners & children in educational & care settings.</p> <p>(2011a) investigates impact of personal values, alternative pedagogies and standards on OL.</p>	<p>3 related empirical studies in SW England: in 334 educational & care settings, children (aged 2-11 years) in rural Devon; 5 follow-up case studies including FS projects; and an ongoing study of OL in the transition between Foundation Stage & Year 1 in 2 city-based schools.</p>	<p>(2011a) Values-based pedagogy can have transformative impact & maximise possibilities for FS as form of OL.</p> <p>Transition:</p> <p>(2010) Other barriers to OL: Funding, No core funding for OL. Testing & senior support: Impact of Govt not incorporating OL into NC and maintaining testing regime. Has led to decline in OL provision. Emphasis on core subjects in NC & assessment devalues OL & acts as barrier, as OL outcomes are less specific.</p> <p>Multiple benefits of OL are clearly demonstrated within cited literature & the research.</p>	<p>PARTIAL FOCUS ON ADULT (2010) Practitioners' 'navigational tools': 'Many staff in schools appear to take curriculum guidance as a directive (Passy & Waite, 2008)' p. 9. Staff placed emphasis placed on obligations and expectations of national guidance, in contrast to personal beliefs or values & local factors that help to map children's needs. 'Time for the 'scenic route', including creativity, environmental awareness or social benefits, may be seen as impossible in a tightly packed curriculum with school-wide consequences for failure to meet expected targets' p. 9.</p> <p>The source & nature of values in OL. Decline in OL opportunities. Recommendation for OL to be part of initial teacher education, in line with Select Committee (2010). Need for congruence with how success is evaluated / measured & purpose of schooling (p. 123).</p>
<p>Knight (2011c) <i>FS as a Way of Learning....</i></p>	<p>(JA) <i>International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education</i>, 1(1), pp. 590-595.</p> <p>Based on Knight's (forthcoming) PhD research.</p>	<p>To establish a co-constructed and consensual national definition of FS rather than outcomes; what it does). To make explicit features of FS & clarify necessary conditions.</p>	<p>16 case studies of FS practitioners describing their sessions (used in Knight, 2011a) Grounded theory initial coding. Constructivist. Semi-structured interviews.</p>	<p>Diverse spread of groups using FS. Conceptual categories of key features in FS sessions. Overlapping conceptual frameworks within FS pedagogy.</p>	<p>FOCUS ON ADULT. Diverse backgrounds of practitioners training in FS (not just educators or outdoor professionals).</p>

Author/s (date) and title	Literature type & data sources	Aims & focus	Methods, sample & analysis	Key findings on pedagogy & outcomes	Key findings on adult experience
<p>O'Brien (2009) <i>Learning outdoors...</i>(JA)</p> <p>O'Brien & Murray (2007) <i>FS & its impacts...</i>(JA)</p>	<p>(JA) <i>Education 3-13</i>, 37, pp. 45-60.</p> <p><i>Urban Forestry & Urban Greening</i>, 6(4), pp. 249-265.</p> <p>(RR) (2004-6) (1. Wales, 2. England, 3. both)</p> <p>1. Murray (2004) <i>FS evaluation project: A study in Wales</i>.</p> <p>2. Murray & O'Brien (2005) <i>Such enthusiasm</i>.</p> <p>3. O'Brien & Murray (2006) <i>A Marvellous Opportunity ... New Economics Foundation for the Forestry Commission</i>.</p>	<p>Evaluation.</p> <p>Wales: Self evaluation tools were developed to research links between FS & 6 positive outcomes</p> <p>England: Could the outcomes (benefits & impacts) identified (in Wales, phase 1) be observed in other FS settings? Review of the self-evaluation kit.</p>	<p>1. Questionnaires & self-evaluation. 24 children (aged 3-9) & FS practitioners tracked over 8 months. 2 schools: selected(vulnerable) children.</p> <p>2. Self-appraisal methods. 24 children tracked over 8 months</p>	<p>Positive changes to behaviour might be attributed to FS. (2006, p.4). Possible positive educational, social, psychological, developmental & physical impacts.</p> <p>Recommendation: Track for longer</p>	<p>Recommendations: Phase 2 focused more on adult involvement. Self-appraisal as action research is effective for practitioners to understand best practice and impacts of FS on children. Recommended approach (p.79, 2005)</p> <p>Little about the impact of the social context - the focus of evaluation was on the impact on the children, which could lead to reflection on principles.</p> <p>New woodland: future care to create near to schools (p.79, 2005).</p>
<p>Waters & Begley (2007) <i>Supporting the development of risk-taking...</i> (JA)</p>	<p>(JA) <i>Education 3-13</i>, 25(4), pp. 365-377</p>	<p>Exploratory study that documented risk-taking behaviours.</p> <p>School was piloting new Welsh early years curriculum (WAG, 2004): emphasis on outdoor play.</p> <p>A small scale study but with rigorous methods.</p>	<p>2 children (aged 4) in FS (local woodland and school setting, 2 in each). Inductive approach with naturalistic observation. (2 x 30min sessions 2 months apart). Potential risk-taking behaviours identified through pilot study & by practitioners. Data collection using dictaphone. Discussion with practitioners included.</p>	<p>The FS woodland environment was better able to support the development of positive risk taking behaviours' p. 365.</p> <p>Active risk taker Child A displayed more varied behaviours in FS setting than school space. Reticent risk taker Child B increased excitement & exploration, taking risks not taken in school space. Mastery-oriented approach to risk & physical challenge & learning goals / dispositions demonstrated. Rule-bound nature of school negative impact.</p>	<p>Child A not reprimanded as in school, due to consistent, permissive approach to risk in practitioners. Inconsistent application of safety rules in school space, across staff team and breaktimes. High ratio in FS affects. School space complex for staff. Natural wilder & diverse environment afforded more risk taking behaviour. As well as natural affordances, it is recommended to do FS in woodland space as they perceive school space as rule bound & harder to adopt permissive approach. Whole team approach to FS training.</p>

Author/s (date) and title	Literature type & data sources	Aims & focus	Methods, sample & analysis	Key findings on pedagogy & outcomes	Key findings on adult experience
<p>Maynard (2007b) <i>A Risky Business? Encounters with...</i>(JA)</p> <p>Maynard (2007c) <i>FS in Great Britain: An initial exploration</i> (JA)</p>	<p>(JA): (2007b) <i>Education</i> 3-13, 35(4), pp. 379-391.</p> <p>(2007c) <i>Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood</i>, 8(4), pp. 320-331.</p> <p>(RR) Evaluation research report, South Wales.</p> <p>Maynard (2003) <i>FS Swansea...</i></p>	<p>(2007b) focused on adult experiences & relationship.</p> <p>'FS in GB' (JA) focused on aims and ethos of FS & it's fit within EY settings.</p> <p>Evaluation (RR) on the 'impact and benefit of children's involvement in FS' (2003).</p>	<p>(2007b) Interviews, observation. Team of 2 teachers & 2 FS practitioners.</p> <p>(2007c) Interviews, observation (YR & a SEN class), questionnaires, documentation & standardised tests.</p>	<p>FS involvement 'appeared to have a positive impact' on physical skills, confidence, disposition to learn & self esteem' (2003, p. 1). It may provide a different mode of learning to that of the classroom.</p> <p>(2007c) main aim for PSHE but better for self-confidence & independence, health, positive learning disposition & life skills. No self esteem impact if short term. FS good fit to early years & cultural concerns re sedentary lifestyles</p>	<p>FOCUS ON ADULT. (2007b) Foucauldian analysis of impact / benefits, organisation / structure / content, tensions in discourse and ethos between mainstream pedagogy & new foundation phase in Wales. Differences in approach: control from the teachers, facilitative FS practitioners, conflict & tension between them. Team overcame this through reflexive dialogue, including their different constructs of child.</p> <p>(2007c) Critical of focus on learning styles & indiscriminate praise. Self esteem over-emphasised, less environmental education.</p>
<p>Maynard & Waters (2007) <i>Learning in the outdoor environment: a missed opportunity?</i> (JA)</p>	<p>(JA) <i>Early Years</i>, 27(3), pp. 255-265.</p>	<p>Document the current use of outdoors.</p> <p>In schools that weren't piloting the New Welsh curriculum (WAG, 2004). Time of transition.</p>	<p>Early years teachers in 4 inner city (3) and suburban (1) schools in S Wales.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews and observation of normal use of outdoor space in lesson time 30-45mins.</p> <p>Grounded theory analysis.</p>	<p>FS helps us to take seriously the development of: children's self-confidence, independence & ability to cooperate with others & encouraging positive dispositions to learning, e.g. curiosity & resilience. This can be supported by child-initiated activity, experiential real-life learning & problem solving, & co-constructed sustained shared thinking.</p>	<p>FOCUS ON ADULT. Teachers miss many of the opportunities afforded by the outdoor environment to enhance children's learning' p. 255</p> <p>2 school staff saw a distinction in 'normal' and 'special' outdoor activity.</p> <p>Issues: managed outcomes, organisational strategies and pedagogical approaches (play, child-initiated), physical activity, weather,</p>

Author/s (date) and title	Literature type & data sources	Aims & focus	Methods, sample & analysis	Key findings on pedagogy & outcomes	Key findings on adult experience
Davis, Rea & Waite (2006) <i>The special nature of the outdoors...</i> (JA)	(JA) <i>Australian Journal of Outdoor Education</i> , 10(3), pp. 3-12. (RR) Davis & Waite (2004) <i>FS: An evaluation of the opportunities and challenges in the early years...</i> Evaluation report summary, Plymouth University(unpublished).	(JA) Evaluation of 4 funded FS programmes FS programmes were compared with a residential centre programme. Defining what is special about OL, both in natural contexts & in distinctive pedagogy. (RR) 'Self-esteem, children's perspectives, language development...learning in the outdoors & the role of the FS leader' (p. 3)	Qualitative: observation (YR & Y1 children), videoing FS, interviews, questionnaires, mapping & adult self-evaluation. 3 schools with 59 children (aged 3-5) participating. Reception or Nursery, urban, suburban & rural communities across Devon. Kellert's (2002) typology of values associated with nature applied, along with Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences and UNESCO report (Delors, 1996) using 4 pillars of learning. Small scale study - not representative, but highlighting areas for future research, on links with pedagogy & environment. Some commonalities found may miss important differences in pedagogical or methodological approach.	FS is an enjoyable form of education that provides a 'myriad of opportunities for rich experiential learning' (p. 25, RR) FS may be of benefit to personal, social & emotional development, knowledge & understanding of the world, mathematical, physical & creative development & positive impact on communication. FS supports early learning through free play & direct responses to nature. Setting has impact on direct experience - wilder, not in school grounds. Secret spaces afford freedom from adult supervision, in comparison to other OP researched. Learning 'to be' & 'to live together' identified as less valued in schools (similar to Kellert's humanistic, moralistic and symbolic values). These social and affective aspects are valued in OL/FS, contributing to holistic view of child & approach to learning. Extended time in FS is important for aesthetic value or appreciation of nature. Moralistic value: Wildness encouraging respect for nature. Symbolic value: free OP helps language development. Active participation outdoors also fundamental aspect of FS.	PARTIAL FOCUS ON ADULT. Need to link FS principles to pedagogy in role. FS begins as adult-led, but with aim to become child-centred exploratory play as children gain confidence, moving from indirect to direct experience of nature. 'This represents a tension between principles and practice in FS' p. 9 (see future research by Waite) '...despite their own positive memories of outdoors, adults tended to restrict access for children in their care through fear of risks...& a lack of time to supervise..' p. 9 Naturalistic value: '...no syllabus, but through observation and awareness of different learning styles leaders adopt an intuitive approach, encouraging children to use all their senses to appreciate nature. Play, in particular, offers a means to engage holistically' p. 6 Humanistic value due to high ratios & emotional focus in relationship: 'leaders describe their relationship to the children as 'hearty parenting' ...responsive to individual needs in a way teaching large groups of 30 children is unable to be'. p. 7 Cost of transport to wilder sites, seen as crucial by FS leaders in study, is a barrier to FS provision.

Author/s (date) and title	Literature type & data sources	Aims & focus	Methods, sample & analysis	Key findings on pedagogy & outcomes	Key findings on adult experience
Massey (2005) <i>The benefits of a FS experience for children in their early years</i> (JA)	(JA) <i>Primary Practice</i> , 37, pp. 31-35.	Views of children, practitioners and parents on FS experience & benefits.	Questionnaires, pre & post. Informal interviews & anecdotal log. Observations, video & photo. 6 children, 6 parents, 2 staff, 1 FS practitioner.	Benefits found in persona & social development, communication & language development, life long learning (supported, self-initiated) & risk taking. Transition stage as children settled into FS, grew in confidence.	PARTIAL FOCUS ON ADULT. FS practitioner - good risk support, communication, and teaching safety. Positive approach to risk countering 'safety first culture'. 'Sensitive co-ordinators' (Bruce, 1997) extending self-initiated play. Good implications for settings establishing FS.

Table X2.2: Secondary literature used as data for primary literature

Author (date) (secondary literature)	Literature type	Use in primary literature
Roe, Aspinall & Ward Thompson (2009) <i>FS: Evidence for Restorative...</i>	RR	Roe & Aspinall (2011a; 2011b)
Roe (2008) <i>The Restorative Power of Natural and Built Environments.</i>	PhD thesis	Roe & Aspinall (2011a; 2011b)
Waite, Davis & Brown (2006a; 2006b; 2006c)	RR	Waite (2011a; 2010)
O'Brien & Murray (2006) <i>A Marvellous Opportunity ...</i>	RR	O'Brien (2009); O'Brien & Murray (2007)
Murray & O'Brien (2005) <i>Such enthusiasm...</i>	RR	O'Brien (2009); O'Brien & Murray (2007)
Murray (2004) <i>FS evaluation project: A study in Wales.</i>		O'Brien (2009); O'Brien & Murray (2007)
Davis & Waite (2004) <i>FS: An evaluation of the opportunities...</i>	RR	Davis et al. (2006)
Maynard (2003) <i>FS Swansea...</i>	RR	Maynard (2007b; 2007c); Maynard & Waters (2007)

Appendix 3: FS Principles and criteria for good practice (FS IOL SIG, 2012).

Ethos/Definition

“Forest School is an inspirational process, that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve, develop confidence and self-esteem, through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. Forest School is a specialised learning approach that sits within and compliments the wider context of outdoor and woodland education.”

Principles with criteria for good practice (bulleted)

- 1. Forest School is a long-term process with frequent and regular sessions in a woodland or natural wooded environment rather than a one-off visit. Planning, adaptation, observations and reviewing are integral elements of Forest School.**
 - FS takes place regularly, ideally at least every other week, with the same group of learners, over an extended period of time, if practicable encompassing the seasons.
 - A FS programme has a structure which is based on the observations and collaborative work between learners and practitioners. This structure should clearly demonstrate progression of learning.
 - The initial sessions of any programme establish physical and behavioural boundaries as well as making initial observations on which to base future programme development.
- 2. Forest School takes place in a woodland or natural wooded environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.**
 - Whilst woodland is the ideal environment for FS, many other sites, some with only a few trees, are able to support good FS practice.
 - The woodland is ideally suited to match the needs of the programme and the learners, providing them with the space and environment in which to explore and discover.
 - A FS programme constantly monitors its ecological impact and works within a sustainable site management plan agreed between the landowner/manager, the Practitioner and the learners.
 - FS aims to foster a relationship with nature through regular personal experiences in order to develop long-term, environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices in staff, learners and the wider community.
 - FS uses natural resources for inspiration, to enable ideas and to encourage intrinsic motivation.

3. *Forest School aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners*
 - Where appropriate, the FS leader will aim to link experiences at FS to home, work and/or school education
 - FS programmes aim to develop, where appropriate, the physical, social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and spiritual aspects of the learner.
4. *Forest School offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.*
 - FS opportunities are designed to build on an individual's innate motivation, positive attitudes and/or interests.
 - Forest School uses tools and fires only where deemed appropriate to the learners, and dependent on completion of a baseline risk assessment.
 - Any FS experience follows a Risk/Benefit process managed jointly by the practitioner and learner that is tailored to the developmental stage of the learner.
5. *Forest School is run by qualified Forest School Practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.*
 - FS is led by qualified Forest School Practitioners, who are required to hold a minimum of an accredited Level 3 FS qualification.
 - There is a high ratio of practitioner/adults to learners.
 - Practitioners and adults regularly helping at Forest School are subject to relevant checks into their suitability to have prolonged contact with children, young people and vulnerable people.
 - Practitioners need to hold an up-to-date first aid qualification, which includes paediatric and outdoor elements.
 - FS is backed by relevant working documents, which contain all the policies and procedures required for running FS and which establish the roles and responsibilities of staff and volunteers.
 - The FS leader is a reflective practitioner and sees themselves, therefore, as a learner too.
6. *Forest School uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for development and learning.*
 - A learner-centred pedagogical approach is employed by FS that is responsive to the needs and interests of learners.
 - The Practitioner models the pedagogy, which they promote during their programmes through careful planning, appropriate dialogue and relationship building
 - Play and choice are an integral part of the FS learning process where play is recognised as vital to learning and development at FS.
 - FS provides a stimulus for all learning preferences and dispositions.
 - Reflective practice is a feature of each session to ensure learners and practitioners can understand their achievements, develop emotional intelligence and plan for the future.
 - Practitioner observation is an important element of FS pedagogy. Observations are used to 'scaffold' and tailor learning and development at FS.

This definition, principles and criteria were based on the original principles and criteria agreed in 2002 and were reviewed in 2011. They were agreed after 5 months of consultation with the FS community in 2011. Published by the FS IOL SIG group and NGB Steering group in February 2012.

Appendix 4: Level 3 qualification module content (FSTC, 2009)

Table X4.1: Training content of Module 1: Practical skills and woodland management

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria	Training and evidence
1. Understand the management of woodlands as a learning resource	Compare woodland ecosystems, identify range of woodland flora and fauna, discuss importance for FSP and how woodlands, flora & fauna can be a learning resource, summarise historic woodland renewable resource use, with reference to sustainability.	Classroom based and outdoor sessions on theoretical knowledge of woodland ecosystems and management. Written portfolio.
2. Demonstrate ability to teach a range of practical woodland skills	Equipment, teaching tool use, tool safety, knots, shelters, fire lighting and safety, fire cooking.	Outdoor skills training, then practical delivery assessed on separate days. Further step-by-step guides with photos.

Table X4.2: Training content of Module 2: Learning and Development (L&D)

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria	Training and evidence
1. Demonstrate an awareness of relevant theories of L&D and their application to FS.	Outline 2 relevant theories of L&D, discuss use in understanding and support of L&D at FS.	Classroom based sessions on theoretical knowledge of L&D.
2. Understand how FS can support an individual's holistic L&D.	Outline concept of holistic development & how it can be promoted through FS, discuss how FS meets L&D needs including appropriate risk-taking, socio-emotional development and building of self-confidence. Compare 2 strategies.	Written portfolio.
3. Understand the role of play for all at FS.	With reference to own client group, ID links between play policies & strategies and FS. Discuss benefits of freely chosen play with reference to observations of play and self-directed learning within FS.	
4. Consider the role of self-esteem, emotional intelligence, behaviour & learning at FS.	Explore these concepts with examples from FS. Summarise factors affecting behaviour and how they affect L&D.	

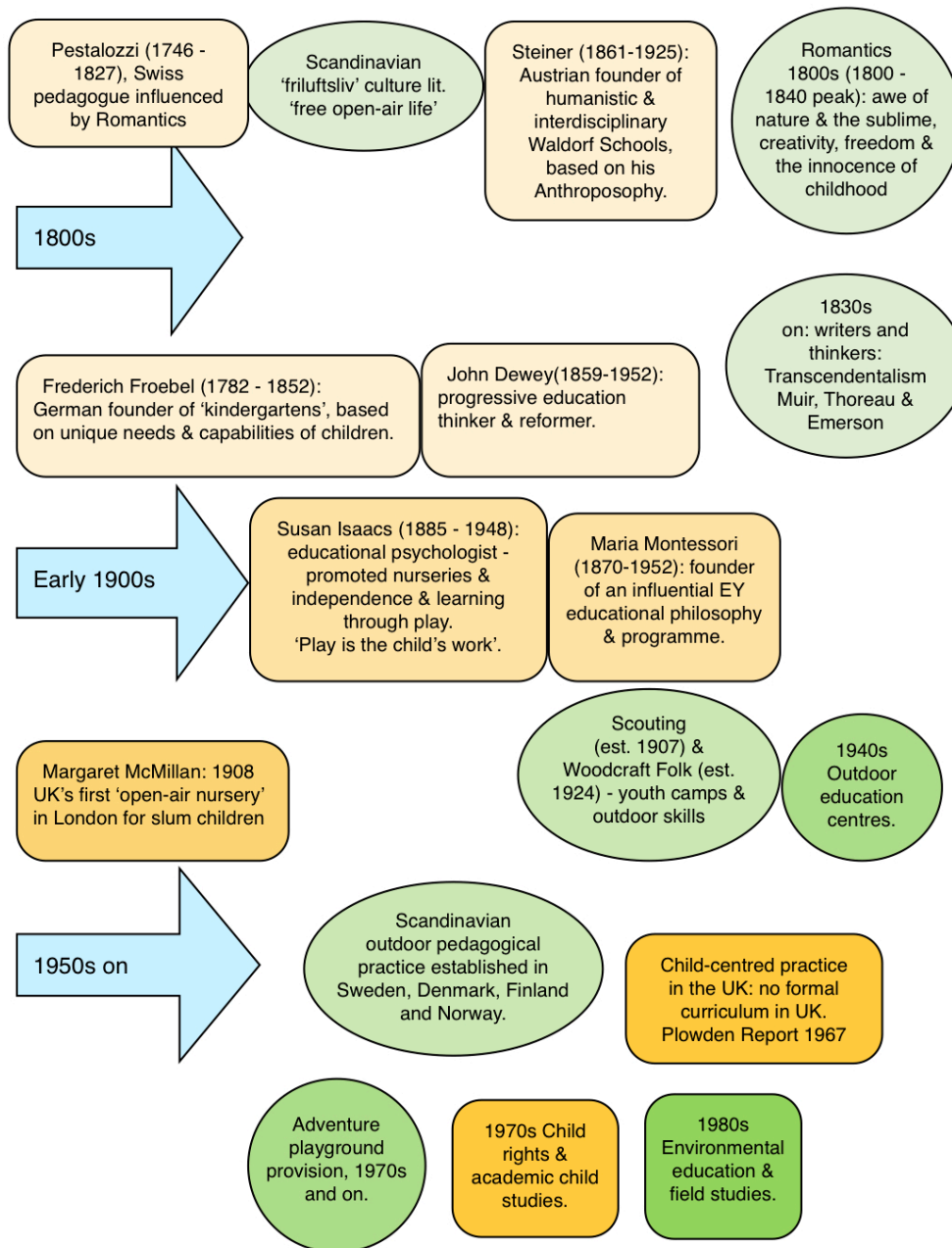
Learning outcome	Assessment criteria	Training and evidence
5. Reflect on own FS training.	Discuss the FS practitioner role in promoting emotional intelligence, self-esteem, appropriate behaviour & learning at FS. Summarise own personal L&D during the training and how this informs future practice.	Written portfolio, including learning journal summary.

Table X4.3: Training content of Module 3: Establishment and Delivery

Learning outcome	Assessment criteria	Training and evidence
1. Understand the development of FS locally & in the UK.	Discuss and review FS history, practice & research.	Classroom based sessions. Written portfolio.
2. Plan & deliver a programme of FS sessions.	<p>Create working documents for Health & Safety, policies & procedures and other relevant statutory requirements for client group & FS site.</p> <p>Assess the ecological impact (EIA) of FS & create a woodland management plan from this at the site.</p> <p>Plan a minimum of 6 sessions with links to client group's L&D needs & objectives.</p> <p>Discuss risk management process and application at FS & risk assess sessions.</p> <p>Develop a communication strategy.</p> <p>Lead sessions with demonstrable flexibility to needs.</p>	<p>Outdoor training & classroom based sessions.</p> <p>Written portfolio to include: FS handbook EIA & management plan Risk strategy Risk assessments (site, activity, tools etc) Communication strategy</p> <p>Assessment of delivery (in this case in real placement practice rather than role-played on training course).</p>
3. Evaluate the planning & delivery of the FS programme.	<p>Post-session formative assessments.</p> <p>Observation of 3 individuals over 6 sessions & evaluate impact of FS.</p> <p>Summative evaluation of programme.</p>	<p>Outdoor & classroom based sessions.</p> <p>Written portfolio to include: Child observation records. Assessments & evaluations of FS sessions.</p>

Appendix 5: Figure of Early Antecedents in FS History

(Cree and McCree, 2012)



Appendix 6: Ethics consent form sample

Postgraduate Research Student Office QW009,
Francis Close Hall, Swindon Rd
University of Gloucestershire
Cheltenham, GL50 4AZ

22nd August 2010

Dear Forest School trainee,

I am writing to invite you to take part in a student research project which I am undertaking during your upcoming Level 3 course, in agreement with and supported by the Forest School training team at Bishopswood.

My research involves finding out about your experiences on Forest School training and the impact on your thinking and practice. I'm especially interested in playful, unplanned or open aspects of the training, such as freely completing a task however you wish, getting to play for your own sake or simply being outdoors in nature.

Participation is voluntary and involves a few hours of your time during and after the training. This research is entirely independent of your assessment on the course and has no influence on your results.

Your participation will contribute to academic knowledge and future developments of Forest School training. The research is much needed as Forest School is a fast growing grassroots movement in the UK and very little academic research has been done on the effects of the training.

During the course I will invite you to a private interview, two group interviews and to fill in two questionnaires. The interviews will be informal discussions about your experiences. I will also invite you to take a few walks for about twenty minutes in your own time and reflect afterwards. During some of the training course, I will observe and take part alongside the group. In addition, I will invite you to submit some excerpts from your reflective journal and / or written assignments (after they're marked, not before). Once the course and assessment is finished I would like to interview you at your setting.

Please find enclosed a consent form for your information. I will bring copies with me for you to sign on the course. The points below give more detail. Please don't be put off by the formal tone; I'm just making sure I've covered everything.

- I know of no anticipated risks to your participation in this research.
- You may decline to answer any questions without explanation
- You may decline to contribute to any part of the research however you wish.
- You may withdraw from the research at any point without discrimination.
- All information you provide will be considered confidential.
- Your name will not be identified with the input you give, in the final thesis or any presentations, reports, and publications.
- I am the only researcher present during the sessions.
- Subject to the University of Gloucestershire's ethical approval, I will use the information collected in my PhD thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns about participating, I invite you to contact me (mmccree@glos.ac.uk) or my supervisor Professor Mary Fuller (mfuller@glos.ac.uk). Thank you in advance for your assistance. I look forward to meeting you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Mel McCree

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM
Forest School Leader Training 2010 -2011
Agreement to Participate

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the researcher or involved institution from their legal and professional responsibilities.

This project is being reviewed by the Research Ethics Sub-Committee at the University of Gloucestershire to receive ethical clearance to be used in Mel McCree's PhD study.

I have read the information presented about the research sessions.

I have had the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions related to these sessions, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I may withdraw from the session without discrimination at any time by advising the researcher or the course leader of this decision.

I understand that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact Professor Mary Fuller on mfuller@glos.ac.uk.

I may ask to see the ethical standards by which the research is being conducted.

With full knowledge of the above, I agree of my own free will, to participate in this research. I agree to keep in confidence information that could identify specific participants and/or the information they provided.

Date

Print Name

Signature

Researcher

Name

Signature

Research stage – Interview 1 / 2 / 3

Appendix 7: Full ethics bias methodology

Reasons, interests and purposes of research that may lead to bias.

I have strong interests that have led me to undertaking this research. There is a difference between an interest and a bias, but I know that my interests, and furthermore my opinions, have a definite influence in creating a bias in my research design, analysis and dissemination. I'm aware of the bias that these interests and opinions engender, and sought to address them in the following ways, which I've separated into different aspects of bias for discussion. I present how I addressed each aspect, by the questions and design of the methods to avoid any unintentional bias. The following considerations were written before the fieldwork, therefore they are in the present tense.

Design bias

I am cautious about ensuring the validity of my investigation and therefore wish to present and include counter-arguments. Further there is a regression effect in a small sample, who because of their presence on the training, will have some in-built bias towards furthering outdoor play and learning. Addressed by:

- Critical examination and inclusion of counter-arguments in data collection questions and literature review e.g. placing outdoor play and learning within the bigger picture of the needs and function of early years education, discussing examples of high quality outdoor delivery achieved without further CPD or training, or seeking opinion and examining work disabusing assumptions about biophilia, ecopsychological concepts, 'nature aversion', 'risk aversion' or 'nature-deficit disorder' (Louv, 2005).
- Self-evaluation and reflective discourse – to increase potential for free opinion

and thought.

- Mixed methods – to examine the same material in different ways.
- In depth case study of small sample – to enhance the particularity and specificity of each individual narrative rather than seek to generalise.

Measurement or response bias

Within the data collection process, there will be a propensity for the participants to give 'socially desirable answers'. This can also be influenced by self esteem levels in the participants. Further, they are on a training course and it is reasonable to assume they want to pass, so there is an in-built social desirability in expressing alignment with key theories and concepts introduced on the course. Addressed by:

- Assessing the potential effect of socially desirable answers and building in index questions to monitor impression management i.e. 'How do you distinguish between good and bad?' or 'How do you experience the difference between right or wrong ways to practice?'
- Durational study, as opinions and reflections change and grow over time.
- Reflective discourse – self-esteem and its influence can be monitored.

Sampling bias

By studying only Forest School Leader trainees, there is a strong inclusive or omission bias in my sample. Therefore, through this research, we won't know what other opinions and experiences are owned by practitioners who have not undergone this training or who deliver outdoor play and learning in other ways. Addressed by:

- In-depth case study approach - the sample bias requires explicit acknowledgement, although the study is not devalued by its lack of comparison or control measure. The depth and detail of the narratives are of worth.

Procedural bias

The participants are all trainees and the research takes place in the context of their training, therefore it is implicitly connected. Addressed by:

- Durational study – allowing for a change of context and changes of opinion over time, outside of the training environment.

Problem bias

There are several problems within the study, particularly because of its small and particular sample and specific focus. What other factors could account for the same result in my study? Further, what information about the research purposes may need to be restricted to lessen the influence of a response bias? What influence does the inherent gender bias have? Addressed by:

- Examination of efficacy of questions in research design: i.e. instead of asking 'Why do FS trainee's become better practitioners?', ask 'What factors in the FS trainee's personal / work life contribute to developing their practice?'
- Examination of efficacy of questions in data gathering – include data about participants own personal choices and independent opinions, to build robust narratives.
- Avoiding generalised speculation or assumptions in my analysis about predictors of variations in the results, or causalities.
- Overt discussion of research purposes with participants as a strategy -
- Setting observation – including the wider factors and variables that may influence the participants in their work context.
- Discussing the unavoidable gender bias and observing gender relations present in the training and practice.

Interviewer bias

The influence of my own bias will be present within my body language, tone of voice and responses to the interviewees statements. There may be further unstated assumptions within my approach to the research that require examination as they may influence the responses gathered. Addressed by:

- Critically reflect on and unpack any of my own assumptions or 'false consciousness' that I can identify, and continue to do so.
- Actively seek variation, complexity and context within the data and narratives gathered.
- Mixed methods – using other techniques to gather data where I am not present, i.e. in the use of written material and private reflective time for the participant.
- Autoethnographic account and analysis that can explore some of my own assumptions and biases.

Reporting bias

How I present and disseminate the findings in the literature can also strengthen a bias. Addressed by:

- Taking into account any counter-argument and so-called 'negative' results within my study.
- Seeking out and challenging any 'false consciousness' I may find within my own views, so that I wholly own my own opinions as quoted and can identify any prevalent morals or prejudices within the analysis and findings, as well as the audience chosen.
- Writing for a wider critical audience rather than the 'converted'.

Appendix 8: Sample of encounter dialogue using Shared Space model

M 00:32:30... if we were to systematically go through those different relationships, like adult- to-adult, adult-child, adult to the wider context, adult to the environment. If we could just give them like a little sound byte each, would that be OK?

Interviewee 00:32:52 Yeah that's fine.

M So we've spoken about adult-to-adult, so if you were to summarise that relationship today, how would you summarise that?

Interviewee I found it frustrating really.

M OK. And adult-to-child, there's lots of different adults involved, so speaking personally from your relationship to say... The children in that encounter was, you had, the child with the stick in the absence of rules.

Interviewee 00:33:19 Child who just seems to be dismissing everything, and he's gonna do what he wants to do. Erm, he is a challenge, and I am sure that we will get there. Probably it's something that I'm going to have to work on. I asked a member of staff to work one-to-one with that child, so that will free me up more. That may be the route, I'm not sure.

M 00:33:44 Sure. And what about his relationship to the environment?

Interviewee He doesn't appear to have one yet. I mean the thing he really does like is sticks. Because from day one, he was picking up sticks and whacking things with them. But then I think he watches television where maybe he's seen people hitting with sticks...because they're very much used as swords and weapons at Forest School.

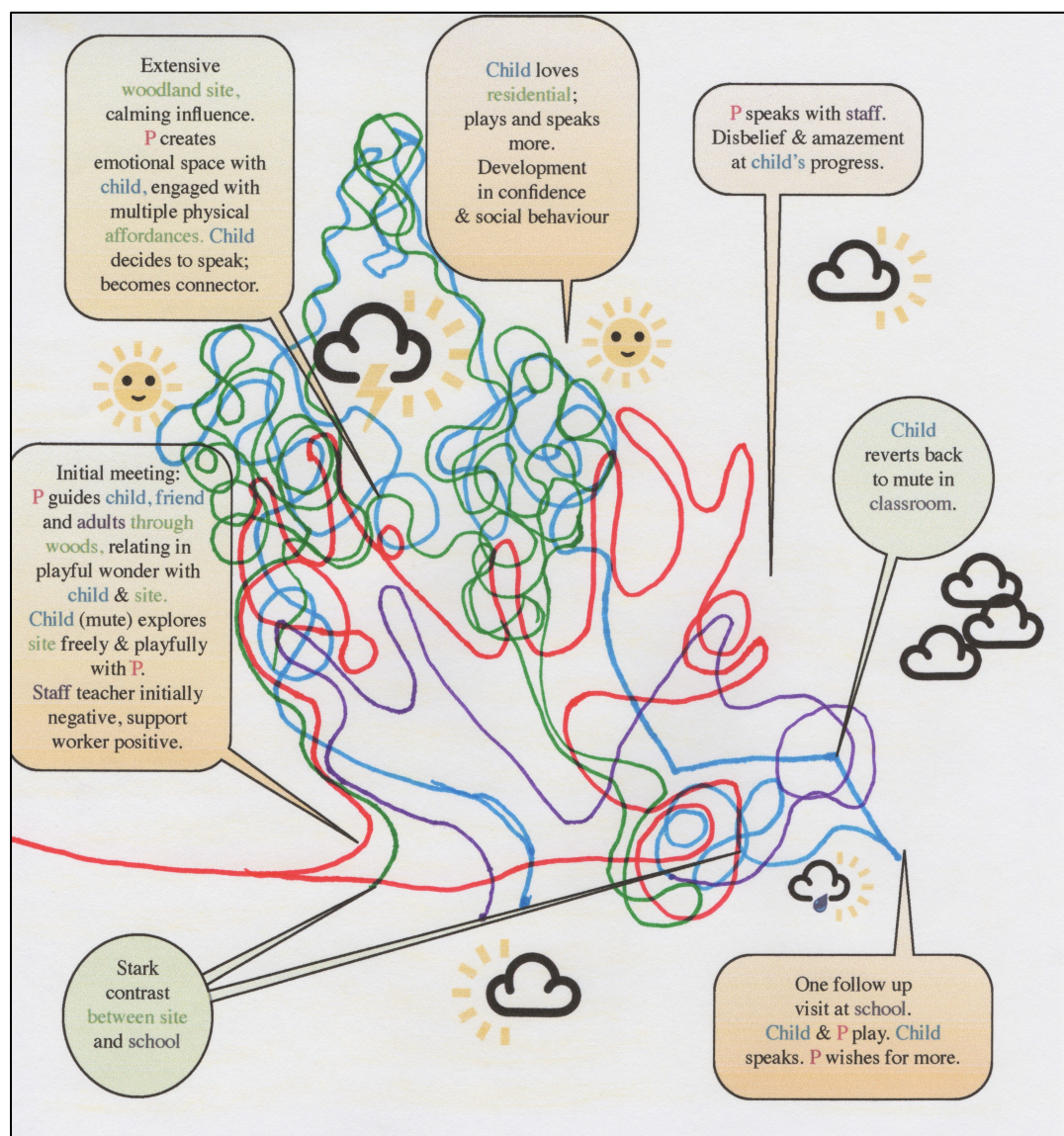
M 00:34:07 Brilliant. And then the fantasy children, I'm going to call them that. The cow and the throne. What about their relationship to the environment?

Interviewee They're really getting into it. They really are. I mean you know some of them will just go and ... we have some wooden statues, we've got lions and different animals and what have you, and some of them will just go and lie across them. You know they'll be there for 10 minutes. Just think, I try and leave them. Whereas another member of staff will go and start talking to them. 'Please step back' you know!

M 00:34:37 Ah yeah. So those are the adults, their relationship to the children.

Interviewee They're almost controlling them, in a (sigh), in a way. They're not letting the child just be, in my eyes. You know, I mean I think if somebody is just quite happily lay there or sat there in their own bubble, their own world, just being, you know why can't they just be left alone to be...? I mean it's different if they're sat there looking totally bored out of their mind. But you know we can recognise the difference in a child that's just totally chilling, and maybe just sat listening or you know feeling the breeze on their face, to the child that's just sat their thinking 'I don't want to be here, I'm bored stupid, just get me back to pre-school'.

Appendix 9: Shared Space map of Moose and the selective mute



The map is an abstract representation of an encounter, shown through time-space.

Each coloured line is someone, or something's journey (the 'something' here is the natural materials, forces and affordances of a woodland space)

Key for coloured lines:

Practitioner / **Child/ren** / **Adults** /

Natural environment

The encounter was related to the researcher by the practitioner.

Moments from before and after can be seen here.

Experiments with Shared Space

The active part of thinking and reflecting on *Shared Space* can be conducted as an interview or focus group, or adapted in a number of participatory ways. Whilst developing the model, I have played with systemic constellations (Horn and Brick, 2005) (a form of role play enactment and therapeutic group work), creative learning conversations (Chappell and Craft, 2011) and the use of visual aids such as sandpits, pavement chalking, giant paper, cardboard, finger puppets and loose parts to represent the different actors and the relations and situated subjectivities between them. These specific types of visual aid are useful, as they are easily accessible and have ephemeral, changeable or destructible qualities, enabling the visualisation to go on within and alongside the interview, adding and changing things. Objects can be improvised to adapt. Different approaches can be employed to suit the needs of the '*Shared Spacers*'. For example, a playful approach, a group approach, or a therapeutic approach would facilitate different forms of response, and fresh perspectives on a situation could be drawn.

The analysis of an encounter using *Shared Space* can be done in a number of ways. First, transcription or notes made during the discussion / enactment, then the different positions and relations are laid out. One FS trainer already uses *Shared Space* within her sessions on pedagogy.

I am interested to experiment further within research and practice.